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Drowned Homelands

Intergenerational Impacts of Lokka and Porttipahta Reservoirs in Northern Finland

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Abstract:

At the turn of 1960s and 1970s Kitinen and Luiro rivers in Sodankylä municipality were dammed as part of a larger hydropower development objective in Kemijoki-river and its side streams. Local communities of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen were displaced and 640 people relocated. The impacts of dispossession are still being felt and continue to accumulate today. Northern Finland faces growing outside land use pressure that has only intensified since the construction of Lokka and Porttipahta reservoirs.

In this thesis I examine the ongoing intergenerational impacts of Lokka and Porttipahta reservoirs on local communities, situating these within the broader landscape of extraction in Northern Finland. To address these consequences, I aim to understand what the drowning of lands and homes has meant and continues to mean for local communities across generations, and how Lokka and Porttipahta connect to broader discourses of historical and ongoing colonial land dispossession in the Arctic.

The primary data in this research consists of oral histories from displaced and relocated communities, including second-generation who have grown up with the presence of the reservoirs. I collected the data through in-depth interviews. Several interviews were conducted alongside the reservoirs, close to interviewees' previous homeplaces. To understand the consequences of relocation and dispossession, I have analyzed the data using thematic narrative analysis drawing on three theoretical frameworks: place, trauma and colonial dispossession. I identified rootedness to place and intergenerationally transmitted impacts of place attachment disruptions and situated Lokka and Porttipahta within broader discourses of resource colonialism and extractivism. I identified four main

narratives: a narrative of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen as homelands, a narrative of essential longing, a narrative of intergenerational environmental trauma, and a narrative of dispossessed home and contested agency. These narratives explain the deep attachment of local communities to their socio-physical environments and the consequences of losing them. This thesis presents Lokka and Porttipahta not only as historical events set in time; they are also intergenerationally defining the displaced communities and have an ongoing influence particularly on the current extractivist landscape of the Central Lapland region.

Keywords: Lokka and Porttipahta, hydropower development, place attachments, environmental trauma, colonial dispossession, resource colonialism, extractivism, sacrifice zones, oral history, power asymmetries, modernization

Tiivistelmä:

1960- ja 1970-lukujen vaihteessa Sodankylän kunnan alueella sijaitsevat joet Kitinen ja Luiro padottiin osana laajempaa Kemijoen vesivoimantuotannon kehittämistavoitetta. Sompion ja Yli-Kitisen asukkaat joutuivat jättämään kotinsa. Yhteensä 640 joutui pakkomuuttamaan tekoallasrakentamisen alta. Pakkosiirron seuraukset tuntuvat edelleen ja ovat jopa korostuneet nykypäivänä. Pohjois-Suomi kohtaa koko ajan kasvavaa ulkopuolista maankäyttöpainetta, joka on vahvistunut nykyiseen muotoonsa Lokan ja Porttipahdan tekoaltaiden rakentamisen myötä.

Tässä pro gradu -tutkielmassa tarkastelen Lokan ja Porttipahdan tekoaltaiden jatkuvia ylisukupolvisia vaikutuksia paikallisyhteisöille, sekä tekoaltaita osana laajempaa maankäyttötilannetta Pohjois-Suomessa. Tutkielman tavoitteena on ymmärtää, mitä luonnon ja kodin hukkuminen todellisuudessa on merkinnyt paikallisyhteisöille sekä jälkipolville. Pohdin myös, miten Lokka ja Porttipahta kytkeytyvät laajempiin kolonialistisiin maankäyttödiskursseihin Arktisella alueella.

Tutkimuksen pääaineistona ovat allasevakkosukupolvien sekä heitä seuranneen toisen sukupolven kertomukset. Aineiston keruun toteutin syvähaastatteluiden avulla, joista useimmat pidin tekoaltaiden rannoilla, lähellä haastateltavien entisiä kotipaikkoja. Ymmärtääkseni pakkomuuton ja maanriiston seuraukset mahdollisimman ihmislähtöisesti, olen analysoinut kertomukset temaattisen narratiivi analyysin avulla hyödyntäen kolmea teoreettista viitekehystä: paikkaa, traumaa ja kolonialistista riistoa. Olen tunnistanut paikkaan juurtumisen, paikkakiintymysten häiriintymisen synnyttäneet ylisukupolvisesti siirretyt vaikutukset, sekä sijoittanut Lokan ja Porttipahdan tekoaltaat osaksi laajempia luonnonvarakolonialismin ja ekstraktivismin diskursseja. Tuloksissani olen tunnistanut neljä laajempaa päänarratiivia: narratiivin Sompiosta ja Yli-Kitisestä kotina sekä kotiseutuna, olemuksellisen kaipuun narratiivin, ylisukupolvisesti koetun ympäristötrauman narratiivin, sekä

narratiivin menetetystä kodista, ja kiistellystä toimijuudesta. Narratiivit osoittavat kuinka syvästi paikallisyhteisöt olivat kiinnittyneitä sosiofyysiseen ympäristöönsä, ja selittävät, mitä tapahtui, kun ympäristö menetettiin. Lokka ja Porttipahta eivät ole pelkästään historiaan jääneitä tapahtumia, vaan ne muovaavat edelleen paikallisyhteisöjä läpi sukupolvien ja määrittävät ekstraktivistista toimintakenttää erityisesti Keski-Lapin alueella.

Avainsanat: Lokka ja Porttipahta, vesivoima, paikkakiintymykset, ympäristötrauma, kolonialistinen riisto, luonnonvarakolonialismi, ekstraktivismi, uhrausvyöhyke, muistitieto, epätasaiset valtasuhteet, modernisaatio

_x_ Tutkielma ei sisällä muita kuin tekijän/tekijöiden omia henkilötietoja.

_x_ The thesis does not contain any personal data other than that of the author(s)

Content

1 INTRODUCTION

The car turns sharply to the right and begins to climb up the mountain. Or at least I'm sure it's a mountain. I hold my breath as we rise to the ridge and water opens up before us, stretching as far as the eye can see. I barely dare to peek out of the driver's side window. I can just barely see the drop out of the window. It's so vast that it makes me dizzy. The riverbed is much farther down than the waves lapping right beside us on the other side.

We stop. At the spot where a sign states loitering is prohibited. Grandfather once told me that in places like this, we always have the right to go. They came to our lands and put up signs on top of our reindeer pastures. We get out of the car. Grandfather stretches and I follow him beside a strange building, from which stairs descend. To the log flume, I hear. My legs must be trembling as I step after Grandfather onto the iron stairs, which have holes so large that my hand could fit right through them.

Grandfather is particularly quiet. He gazes down at the river, and when we return to the roadside, I see his eyes searching for something along the horizon. Grandfather exhales quietly, I can see it. His beard quivers before he points somewhere out on the open water. Some headland.

"Do you see, that's where I'm from. There's old Ukkola, which was on top of the bank across from Ukkolansuvanto. Now there's 14 meters of water above the chimney top".

I blink my eyes. I don't understand how there could once have been a house under the water. Or houses, multiple villages. There were entire forests, bogs and lichen grounds there – even hills, which now peek out as islands in the midst of that great gigantic mass of water.

I go to stand by the railing that prevents falling into the lake. It's called a lake, but only an artificial lake. Mother takes a picture of me. In it I have a serious expression. In my mind circles Mother's story about hydroelectric power plants. We're standing on top of one now. A horsefly whizzes past my ear. If you swim too close to the dam gates, the current pulls you in. No swimmer can resist it, though I still intend to become a good swimmer when I grow up – I don't need floaties even now. An enormous force pushes inside the dam gates, where spinning turbines produce electricity for the world. It travels somewhere south, far from home. Through the dam gates one wouldn't travel south though, but the turbines' sharp blades would make mincemeat of you. And nothing at all would be left. Only memories.

Just like for Grandfather, when he looks at the reservoir. Usually Grandfather laughs, but now he doesn't laugh. We return to the car and continue our journey across the dam to the forest and calf markings. I still don't understand how Grandfather's home can be in the lake.

In many ways this thesis seeks to explore a question that I have had since childhood: how a home, a village, an entire world could be drowned under water, and what it means to lose all that to national development goals. I have carried these questions since I learned that life once existed beneath the large, landscape-defining lakes. In this sense, this study is shaped by my third-generation positionality within the histories of Porttipahta and Lokka.

The post-second world war era was a time of intensive modernization in Finland. New technologies were developed and demand for energy grew. At the turn of decade in 1960s and 1970s the biggest reservoirs in western Europe were constructed into Kitinen and Luiro rivers in Northern Finland, forcing 640 people to leave their homes for good (e.g. Kauhanen, 2024; Mustonen et al, 2011). This remains the largest nature-changing extractivist project in Finland to this day. However, Northern Finland, usually referred as Lapland, is currently center of new extraction and development projects. The history of displacement in the name of the greater good of the nation is part of the historical, cultural and environmental landscape of Northern Finland, especially the Central Lapland region and Sodankylä municipality, where reservoirs Lokka and Porttipahta are located.

1.1 Industrialization increasing hydroelectric development

Arctic regions have been historically characterized by the outside interests to the area and its resources, whilst being home for diverse indigenous and local communities. It has become both in literature and in lived realities a region of many conflicting interests and tensions. Lately, there has been fast growth in the extraction of natural resources, such as rare earth minerals (Sörlin, 2023, 3; Sörlin et al, 2023; Joona & Joona, 2023). This intensification of extractive industries is far from anything new (Sörlin, 2023, 11; Sörlin et al, 2023).

When the modern society began emerging with the rise of the Industrial Revolution in the 20th century, extraction of natural resources became an enabling mechanism for modernization (Sörlin et al, 2023, 35). Intense post-war modernization occurred across the globe and resulted in the development of hydropower to answer increased energy demands (Cohn et al, 2020; Össbo, 2025). Across the border, in Norway, a big controversy regarding dam construction was taking place in the 1960s and 1970s coinciding with the construction of the Porttipahta and Lokka dams. The Norwegian state's plans to harness the Áltá-Guovdageaidnu river to hydroelectric production resulted in action and demonstrations, mobilizing the Sámi community and drawing international support from indigenous and nature conservation groups which transformed the Sámi political life especially on the Norwegian side of Sápmi (Nykänen, 2022b; Eidheim, 1997). Despite the strong opposition, the dam was

constructed. However, the initial plan was altered so that the Sámi village of Máze would not be flooded (ibid).

There were multiple other hydropower development projects coinciding with the dam constructions of Lokka, Porttipahta and Áltá-Guovdageaidnu (e.g. James Bay and Manitoba Hydro in Canada, Bårjås and Suorvvá in Sweden). During this time the electrical systems were integrated with state-led companies and statewide goals (Cohn et al, 2020, 146). This increased the drive to find ways to utilize the northern resources (Cohn et al, 2020; Ma et al 2005 & Össbo, 2025). This age was defined by the emergences of notable land use conflicts in the Arctic.

Prior research of Lokka and Porttipahta has predominantly focused on the effects of the Lokka reservoir and the changes it brought to traditional livelihoods (e.g. Mustonen et al., 2011; Pyhäjärvi, 2011; Aikio, P, 1991), or have primarily been historical sociological inquiries, treating hydropower construction as a historical case study (e.g. Kauhanen, 2024; Järvikoski, 1979; Pyhäjärvi, 2011). Previous research is limited by the temporal scope as it was either conducted shortly after the construction of the reservoir, or it focused on the immediate changes caused by relocations and environmental loss (e.g. Järvikoski, 1979; Havukkala, 1964; Aho et al, 1991; Huttunen et al, 1995). More recent analytical frameworks such as resource colonialism, extractivism, and raise of Indigenous and local rights discourses have been only marginally applied. Jouni Kauhanen (2024) has touched upon these themes in his PhD dissertation, which focused on producing a historical narration of the terra nullius justification processes behind the reservoirs with a clear focus on Lokka. There is also an evident lack of publications and research in English, despite a large body of international literature on hydropower development and land dispossession (e.g. Afanasyeva, 2013; Loney and Warner, 1999; Össbo, 2025; Nykänen, 2022b, Ma et al, 2005).

This thesis seeks to address these gaps. Already over ten years ago Mustonen et al (2011) recognized the need to research and revisit Lokka and Porttipahta reservoirs with the "*the latest scientific, legal, Indigenous and other epistemologies to have a clear view of the situation*" (Mustonen et al, 2011, 110). My aim is to respond to this demand, while foregrounding the lived experiences and narrative of the intergenerational impacts of land dispossession.

1.2 Research goals

The focus of this research lies on the intergenerational longitudinal impacts of Lokka and Porttipahta. Goal is to understand them as part of ongoing colonial dispossession in the Arctic, and more specifically in the Arctic Finland. The aim is to not only place the construction of reservoirs as one

historic event that displaced 640 people, but to understand how and why the burden of the relocation and loss of environment is still experienced, transmitted, and reproduced in current land use practices. The thesis addresses the topic through three main research questions:

1) *What kind of impacts Lokka and Porttipahta have had, and continue having on local displaced communities?*
2) *How displacement has affected and produced intergenerational impacts on place attachments, identity and overall life – can we talk of experiences of environmental trauma?*
3) *How hydropower development and its impacts are connected to broader structures of colonial dispossession, and whether Lokka and Porttipahta can be seen as a colonial precedent?*

To address these questions, I have decided to approach it first by understanding why the lost land was important through an inquiry on place attachments (*place*). Then I will explore what happened when those attachments were disrupted and lands were lost, which leads to questions of possible traumatic traces (*environmental trauma*), that might be passed down over time. This study explores the longitudinal and cross-generational consequences of hydropower development that materialized over 50 years ago but does not limit it to the intergenerationally transmitted loss and trauma. The inquiry is extended to situate Lokka and Porttipahta into resource colonialism and extractivist contexts to understand the power dynamics and their impacts to present-day land use developments and local agency (*colonial dispossession*).

The primary data of this research consists of interviews that are mostly conducted by implementing walking-interview method into culturally grounded method of *tulistelu*-interviews. Data is analyzed through thematic narrative analysis, that is tied to the three-layered theoretical framework of place, trauma and colonial dispossession. This thesis is revisiting the social issues surrounding the creation of Lokka and Porttipahta reservoir, with consideration of the present-day implications. Both Lokka and Porttipahta are addressed equally to contribute correcting the unequal distribution of prior research that has tended to be centered around Lokka. Construction of Lokka and Porttipahta is approached as events carried through history. By examining history, the present day can be better situated, and the consequences are recognized to unfold over time. Before diving into the research questions, the history of Lokka and Porttipahta will be briefly outlined to better contextualize the study.

2 HISTORY OF LOKKA AND PORTTIPAHTA

Following the WWII, a modernizing Finland underwent a transformation from an agricultural society to a modern industrial welfare state. Northern Finland, Lapland, was in many ways an important stage for enabling this transition (Kauhanen, 2024, 47). In the 1950s, two large regulatory reservoirs were planned in the Lapland region, specifically into the Sodankylä area, to address the increasing electricity production requirements of the era. At the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, western Europe's largest artificial lakes, Lokka (417 km²) and Porttipahta (216 km²), were constructed to the north part of Sodankylä to communities of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen, submerging portions of the reindeer herding districts (*paliskunta*) of Lappi, Sattasniemi, Oraniemi, and Kemi-Sompio, as well as the homes of over 600 people (Kauhanen, 2024; Mustonen et al, 2011; Kauhanen, 2014; 2024). The artificial reservoirs were constructed largely without consideration for local rights. Residents of the reservoir area received inadequate compensation for the relocation, which fundamentally transformed the local environment and cultural reality. Reservoirs remain as the biggest industrial development projects in Finnish history, that have extensively altered the natural environment (Kauhanen, 2024; 253).

2.1 Sompio and Yli-Kitinen: multicultural homelands

History of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen dates far back. The cultural landscape of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen has been shaped into a distinct multicultural heritage and nature-based way of life over time. Before any settlers starting to arrive in the 17th century, after the encouragement of the Swedish king in the form of tax benefits, Sompio and Yli-Kitinen were inhabited by Forest Sámi people (Mustonen et al, 2011, 15; Joona & Joona, 2023, 438; Aikio. M, 1991). After settlers (*lantalaiset*) from the southern Finland started to move to Sompio and Christian missionary activities increased, the Kemi Sámi language spoken by the Forest Sámi started slowly dying. Official records of Forest Sámi began disappearing as well, when many established a settlement farms (*uudistila*), which changed their status on the paper from Forest Sámi into a settler (Nykänen, 2022a, 93; Mustonen et al, 2011, 15-16). Mixing of the local indigenous people and the settlers happened gradually in the whole Forest Sámi area, creating a distinct mixed hybrid culture (Nykänen, 2022a, 93).

From 1870 to the 1890s reindeer Sámi from Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino) and Eanodat (Enontekiö) migrated to the northern parts of Sodankylä. The border closure between Norway and Finland created problems for reindeer herding based on free migration between state borders. This led for some families to migrate to Sompio and Yli-Kitinen regions (Nykänen, 2022, 93-94; Mustonen et al, 2011, 17; Lehtola, 2010, 129; 142; Kauhanen, 2014, 32; Aikio, M, 1991, 92-93). The migrated Sámi

communities introduced large scale reindeer herding and North Sámi language to the central Lapland region (Nykänen, 2022a, 93-94; Mustonen et al, 2011, 17). Together the newly migrated North Sámi people, the Forest Sámi descendants and settlers made the diverse and distinct communities of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen.

2.2 Sompio and Yli-Kitinen as dwelling sites

"*This vast wilderness of the sun-facing side, a land of fells, forests, and wetlands, is Sompio, the ancient Sompio-Lapland* [Tämä päiväpuolen suuri erämaa, tunturien, metsien ja aapojen maa, on Sompio, ikivanha Sompion-Lappi] *–",* described Samuli Paulaharju (1875-1944), a Finnish folklorist, the Sompio area (1939, 13). *Luirojoki*, the Lurioriver was the heart of Sompio where small rivers eventually flowed into. The nature of Sompio largely consisted of wetlands and the biggest open bog, *aapasuo*, in Europe, *Posoaapa* was one of those many mires in the region (Kauhanen, 2014, 14; Pyhäjärvi, 2011, 10).

Numerous small villages and settlement clusters were scattered throughout Sompio. Villages of Korvanen, Riesto and Kurujärvi were fully immersed under water, while Mutenia and Lokka were only partially flooded. In total 70 families from these five villages were relocated (Pyhäjärvi, 2011, 4; Kauhanen, 2014, 173). These different settlement clusters have long and diverse histories. The Sompio region is home to Finland's oldest archaeological discoveries from Juikenttä, representing the old Sámi life from early Middle Ages (Harlin et al, 2019, 151). The surrounding areas contain other archaeological finding that together with the pre-historic dwelling sites demonstrate a rich and far-reaching history and settlements in the vicinity of the present reservoir areas (Saarinen, 2020). The long history of Yli-Kitinen is also evidenced by prehistoric dwelling sites found at Vuominiemi and Vaulonsuvanto during the brief archaeological research conducted prior to the construction of Porttipahta (Kauhanen, 2014, 26).

Yli-Kitinen, the area left under Porttipahta, has far less documented history compared to Sompio. Cultural history follows the same trajectories of the distinct mixed hybrid culture like in Sompio. Settlements were organized into clusters alongside the Kitinen river, which was important for transportation and food security. Compared to Sompio, where substantial villages were formed, life in Yli-Kitinen was more peripheral. In Yli-Kitinen, settlements were more scattered along the Kitinen River. Laiti was the only settlement definable as a village, other cluster were smaller in size and typically consisted of houses of a single-family lineage. In 1950s there were seven houses and a boarding school in Laiti village (Kauhanen, 2014, 41). For most parts Yli-Kitinen was without any

road connections, the only road was a small 8-kilometer Ukkola cart road also referred as Lohijoki-Rovanen forest road (Kauhanen, 2014, 42).

2.3 Life before reservoirs

Villages of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen have been home to multicultural life with a distinct local cultural heritage. In many ways life had frozen in time in these remote communities. Intense modernization had not yet accessed these villages. Although the absence of electrification and other development could be partially explained by the hydropower development plans dating back to the 1900s, which had placed the areas under a building restriction (see Kauhanen, 2024, 50, 190-195, 344).

Despite the small-scale commercial activities such as local stores and tourism in the region, life was not yet fully integrated into the market economy, making it less dependent on national economic fluctuations (Järvikoski, 1979, 104; Pyhäjärvi, 22-23, 49-50). Communities of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen relied heavily on nature and subsistence activities to bring the food to the table (Kauhanen, 2014; 2024; Pyhäjärvi, 2011; Mustonen et al, 2011). Hydropower development in the Kemijoki River began to transform local livelihoods already when the Isohaara dam (1940) blocked salmon migration to upstream parts of the Kemijoki system, including the Luirio and Kitinen rivers (Alaniska, 2013, 18; Kauhanen, 2024, 183). Today the Kemijoki River is fully regulated for hydropower.

Reindeer herding – one of the main livelihoods, was altered drastically by the reservoirs. Before reservoirs reindeer herding was fully based on the usage of natural pastures and the active herding of the animal in smaller groupings (*tokkakunta*) (Pyhäjärvi, 2011, 19-18, Kauhanen, 2024, 67, 199; Järvikoski, 1979, 115). In the communities mostly inaccessible by roads, sledge reindeer, *ajohärät,* were important for transportation (ibid). Four different cooperatives or reindeer herding districts, *paliskunta,* were located into Sompio and Yli-Kitinen - Lappi cooperative lost extensive amount of ground as it was impacted by both Lokka and Porttipahta, but other cooperatives were not spared from considerable damage either.

When WWII was shaping the world, communities of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen experienced especially the consequences of the Continuation War (1941-1944) and the Lapland War (September 1944 to April 1945) that shaped the whole northern Finland (Laurén, 2018, 7; Byman, 2025). The Lapland War resulted in difficult evacuation trips of local communities from North to Southern and Western Finland and to Sweden (Laurén, 2018, 7-8; Byman, 2025; Seitsonen & Koskinen-Koivisto, 2018, 429-430). During the Lapland War, when the German troops retreated from the North most of Lapland was burned down leaving everything to be rebuilt (Byman, 2025; Seistonen & Koskinen-

Koivisto, 2018). The Lapland War and the destruction of the North have been left into the margins of history and is less discussed and acknowledge part of the Finnish war history (ibid).

The losses after the war were not limited to the lives lost on the front lines. Alongside the eastern border, villages and houses were attacked by Soviet partisans during the Continuation War (Laurén, 2018, 1). Large evacuations were not mobilized even if the threat of possible attacks was acknowledged (Laurén, 2017, 49, Sotiemmeperinne, 2026; Pulkkinen, 2021, 131). In total there were 45 partisan attacks in Finland, where most of the victims were civilians mostly women and children. In total over 150 civils were killed (Sotiemmeperinne, 2026). Sompio became the site of some of the bloodiest partisan attacks in Finland. Partisans attacked Lokka, a village partially submerged by the Lokka reservoir, and Seitajärvi, a village in the Savukoski municipality. Yliluiro, a dwelling site, was also attacked (Sotiemmeperinne, 2026; Tikkanen & Tikkanen, 1983, 95-110). In the attacks to Lokka, on the 14th of July 1944, 21 people were killed, all women and children, apart from one 66 years old man (Pulkkinen, 2021, 9). The impacts of these attacks have been intergenerational, traumatic and intertwined with silence (Laurén, 2018, 9-10, 17-18; Sotiemmeperinne, 2026).

2.4 Damming of Kitinen and Luiro rivers

> *”In this mire, ships will be sailing”, announced Hirvas-äijä, seer, Niila Hirvausvuopio (born 1872). --- Now there stands Vuotso canal. --- Under the big old pine tree Polvari-Jaako gave a prophecy: “Once there will be the end of all, the great flood will come to Sompio.* [Tällä jängällä vielä laivat seilaa”, ilmoitti Hirvas-äijä, tietäjänäkijä Niila Hirvasvuopio (s1872). --- Nyt paikalla on Vuotson kanava. – Lokan suuren petäjän alla oli Polvari-Jaako ennustanut: ”Kerran tulee kaiken loppu, hirmuinen veenpaisumus Sompioon]” (in Kauhanen, 2014, 103).

Already before the reservoir planning had started, the local oral traditions were shaping the future story of the drowned lands, as the quote from the book by Kauhanen (2014) shows. The damming of the Kemijoki River began in the 1950s with the establishment of the state-led company Kemijoki Ltd in 1952, under the leadership of Prime Minister Urho Kekkonen (Alaniska, 2013, 18; Kauhanen, 2014, 94–95). Construction on the streams of Kemijoki began with Pohjolan Voima Ltd, that was founded in 1943. The Figure 1 presents the timeline of Lokka and Porttipahta reservoir building starting from 1930 and extending to the 2020s.

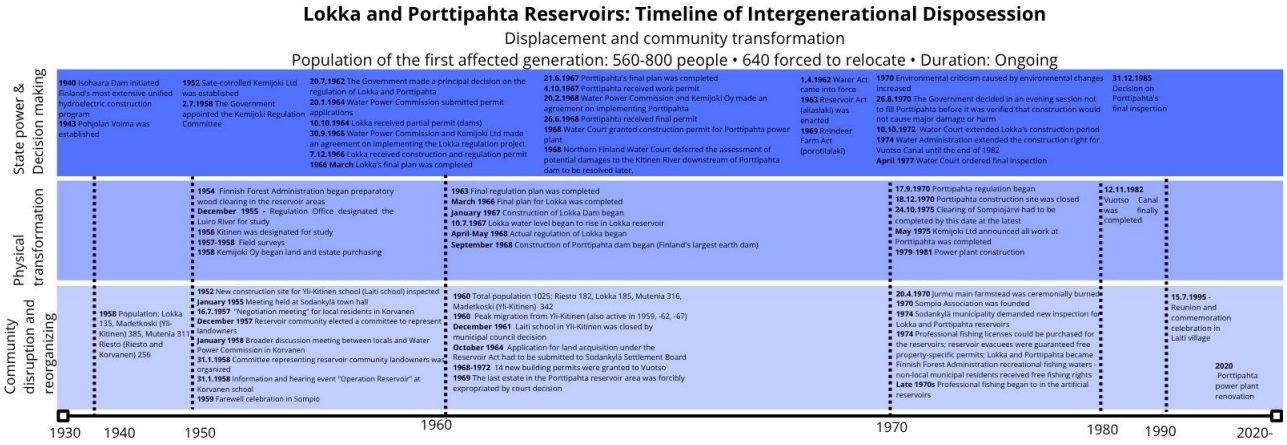

Figure 1 Timeline of the reservoir construction organized into three layers: community disruption and reorganizing, physical transformation, state power & decision making. This timeline has been compiled using Kauhanen, 2014; Kauhanen, 2024; Mustonen et al, 2011 as source material. A larger version of the timeline is included in the appendix.

The planning of Lokka and Porttipahta had already begun in the 1930s, but started to move forward in the 1950s, when first loggings were initiated and first governmental ruling regarding Lokka and Porttipahta was made (Kauhanen, 2024, 78). This set off a process lasted over a decade. During this time the locals were kept in the dark and had to adapt to the upcoming environmental changes. This remains the largest and most extensive man-made environmental transformation in Finland. When Luiro and Kitinen rivers were recognized as potential reservoir sites in the mid-1950s, initial planning and mapping of the area was already underway. The first open meeting for locals in the Sodankylä region was held in July 1957, a few years after the first timber harvest and four years after Imatran Voima, one of the companies involved in the construction process, purchased a helicopter for aerial mapping (see Figure 1; Kauhanen, 2024, 88-117).

Already the field studies in Yli-Kitinen and Sompio caused disruption to the local communities, even though the local conditions and culture remained less studied (Kauhanen, 2014, 105). Estate and land sales began in the mid-1950s with the purchase of stream land (*koskiosuus*). In 1957 Kemijoki Ltd began the long and difficult process of estate purchasing. The last estate purchasing took place in 1969, with a court order for forced expropriation (Kauhanen, 2024, 87). Kemijoki Ltd was not eager to compensate for any of the possible damage for people, nature and livelihood. For example, Kemijoki Ltd had initially no desire to compensate for any losses faced by reindeer herders. However, they eventually provide one-time compensation, albeit not reflecting the actual damage (Kauhanen, 2024, 268-294). The clearing of the designated reservoir areas was inadequate, leaving areas uncut and creating so called 'water forests' to the reservoirs where moving was difficult and dangerous, although Kemijoki Ltd had to later harvest some of the remaining unlogged forest (Kauhanen, 295–300).

Nearly a thousand people were impacted by the reservoir, and 640 people lost their homes. Situations from where people moved differed. The relocated communities are often referred to as environmental refugees or reservoir evacuees/refugees (*ympäristöpakolainen, allasevakko*). In this thesis the term reservoir refugee will be used. Relocating communities and flooding lands impacts individuals and communities for generations in many ways. In this thesis I will begin to dive deeper into those impacts and narratives that the greatest human inflicted environmental change in Finland has created.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this thesis I implement a bottom-up theoretical framework which builds on, and brings together, three conceptual approaches, each of which highlights a different perspective to understand the long-term impacts of the Lokka and Porttipahta reservoirs across generations. The framework is structured to start with individual and communal lived experiences, building up to a broader scale and towards more general societal concepts. In Figure 2, below, the theoretical framework is visualized as a three-layered circle. The innermost circle is called *place*. That circle builds upon place attachment theories and looks at the importance of the surroundings for both individuals and communities in building a strong sense of self, and meaningful life (e.g. Brown & Douglas, 1992; Low & Altman, 1992; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). In this circle I am also looking at the disruption of those attachments, that can be a result of environment-changing projects, such as reservoir building is.

The second layer of the circle *trauma* provides more conceptualization to understand what happens when place attachments are disrupted and broken. The focus is on the concept of environmental trauma that Outi Autti has further conceptualized to cover the traumatic experiences of hydropower development induced environmental change (2022a;b). To better understand the intergenerational aspects theoretical discussions of trauma transfer, presence of silence and silencing in creation and passing of traumas in communities will be reflected (e.g. Siltala, 2016; Kivimäki, 2018).

The third, outermost circle, *colonial dispossession* ties the analysis to broader theorization of the social and political context of hydropower development and community dislocation in Northern Finland. Extractivism and resource colonialism in the Northern Fennoscandian context is explored, for comprehending the situationally of Lokka and Porttipahta, and to help to bridge between the history of hydroelectric development in Finland and new forms of land dispossession that are prevalent today (e.g. Gritsenko, 2018; Sörlin, 2023; Sörlin et al, 2023; Szeman & Wenzel, 2021). To address this beyond mere theories of extractivism and resource colonialism considerations of sacrifice zones and different forms of violence are included (e.g. Juskus, 2023; Lopes de Souza, 2021; Lerner, 2010; Shelin McNeil, 2018; Narchi, 2015, Galtung, 1996).

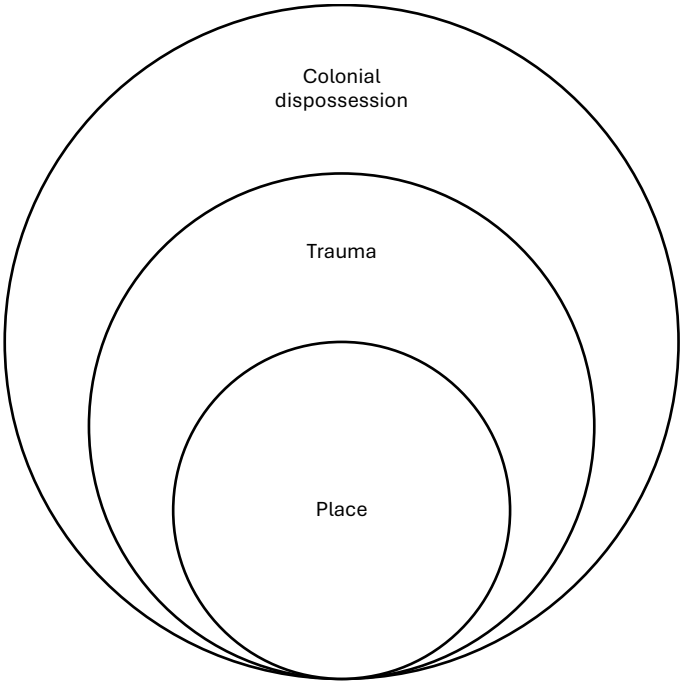

Figure 2. Tripartite model of the theoretical framework

By combining these three different theoretical components the intergenerational ongoing impacts of dispossession can be addressed holistically. Place attachments help to understand what was lost and why relocations have impacted individuals and communities to such an extent. The drastic environmental change and experience of loss can be further understood through environmental trauma frameworks, which helps to recognize the transfer across generations. Colonial dispossession, rooted in the drastic and traumatic human-induced environmental change is essential in understanding not only the broader political layer, but also to trace the continuation of extraction and examining how Lokka and Porttipahta have intergenerationally shaped the extractivist and colonial landscape of Northern Finland.

3.1 Place

Place attachment relates to people-place bonding encompassing affective, cognitive and behavioral ties that are gradually woven through interaction with place, producing enduring attachments over time (Low & Altman, 1992; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Brown & Perkins, 1992). Place attachments are grounded in identity formation where the sense of self, both individual and collective, is reflected in and shaped by the physical environment (Brown & Perkins, 1992, 280).

Places of residence create local identities and sense of belonging that are formed in a two-way relationship, in which the identity of local areas is shaped by their inhabitants, while people also form place-based identification (Tailor, 2010, 2, 5). Place attachment links individual, group, and cultural self-worth, self-esteem and pride, while also connecting individuals, families, and communities to

environments through entangled process of identification and engagement (Low & Altman, 1992, 10). Having a "*strong, local sense of home*" and being emotionally attached to both the physical – and social environment consisting of communities' forms rootedness to the place (Hummon, 1992, 263, 257).

Scannell and Gifford (2010) have created a framework for analyzing place attachments, consisting of three different dimensions: person, process and place (the PPP framework). The *person* dimension explores how attachments are formed through significant experiences and memories at the individual level. In contrast collective attachments are constructed within communities through cultural preservation and practice (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, 2-3). Psychological *process* explains the formation and sustaining dynamics of bonding through emotional connection (affect), memories, meanings and knowledge (cognition) and manifestations of attachments (behavior) that usually includes proximity-maintaining behaviors of returning and revisiting (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, 2-4). While proximity-maintaining behavior can keep a person connected, it can also lead to dysfunctional place attachment. Involuntary relocations, particularly when returning is impossible, can result in dysfunctional attachments (ibid) [1]. When a place is lost, people tend to reconstruct it or seek places with similar characteristics (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, 3-4). These three different components of process dimension help to understand the psychological dynamics of place attachments. The final dimension of the PPP framework combines the social attachment, "bondedness" including social ties, belonging and familiarity, and the physical attachment "rootedness" relating to place-based resources and amenities, to explain what aspects of place people connect to (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, 4-5).

Scannell and Gifford's conceptualization can help to analyze place attachments, by providing different focal points. It helps to understand the complexity of place attachments, giving space for consideration of community, relationship with nature and individuals' own identifications and connectedness. This can help me to understand and explore the ruptured bonds between people and places in the case of Lokka and Porttipahta. However, to fully grasp the reservoirs' impacts on attachments, it is necessary to understand the disruption of place attachments.

Because place attachments emerge individuals' behavioral, cognitive and emotional embeddedness in their sociophysical environments, disruption to those attachments – defined as "*noticeable transformation in place attachments due to noticeable change in people, processes or places*" – can

[1] On the other hand, going away from a place, meanings and understanding of the attached place can develop further (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, 4).

have multifaceted consequences especially when they are sudden and threaten to overwhelm the stability that place provided (Brown & Perkins, 1992, 284-290). The process of disruption can be categorized into three phases: *predisruption*, where place bonding has formed and — in cases of voluntary relocation — can prepare for change; *disruption*, where destabilization occurs, with more sudden and extensive disruptions inflicting more severe consequences; and *postdisruption*, where new attachments and identifications are formed to avoid being "*frozen into dysfunctional limbo*" (Brown & Perkins, 1992, 287-296). The whole disruption process can include feelings of homesickness, grief and trauma (Brown & Douglas, 1992).

3.2 Trauma

The concept of trauma is interdisciplinary, though it has traditionally fallen under medicine and psychology. In this research I draw on sociological trauma frameworks, where the focus shifts from individually experienced traumatic frameworks toward embodiment of more complexly expressed traumas across societies, cultures and communities (Autti, 2022a; Kivimäki, 2018). Questions within environmental change, - including human accelerated climate change, or man-made environment change projects - have prompted researchers to develop theoretical frameworks to explain the trauma processes activated in these contexts. Overall, the concept of trauma relates to psychological phenomena, where an event creates abundance of negative emotions, most notably stress which can be experienced individually or collectively (Autti, 2022a, 96; Siltala, 216, 31-32).

Environmental trauma, which describes the traumatic experience sparked by changes in the environment, is a beneficial conceptualization that captures the unique conditions of trauma within the context of hydropower development, environmental change, and community relocation (Autti, 2022a; Autti, 2022b). Theorization of environmental trauma based on the cultural trauma framework relying on collective memory, social processes, and historical documentation (Autti, 2022a, 96), is going to be utilized as the grounding concept to understand the traumatic embodiment stemming from reservoir construction.

Because environmental trauma builds on cultural and collective experiences of trauma, it is also relevant to consider these concepts, especially when environmental trauma has shaped communities intergenerationally. Cultural trauma is embedded into individual experiences of distress threatening the collective identity (Alexander, 2012). It navigates itself into group consciousness and memory, which will have consequences for the future identifications (Kivimäki, 2018, 46-47; Alexander, 2012; 2004).

According to Autti, events that change or threaten the physical surroundings, and have negative effects on life and well-being can be seen through environmental trauma (Autti, 2022a, 96). She relates it to the disruptions of place attachments, - the individual attachment to the environment is challenged by an unwanted activity or an event that can be either sudden or part of longer uncertainty that trigger emotions (Autti 2022a, 96-97). Environmental trauma encompasses not only the psychological impacts of trauma but also its social and cultural dimensions which include disruptions to sense of place, social networks, and local cultures. These impacts can be direct and individual or indirect and collective - they can affect people and generations that did not directly experience the traumatic environmental change itself giving environmental trauma an inherently intergenerational dimension (Autti, 2022a, 97).

Trauma can be experienced through secondar traumatization, or sometimes it can create whole trauma communities (Autti, 2022a, 104; Bond & Carps, 2020, 56-57; Leese 2022). According to Autti "*experiences of large environmental changes are longitudinal and accumulate over time*" [kokemukset suurista ympäristömuutoksista ovat pitkäaikaisia ja ajassa kertautuvia] (Autti, 2022a, 104). She has studied the environmental trauma within the context of hydropower development in Kemijoki River in Finland. She sums the environmental trauma up, by stating that *"an environmental trauma event violates individual sense of place, but can also harm social-me, community and legal rights*" (Autti, 2022a, 106). Damming of rivers change the local culturally and socially embedded environment that in many cases has been done in a way where local rights and communities have been marginalized (e.g. Autti, 2013; 2022a; 2022b; Afanasyeva, 2013).

When cultural, community and environmental traumas are being discussed, it is essential to note silences and pauses within the traumas (Autti, 2022a, 106; Kivimäki, 2018). Sometimes silencing the experience of trauma, can be transferring it further down the line (Autti, 2022a, 104; Siltala, 2016, 29). Silence can be forced when speaking is impossible or restricted. Sometimes silence serves as a means of survival (Kivimäki, 2018, 36). The reasons for silence and the topics avoided can be tied to power dynamics. Sometimes, silence can be political, ensuring that the power consensus is not compromised. These types of silences uphold the idea of the "greater good," which can mean that some people or communities must remain silent for the benefit of others (Kivimäki, 2018, 41).

It may not always be possible to work through traumatic events, which leave traumas unresolved. These further burdens new generations and shapes identification, both consciously and unconsciously (Siltala, 2016, 77). The fractured identities and traumatic memories of previous generations are transferred to new generations, until the trauma has been resolved. Resolving intergenerational trauma usually involves disrupting the transfer through polyphonic dialogue and narratives when there is

clear longitudinal power imbalances connected to the trauma (Siltala, 2016, 77-78). Siltala (2016) has explored this especially in the Sámi context, by recognizing that they have repeatedly experienced multifaceted distress. These traumatic experiences have exceeded the tolerance of individuals and the community as a whole and have been passed down through storytelling, narratives and non-verbal communication (Siltala, 2016, 85-86).

The drastic environmental changes and disruption to attachment that occur during reservoir construction align well with the framework of environmental trauma as the sense of place, identity, community and environment was violated by drowning. The presence of power imbalances during the construction process makes it reasonable to expect that possible traumas may be transferred through generations. Given these expectations, the concept of environmental trauma provides a framework for understanding the magnitude of implications that submerging of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen communities has had and continues to have.

3.3 Colonial Dispossession

The framework of colonial dispossession incorporates multiple sub-concepts and theories into one understanding of the power dynamics and broader societal circumstances relating to the land use trajectories in Northern Finland. Arctic is characterized both in academic literature, and in political discourses as a resource frontier, for both international and national interests that have historically burdened local and indigenous communities (Sörlin et al, 2023; Gritsenko, 2018; Kuokkanen 2019; Johnstone, 2023).

Concept of extractivism provides a broader ideological framework to understand extraction - nature and its resources become commodities that are extracted and molded into profit (Szeman & Wenzel, 2021; Parks, 2021) Essentially, it manifests resource logic where nature is seen through an economic lens as "*stuff-waiting-to-be-sold-and-used*" (Szeman & Wenzel, 2021, 5). The extractivist notion of human superiority over nature, - and the objectification of its resources – is deeply rooted into the colonial ways of thinking (Sörlin et al, 2023, 38-39). However, the use of colonial end extractivism disources should be evaluated critically as Szeman and Wenzel however point out how "*in too much discourse today, all colonialism are settler colonialism, and all capitalism is extractive*" (Szeman & Wenzel, 2021, 6). Reducing all profit-making and power dynamics to extractivism and settler colonialism risks overlooking the historical, geographical and cultural specificities that shape each particular instance of extraction — what Szeman and Wenzel (2021, 7) describe as the *"human instrumentalization of nonhuman nature*".

Despite the risk of reducing all colonialism to settler colonialism, the settler-colonial framework provides an important lens for understanding the extent of colonial presence in the Arctic. Particularly noteworthy is the settler-colonial logic of empty wilderness — a cornerstone of the Doctrine of Discovery, most prominently in North American and Greenlandic contexts – whereby indigenous peoples are viewed as obstacles in otherwise "empty land" or terra nullius (Wolfe, 2006; Miller, 2019, 41; Junka-Aikio, 2022, 35). This representation of elimination logic has been equally present in the colonial dispossession of northern Fennoscandia where colonialism has been gradual and slowly transformed the northern parts into resource regions (Sörlin et al, 2023, 39; Sörlin, 2023; Junka-Aikio, 2022, 35, Joona & Joona, 2023). Another important notion from Wolfe's groundbreaking work on settler colonialism is the centrality of land as "*contests for land can be – indeed, often are – contests for life*" (Wolfe, 2006, 387). This highlights the intertwined connections between colonialism, land, and existence. These dynamics are inherently tied with extractivist landscape of Northern Finland through the construction of Lokka and displacement of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen communities - struggles over land and dispossession raised fundamental questions of survival, power and belonging.

Fennoscandian Arctic fits within broader conceptualization of resource colonialism – understood as economic strategies fundamental for postindustrial capitalism which has maintained the view of Arctic as resource frontier for centuries (Gritsenko, 2018, 5). This dynamic operates both between and within national states, as extractive projects in Fennoscandia tend to concentrate in northern peripheries far from urban centers, highlighting a persistent center-periphery dynamic (Sörlin et al., 2023, 37). Resource colonialism became evident in the Arctic at the latest after 1900, when terra nullius rhetorics were used to justify intensively growing extraction, that materialized in Finland as exponential growth of hydropower dams (Sörlin et al, 2023, 49). This *extractive colonial regime* of post-1900s continues today though new land use conflict that are driven by growing demand for critical mineral and renewable energy solutions (Sörlin et al, 2023, 49; Johnstone, 2023; Lassila, 2021; 2025; Skorstad, 2023; Joona & Joona, 2023; Miller, 2019). While green colonialism has emerged as an important lens for understanding ongoing dispossession in Arctic Finland (Lassila, 2025), this research focuses on resource colonialism as a framework that captures the historical continuation more effectively – even as hydropower can be justified through green transition discourses.

To understand the realities of resource colonialism and extractivism in Northern Finland, I draw on the concepts of sacrifice zones and colonial violence. Sacrifice zones refer to the accumulation of environmental, health and economic harms within marginalized communities, where certain places are sacrificed for the "greater good" of economic development (Lerner, 2010; Scott, 2010; Lopes de

Souza, 2021; Skorstad, 2023; Juskus, 2023). More broadly, the concept describes how capitalist development creates — often peripheral — spaces where humans and nature become expendable (Lopes de Souza, 2021, 220) Ryan Juskus (2023, 16-18) frames sacrifice zones as geographical concepts of spatial production that function as a "boundary object" connecting diverse contexts and affected groups, revealing costs of development that might otherwise remain unrecognized. The costs are justified through the “greater good” discourse, that make sacrificing of places, communities, and nature acceptable even without a consent. Sacrifice zones culminate into questions of inequality and survival, as marginalized groups bear the weight of disproportionate risks and losses.

Framework of violence becomes relevant in addressing accumulation of harm and power asymmetries. Johan Galtung’s (1996) classical “violence triangle” highlights how different forms of violence (direct, structural, cultural) can reinforce and legitimize one another (Galtung, 1996, 199). Culture can normalize exploitation and repression and keep producing long-term harm, including collective traumas (Galtung, 1996, 200). Nixon (2011) has introduced complementary framework “slow violence” to emphasize temporality of violence. It refers to gradual, often invisible harm that is unfolding over time, particularly in cases of environmental degradation (Nixon, 2011; Narchi, 2015,7)[2]. Shelin MacNeil has introduced *extractive violence* to emphasize human-land connections (2018, 86). Extractive violence is violence against nature, animals and people originating from extractivism. It is a form of violence particularly impacting communities with close connections to land[3]. As extractivist violence embodies the idea of deep connection and attachment to nature, violence towards nature becomes inevitable violence against people (ibid).

By connecting resource colonialism, extractivism, sacrifice zones and violence together I am understanding the complexity of colonial dispossession that encompasses the uneven power relations and the structural repression and marginalization of specific communities and areas. Connecting these different concepts, I can realize the history and ongoing colonial dispossession in Northern Finland, which is embedded in extractivist goals and further marginalization of certain areas for resource exploitation.

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[2] Concept of slow violence has been used for example in context of mining to describe how long-term mineral extraction, corporate discourses and state regulations can cause harm and environmental suffering over long periods of time (Heikkinen et al, 2023).

[3] Violence against nature can also be explored through concept of environmental violence by Narchi (2015) which means harm caused by development undermining livelihoods and cultural reproduction and destroying possibilities of continuity which can be triggered by “*ignorance, epistemological blindness and negligence*” (2015, 9)

3.4 Theory synthesis

In this research I am combining multiple theoretical concepts to grasp the complexity of narratives related to the construction of Lokka and Porttipahta reservoirs. I see that these different sections of the framework have enabling and amplifying relationships that help to understand the dynamical and holistic nature that relocations have intergenerationally in a ongoing extractivist setting. Understanding how people relate to certain places, and why those places might hold importance to whole communities, enables better to understand the magnitude of impacts losing those places and attachments can have. Trauma and its intergenerational transfer are a consequence of disruption in place attachments, but it also becomes evidence of or even perpetuates the presence of colonial dispossessions. Colonial dispossession is what makes certain place disruptions traumatic in the way they are, rather than trauma being merely an incidental consequence of relocation. It brings to light the uneven power dynamics that override the local sentiments and rights, helping to highlight the continuity that a large-scale environment changing project can have and how marginalization of an area and its people can begin to happen.

4 METHODOLOGY

This research is grounded in qualitative methodology. Given that the research questions relate to place attachments, environmental trauma, intergenerational transfer and colonial power dynamic qualitative methods allow for depth in research of experiential, relational and personal subjects (deMarrais et al, 2023; Puusa & Juuti, 2020). The aim is to understand experiences of relocations, loss of home and their intergenerational consequences by analyzing oral histories and drawing theory-based conclusions. This study is framed through interpretivist methodology. Rather than seeking one measurable truth the goal is to understand the meaning people give to place, loss and their relationships to the reservoirs and relocations (see Fujii, 2017, 2).

This section outlines the data, gathering process, and analysis methods that I have chosen to use. I am going to go over ethical considerations that are essential for the type of research I have done. The subject of this thesis alone requires deep ethical considerations, as this research focuses on personal recollections of sometimes very difficult experiences and memories. I will begin by underlining my research position, as someone who has a personal relation to this study as my insider position on the subject has worked both as a methodical asset (e.g. trust-building, access, contextual knowledge) and as something that requires critical and transparent reflection.

4.1 Positionality

All research is always done through the paradigms, set of beliefs, researcher works with (Keskitalo et al, 2021; 66; deMarrais, 2023, 66-72). Those are grounded into theoretical frameworks, methodologies, ontologies, epistemologies and axiology (ibid). By recognizing own positionality I am for reflexive transparency that makes my situatedness and its possible influence on the research visible.

Since I was a child, I have followed the reservoirs and everything they have brought with them. My grandfather's family was relocated under Porttipahta, when he was about the same age as I am now, writing my thesis. I have heard stories from life before and seen the everyday impacts of Porttipahta especially to reindeer herding, but also to those disrupted communities as whole. In a sense I represent the third generation. According to Jouni Kauhanen, who worked on hydropower development justifications, "*first generation experiences the trauma, the second one is silent and the third one processes it*" [ensimmäinen sukupolvi kokee trauman, toinen vaikenee ja kolmas käsittelee sen] (Kauhanen, 2024, 45). Even if writing this might be part of a larger narrative of trauma processing, I still need to address my own positionality. I have prior, experience-based knowledge, and on top of

that I have gathered more knowledge and information through research. Having a personal relation with the topic gives both advantages but also requires being vigilant throughout the process (Fujii, 2017, 20).

Coming from a similar cultural background and being in a sense – an insider, shaped the interview dynamics in both beneficial and limiting ways – participants knew that I held some prior knowledge and was not just extracting their knowledge for faceless research[4], which aided trust-building. The insider status however holds the underlying assumption of prior knowledge, which might result in less descriptive narrations (Fujii, 2017, 20; Savolainen & Taavetti, 2022, 19). I encountered few times the notion "*as you know*" – which is analytically empty. Even if I knew what the interviewee meant, I am then left with the ethical dilemma, if I can use my prior knowledge and assumptions as an insider to add that knowledge into interpretation. I also need to be aware that as I am part of a small margin where communities have been tight, and families have had their own disputes, being an insider can both give access but also close some doors. Throughout this research I have tried to remain transparent about my position while grounding interpretations firmly in the material itself rather than in assumed insider knowledge

4.2 Data

Collecting a rich data that addresses the research questions is a base for any qualitative research – to any research for that matter. Qualitative research requires being involved with the data that brings forward different patterns through different experiences and perspectives – both research and data are descriptive (deMarrais et al, 2023, 7-9; Jha, 2024, 24-25). Oral histories gathered through interview methods described in detail below, have been the main data of this thesis. Literature has served as important secondary material, that has provided context and insight that situates the oral histories and narratives within existing research on Lokka and Porttipahta (e.g. Kauhanen, 2024; Pyhäjärvi, 2011; Mustonen et al, 2011; Aho et al, 1991).

4.2.1 Oral histories

Because my objective is to research lived experiences and narratives, interviews have been the primary method for data collection. Interviews convey oral histories of historical events, bringing

[4] Often small marginalized groups can be dealing with signs of research fatigue, when researchers from many fields have repeatedly expressed interest (Ashley, 2021). It is important that the participants themselves see the research as useful (ibid).

forward personal recollections and perspectives that archival sources alone could not provide (Savolainen & Taavetti, 2022, 12). Interviews grounded in oral histories [*muistitieto* in Finnish] provide rich data, that gives voice to marginalized actors (Häkkinen, 2022, 335). Since I am working with memories, I am not trying to provide an accurate objective historical reconstruction of hydropower development in Northern Finland, - which has already been done to an extend (see Kauhanen, 2024; Mustonen et al, 2011). Rather I am embracing the individual, diverse and synthesizing nature of memories (see Häkkinen, 2022, 335).

4.2.2 Planning the interviews

In the spring of 2025, I began planning the interviews for the coming summer, as well as selecting the interviewees. I selected interviewees using *snowball-sampling*, or as sometimes referred *network sampling* (deMarrais, 2023, 122). I gathered initial list of interviewees from previous projects and my own acquaintances, which is commonly useful sampling practice in early phases of projects (ibid). I utilized already established contacts and reached out to people I knew and believed would be valuable for the research. Through them, I could find more suitable interviewees. I did not select my participants randomly, rather purposefully. My aim was to have material that reflected different stories (narratives), experiences and perspectives. Diverse narratives and experiences can reveal the multidimensionality and complexity of the subject. I believe that in many ways the interviews succeeded in capturing this. Still, no data set is perfect, and mine includes limitations as well.

I conducted eleven in-depth interviews that ranged on average from approximately one and a half to two and a half hours – with some being even closer to four hours. Eleven in-depth interviews provided rich and sufficient set of data. The material started to reach saturation as similar themes and narrative patterns began emerging across interviews.

For me it was highly important that the interviews were grounded in confidential conversation, in which I allowed interviewees to define what they wanted to share in two-wayed respectful and reflective dialogue (see Alleman, 2020, 92-96; Fujii, 2017). This is a common practice during oral histories interviews and includes the key characteristics of relational interviewing methodologies that are embedded in interpretivist approaches (Savolainen & Taavetti, 2022, 19; Fuji, 2017). Interviews were semi-structured, as I had certain themes that I wanted to cover while the interview situation was based on dialogue. There were few questions I wanted to ask all interviewees, such as *what comes to mind when you think of Kemijoki Ltd*, or *what is the first thing you remember when you think back to your old home places.*

Most of interviews were with the first-generation members – those who were relocated under Lokka and Porttipahta. As time has passed since the relocations, all my first-generation participants were relatively young at the time of moving - they were not the ones who had signed any estate sale contracts. However, they were still demographically diverse. Some had lived evacuations of the Lapland War, some were still young children when they moved whereas some were already young adults. Goal was to have as balanced gender – and homeplace distribution as possible. Out of all my interviews I had six women and five men, seven were from Yli-Kitinen and four from Sompio. The slight overrepresentation of Porttipahta in the material is justified given that previous research has focused predominantly on experiences relation to Lokka (e.g. Mustonen et al, 2011; Pyhäjärvi, 2011). One interviewee from Yli-Kitinen even pointed out how she was still so surprised how little talk there has ever been on Yli-Kitinen/Porttipahta – many even forget that there were people displaced from there as well.

The interviews conducted also have a slight underrepresentation of the second-generation participants. I had only two interviews with second generation, and both interviewees were male. Those two interviews were rich in material, and all the first-generation interviews reflected on how they have passed knowledge down to new generations, and how they see the role of the subsequent generations. Narratives of the first generations did intersect with the second generations stories, which reflect the richness of the data. Regardless, I do recognize this shortcoming and see space for further inquiries. Some of the conclusions drawn from the narratives of second generation I have assessed through lens of my prior active participation within this topic – I have participated in oral history workshops on Yli-Kitinen and ongoing discussions with second- and third-generation community members, which have reflected similar themes to those emerging from the interviews.

I prioritized interviewing the aging generations, whose firsthand accounts are increasingly at risk of being lost. In the field of oral histories in Finland, there actually has been prevailing discourse of tradition preservation and documentation before gathering history is too late (Salonen, 2022, 120-121). While having my specific research goals, my research is also grounded in preservation of memories from the time before Lokka and Porttipahta reservoirs.

4.2.3 Walking interview as a method

The actual interview situation has varied. In accordance to relational interviews, the data gathered from the interviews emerged from interactions and dialogue, rather than being just something extractable (Fujii, 2017, 3-8). Most of the interviews were made by utilizing walking interview

methods that I tailored to fully fit my specific interview needs, and cultural context around interviews. Some of the interviews I did with more standardized practice of seated interviews.

Walking interviews as a method can be carried out in several different ways. They are often well suited to enriching data — particularly when place holds special significance — as walking creates a connection to the environment in which the interview takes place (Evans & Jones, 2011, 849–850; Teff-Seker et al., 2022, 8–9). In walking interviews the senses have an important role to play, as the environment can offer cues that guide the conversation and help participants to open their experiences and relationship to the surrounding environment (Evans & Jones, 2011, 855–856).

Walking interviews have been found to differ from seated interviews in both content and duration — walking, interviewees tend to speak more about place and the use of different places, and narratives produced during seated interviews tend to focus more on people, even when places have been used as a prompt for discussion (Evans & Jones, 2011, 855–856). Walking interviews also enable the practice of *mobility justice*, which attends to imbalances in power relations (O'Neill, 2024, 97-101). By walking together, the hierarchies of interview situations get shifted which also helps to create a space, “active present”, where dialogue is more natural, and there is a place for life stories not only to be told, but also share and heard (O’Neill, 2024, 102). I became interested in using the walking interview as a method in my own research, given the centrality of place and life stories of people in my thesis. I saw walking interviews as a method that could be both rich experience for the participant and me, and convey rich, diverse narratives.

4.2.4 *Tulistelu*-interview

I have found walking interviews genuinely rewarding — both for myself and for the interviewees. The interaction is more intimate and open. However, I do not consider seated interviews to be inferior. Sometimes they can create a safe and calm environment that accommodates people's different needs. Walking interviews alone can sometimes exclude important narratives and experiences — for instance, if people are no longer able to walk long distances due to age (Evans & Jones, 2011,851). Out of the interviews, five were carried out as walking interviews. One additional interview also included elements of the walking interview format, as we drove around to visit the area where interviewee's family had relocated.

The walking interview may not be the most accurate term to describe the nature of all five of these interviews I did. As in some cases, walking played only a secondary role, and the interview itself took place in a significant environment or setting in some other way. I have developed the walking

interview method by naming these different interview settings I have done. I have named the main interview setting, as *tulistelu*-interview[5]. Since I have also done more traditional seated interviews as well, I will walk through a few examples to illustrate the different interview formats I used and how they enriched the data.

Tulistelu-interviews constitute my methodological attempt to decolonize research practices and ground it in indigenous methodologies. *Tulistelu*-interviews bind together the movement, and mobility justice considerations of walking interviews with sharing circle traditions arising from indigenous methodological framework – for instance further theorized withing the Sámi context through the concept of *gáfestallat* as a Sámi sharing circle (see Keskitalo et al, 2021[6]). Similarly to *gáfestallat*[7] (or sharing circles) *tulistella* (in Northern Sámi dolastallat) is a space, where people gather around a fire, to discuss, reflect, make decisions and plans, and reminisce old stories (see Keskitalo et al, 2021, 66-67). *Tulistelu* culture is an important part of northern life providing a natural setting to talk and share.

I see *tulistelu*-interviews embedded into the epistemology of sharing circles, and *gáfestallat*. I could have named and connected these interviews into *gáfestallat*-discussions – but I see that the consideration on moving, and the presence of fire, were elements that made these interview settings more distinct. Fire as an element also had an importance in creating safe, trusting space as it can be calming and conversation-opening in its own way. Therefore, I feel that conducting interviews around a fire is very natural for people from the north and activates conversation in a different way. In addition, these interviews were a dialogue between researcher and the participant, rather than a full sharing circle. In that sense they embodied well the relational interview methodologies (see Fujii, 2017). *Tulistelu*-method could be also extended into full sharing circle setting.

All my *tulistelu*-interviews included some elements of walking. In some cases, I was already conducting the interview during the walk, while in others the interview took place entirely around the fire. These interviews also involved a car journey to the interview location. During the drives, many interesting discussions took place, but those I did not record. I reserved those car journeys for trust-building, which is essential for conducting interviews – or any research at all (Puusa & Juuti, 2020; see also Fujii, 2017, 7; Alleman, 2020, 93). Some of *tulistelu*-interviews were more static in nature

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[5] *Tulistelu* is culturally embedded term mostly used in Northern Finland. It refers into action; sitting around a fire, while talking, making coffee/food and eating/drinking

[6] Sharing circles are videly adopted method, that has been deprived from indigenous cultures into methodology (see e.g. Paksi & Kivinen, 2021, 210)

[7] In northern Finland, gáfestallat is a concept that is also culturally embedded to the local northern culture, and dialect through the term of *kahvistella*.

due to the participants' age and mobility restrictions. They nonetheless followed the thematics of *tulistelu*-interviews – even in the absence of actual fires or extensive walking they enabled the same connection to environment and memory activation as walking interviews typically do. During these I sat with the interviewees on the shores of the reservoirs, looking out at the water and the shoreline while conducting the interview within the landscape.

Some of the interviews were conducted as seated interviews at participants' homes. Even if these interviews did not have the environmental embeddedness as in tulistelu-interviews, they were still rich. Yet some questions required more explicit contextualization indoors than in outdoor settings, but the thematic substance remained accessible. I feel that combining different interview methods worked well. Reshaping the walking interview method into *tulistelu*-interviews was fitting for my thesis and produced important rich body of data. I was positively surprised by the extent to which the interviewees themselves brought up themes that were directly relevant to the theoretical framework.

4.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations have been central throughout this research. My topic revolves around trauma and difficult themes within a small and marginal community. It calls for careful ethical attention at every stage of the research process. The guiding principle in research is doing no harm — participation should never harm people, and it must always be voluntary (Savolainen & Taavetti, 2022, 23; deMarrais et al, 2023, 40; Alleman & Dudeck, 2019). To ensure informed consent, I prepared consent forms (appendix 2) that I reviewed together with participants before each interview. I emphasized their right to withdraw at any time or refuse the use of any part of the interview in the analysis. Because I have worked with small community, anonymity presents a particular challenge. I have tried to protect participants' anonymity as well as possible, but complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

4.3.1 Working with sensitive topics

Working with oral histories, and sensitive and traumatic emotions or even time to time "taboo" topics, ethical considerations should be underlined and sensitive practices implemented both during the interview and analysis process (Laurén & Jaago, 2022, 161; deMarrais et al, 2023, 53-54). Recalling difficult memories can be heavy, and make the participants vulnerable, which calls for extra considerations of voluntariness and not further burdening the participants (Laurén & Jaago, 2022, 161). To address this, I did not only see the fully informed prior consent as essential, but also creating

a safe trusting environment and relationship was required. I tried to begin and end each of the interviews on a positive note. I aimed to ground both the start and end with good, warm memories of the old homelands, and transitioned into lighter everyday topics. This happened naturally during the *tulistelu*-interviews – after one of the interviews we began picking blueberries with the participant and talk of lighter topics. Nevertheless, even with the seated interviews, I stayed discussing lighter topics for a while to rewind from the interviews.

While analyzing possible trauma traces, it is important to highlight the difficulties recognizing trauma, if experiences are not named as traumas by interviewees themselves – exploring how experiences and memories are narrated is important during analysis (Laurén & Jaago, 2022, 165). The analysis must also be guided by principle of caution, to ensure that the narratives are not over-traumatized or reduced to victimization alone – they carry within them stories of survival and resilience that must be recognized alongside the experiences of loss and harm (Laurén & Jaago, 2022, 180-181). During my analysis of loss, and trauma traces I have kept these principles in mind – I have aimed to see the dataset as a holistic narration, that carries within many entangled stories.

As I am working with difficult emotions and experiences within the displaced communities of Lokka and Porttipahta, I need to consider also giving back to the community. Especially within indigenous methodologies and research on indigenous people there has been emphasis of five ethically embedded guidelines: *respect, reciprocity, relevance, responsibility* and *relationship* (e.g. Paksi & Kivinen, 2021, 204-205). Those five guidelines have been guiding my work, and ethical considerations. Reciprocity further addresses the mutually beneficial research to both local communities and researchers (ibid). After this research is done, the work continues as I have both promised my research participants and myself, to restore the knowledge back to the community. I am going to write something in Finnish, to ensure that the research remains linguistically accessible to those it most directly concerns. I have also considered reaching out to *Sompioseura*[8] – the Sompio local heritage association – about the possibility of presenting my research and finding directly at one of their meetings or events.

It is important to note that bringing back difficult memories of displacements and trauma considerations can activate difficult emotions and memories and be perceived in various ways. Weighing between possible short-term harms and long-term benefits of returning the knowledge is essential (Alleman & Dudeck, 895-897). I am aware that brining back my thesis results, can stir

[8] *Sompioseura* is a local heritage association established in 1970 to keep community ties, place attachments and interests towards old Sompio alive (Sompioseura, n.d).

mixed-emotions and be perceived in many ways. However, I do feel that it is my responsibility as a researcher to be transparent of my research and results to the ones it most directly concerns.

4.3.2 Use of AI

Use of artificial intelligence (AI) within academia has been increasing as AI has further developed. It brings new needs for ethical considerations such as consideration of authorship, transparency, data sovereignty while providing benefits, like more efficient use of time (Marshall & Naff, 2024). Using AI in research is all the time developing field, and direct answers to right and wrong use of is difficult to explicitly conclude. In this work I have used AI to save time during transcription and help to overcome some linguistical difficulties. To get preliminary transcriptions of my interviews I have used *goodtape.io* AI. All the citations I have used, I have transcribed myself to preserve interviewees' language and ensure the accuracy of the transcription. This has been very important, as the AI had difficulties transcribe dialect-speech. In addition, I have gone over the audio data of the interviews whilst doing analysis to ensure that the transcription by the AI remained faithful to the audio file.

The most significant ethical shortcoming of the AI transcription is data protection. Often consent forms do not include information if the interview is going to be transcribed by an AI (Marshall & Naff, 2024, 3). This was also my case, and I resisted for long the idea of using any AI tools. I had to weigh the potential benefits and risks. Interviews were personal stories over sometimes difficult topics, so feeding raw data to software comes always with risks, however I concluded that the data itself per se could not be used against my participants, and I did not include names or identification markers in the audio files. Yet my interviews are highly sensitive sets of data that should be protected.

Because I have decided to write a thesis in my non-native language, English, I have had from time-to-time difficulties in articulating myself. To address that gap, I have used AI (Claude, deepL and ChatGPT) to help translating some of my thoughts from Finnish to English. Mostly I have asked for translations of words, or sayings – or asked for synonyms to find different ways of articulation – but there are some cases where I have asked for full-sentence translations. In those cases, I have carefully gone over and edited the AI suggestions. In this case I see the use of AI as a richness and beneficial tool, which serves to preserve the initial content when expressing it in a second language.

4.4 Data Analysis: Thematic narrative analysis

I have chosen to use a thematic narrative analysis to analyze my data as the research interest lies in people's own experiences, their own oral histories and stories within. This has directing to choose an

analytical perspective that emphasizes the role of interviews and recollections in a meaningful way. In narrative inquiries those stories are utilized and verbalized into research (Heikkinen, 2018). I see that that tying narratives with the thematic framework from my theoretical perspectives I can understand the holistic nature of the intergenerational impact of Lokka and Porttipahta in most meaningful ways.

To understand what is meant by *narrative*, is an important first step towards narrative analysis. The meaning of narrative has evolved through time to move from merely linguistic definition to include several types of different narratives, such as personal or institutional narratives (Chase, 2018, 547-548). There has been also a change in the spatiality of narratives. Previously they have merely been understood through past events, later it has broadened to cover narratives of experience – giving possibility to explore feelings and thoughts of future in addition to past experiences (Chase, 2018, 547). In my analysis both the past and present are interests and more over their interconnections and relationships. Narrative analysis enables identifying patterns, contradictions and silences that arise. Narrative analysis is a broad method, which can be implemented in myriads of ways (Hänninen, 2018).

My analysis could be done via life story-analysis, where recollections of people's own histories in analyzed by concentrating on themes, tone, language and people that are present through narratives (Hänninen, 2018; McAdams, 1993). However, I chose to do my analysis through thematic and concept considerations – as my goal has not been to construct individual narratives from oral histories, rather I wanted to construct larger cross-cutting narratives, that can emerge in many ways in personal oral histories. In thematic and concept narrative analysis, different themes are explored through the narratives and their relations with narratives is distinguished – in this form of analysis questions of how the narrator relates themselves to different themes, and what kind of picture gets conveyed through the data (Hänninen, 2018).

I have constructed the analysis in alignment with the theoretical framework. Based on this framework, I have organized my interview material through the lenses of place, trauma, and colonial dispossession where: place establishes what existed and what it meant, providing a grounded understanding of what was lost when the environment was drowned; trauma examines how that loss was experienced and whether traces of trauma persist across narratives; and colonial dispossession draws together experiences of power relations, marginalization and extractivism to understand how local narrations connect to colonial dispossession discourses. Through this organization, the analysis is structured into four chapters, each building toward the next.

I have coded my interviews for anonymity with the following principle: FGW – First generation Woman, FGM – First generation Man, SGM – second generation M. I use alphabets from A-F to distinct interviews. In the body text, I mostly refer without the acronym, by saying e.g. Woman A from Yli-Kitinen. All my interviews were conducted in Finnish language, mostly in Northern dialect. As a result, a great deal of cultural knowledge is embedded in the language, that resist the full translation into either English or standard Finnish[9]. For this reason, I have chosen to include Finnish-language quotes alongside the translated text. Longer quotes are first in English and followed by original version in italics. In the body text the Finnish version appears in square brackets following the English translation. I have also decided to include certain original words throughout the main body of text. In English translations I have aimed to retain as much of the knowledge embedded into the original citation, but I have not tried for instance translate them into a way that would note the dialectical tone. Readability has been a guiding principle for the translation, while remaining faithful to the meaning and spirit of the original quote. Opening each subjection of the analysis chapters with a quote is a deliberate stylistic choice – it is a way of foregrounding the significance of the narrators' own words and center their voices within the analysis.

[9] e.g. van Nes et al, 2010 discuss over the difficulties of translating data from the original language to English. Linguistical nuances and cultural connotations are at risk of being lost with translations, - translations are interpretations. van Nes et al emphasize importance of using the original language as the base of analysis, which is something I have done.

5 NARRATIVE OF SOMPIO AND YLI-KITINEN AS *HOMELANDS*

> And then when I woke up there, in the pirtti [mainroom of the house]. I often slept in the pirtti at the front — I always woke up when the swallows woke up. And they started making that sound, that cooing. They had a completely different sound than when they were flying. They started burbling like that. That is the first thing that comes to me. And specifically, the swallows, and then the view — when you looked out of the window, or from the steps, you could see south and north, I don't know, but I thought at least two kilometers in both directions. And it could have been much longer too, but I had no way of — I didn't measure it from a map or anything. You could hear the rapids from both sides. And then in the evenings, from the Myllyoja side, there came these white things — there was this strange humming sound — or it was a riffle, not a rapids. From there came something white, like some kind of, could it have been foam, foam patches. And the roar of the rapids, or that noise of the riffle, that sound always carried from up there.
>
> *Ja sitten kun heräs siinä, kun siinä pirtissä, mie usein nukun pirtissä siinä etupuolella, niin heräs aina siihen, kun ne pääskyset heräsivät. Ja ne alko sillä lailla kujertelemaan. Siis niillä oli ihan erilainen ääni, mitä silloin, kun ne lenti. Ne alkoi sillä lailla pulisemaan siellä. Se mulla tullee ensimmäisenä. Ja nimenomaan ne pääskyset ja sitten se näkymä, että kun katto ikkunasta, tai sitä portailta, niin näkyy etelään ja pohjoiseen näkyy, mie en tiiä, mutta mie ajattelin, että ainakin kaksi kilometriä molempiin suuntiin. Ja saatto olla paljon pitempäänkään mutta eihän mulla ollu mittään – en mitannu kartasta enkä muuta. Siellä kuulu sitte molemmilla puolin koski. Ja sitten iltasin tuli sieltä, Myllyojan puolelta tuli niitä semmoisia valkoisia – kuulu semmonen jännä humina - tai se oli niva ei se ollu koski. Sieltä tuli semmoista jotain valkosia ne oli niinko semmosta jotain, oisko ne vaahtoa, semmoisia vaahtoplänttia. Ja se kosken kohina, tai semmoinen nivan kohina, että se oli aina se kohina sieltä ylhäältä kuulu*. FGW D, Yli-Kitinen

The memories of the woman above paint a full-sensory memory of everyday life in the now-reservoir areas. When I asked her to describe the first thing to come to mind, when she thought of her old home, she embodied the place itself fully into her story: she described how she woke up with the sound of swallows, looked out and saw far. The river - with its rapids and riffles – was always present, felt through both sound and sight. It is a reminiscence of how the place was experienced. This quote opens the question of what the submerged areas meant for individuals and entire communities of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen, that were dispersed by Lokka and Porttipahta artificial lakes. Understanding the local meanings of these places leads to better understanding of what the loss has meant and how extensive it has been.

5.1 Memories of *marjapaikat* – the subsistence way of life

> Sompio is not forgotten, even though it lies beneath the water. And especially now during cloudberry season, one remembers those extraordinary cloudberry grounds.
>
> *Ei Sompio unohdu, vaikka se kuinka jäi veen alle. Ja varsinkin nyt hillan aikana kyllä muistaa ne mahtavat hillapaikat*". FGW B, Sompio

Life in Sompio and Yli-Kitinen was conditioned by the natural resources and catch provided by the natural environment, *"livelihood was drawn with the cycle of the year*" [otettiin elantoa, se oli vuoden kierron mukaan]" (FGW C, Sompio; see also Pyhäjärvi, 2011; Kauhanen, 2014; 48-49). The two main rivers, Luiro and Kitinen, and their many side streams were rich in fish. Fish were naturally important sources of food, and local children had a central role in fishing. Many members of the elder generation recalled how children, as young as age of ten, were tasked with fishing. It was a pastime activity while contributing to the food security of families. In Sompio, the *Sompiojärvi* (Sompiolake) was an important seasonal fishing ground, rich in culture and stories, where the traditional *Kiiskismarkkinat* autumn fish market were organized to harvest fish for the coming winter (Pyhäjärvi, 2011; FGW C, Sompio; FGW B, Sompio; FGM E, Sompio).

Berry picking was also a central task in which children participated during the summer and early autumn seasons. Woman E from Yli-Kitinen described her childhood summer days beginning with taking cows out to the woods, followed by hours of berry picking. She pointed how at the time there was no need to be envious of others cloudberry swamps or fishing spots, but "*nowadays nobody tells where they go cloudberry picking* [nykysinhän ei sanota missä käyhään hillassa]". There was enough ground for everyone to get what they needed. The abundance of the lost land was idealized repeatedly but women E mentioned how now "*there is not berries in the same way* [Ei nykysin ole ennään sillä lailla tuota marjaa]". This embodies how significant it was for life itself that the land provided for the communities.

Woman D from Yli-Kitinen also recalled the richness of land. She narrated it through hard work: "*Those trips were awful. There was so much cloudberries and we had a whole tub. And that was filled within moments. There was just so much of cloudberries, as there were no other cloudberry pickers there* [ne oli kamalia ne reissut. Siellä oli niin paljon hilloja, ja meillä oli saavi. Nehän oli hetkessä täynnä. Niitä oli niin paljon vain sitä hillaa, ko ei ole muita poimijoita siellä]". The necessity of using resources as part of everyday life is not fully intertwined with the romanticization of abundance - like referring to a cloudberry picking trip as an "awful trip" illustrates.

Berry picking and fishing, alongside small-scale farming, reindeer herding and hunting formed a holistic subsistence system to ensure local self-sufficiency. Different livelihoods were tied together like woman E from Yli-Kitinen narrated, - taking the cattle to graze was followed by berry picking. The interviews brought forward many recollections of reindeer, for instance how large reindeer caravans (*pororaito*) served as funeral convoys, and how the calf handling practices of that era (*hihnavasotus*[10]) were associated with good memories. The area were also described as being abundantly rich in grazing and forage for reindeer — as elder reindeer herder C from Yli-Kitinen for example outlined "*Sometimes the whole herd of reindeer from the cooperative was brought there, because there were good lichen grounds, those steep riverbanks where reindeer could dig well when there was a lot of snow and such* [Siellähä oli joskus tuothin koko palkisen tokka sinne ko siellä oli hyvät jäkäliköt semmosia jyrkkiä törmiä, joissa oli porolla hyvä kaivaa, sillon ko oli paljo lunta ja muuta]". He described how the lichen grounds were so plentiful that the reindeer of the whole co-operative could graze there, even when snow conditions were difficult.

Landscapes with rich terrain and diverse habitats constructed a symbiotic relationship between people and non-human actors. Both people's own oral histories, and previous research show how communities were highly self-sufficient with little dependence on market economy - in Sompio some villages even cultivated barley and other grains (e.g. Järvikoski, 1979, 104; Pyhäjärvi, 2011, 5, 9). Elder man E from Sompio phrased the subsistence way of life: "*When we were in our second decade, in our teens, we were completely like, living off the land. We went berry picking and hunted — since we had guns and ammunition after the war* [Ko toisella kymmenellä olthiin nii me olimma täysiä semmosia niinko luontaiseläjiä. Marjassa käythiin ja mettästethiin niinko meillä oli pyssyjä ja panoksia sovan jälkeen]".

For new generation connecting to the old lost family areas has been done naturally by continuing same subsistence activities, like for second generation man A who has formed attachment to his family's land through natural everyday practices of subsistence way of life[11]. Same activities have reproduced the person-place attachments in generations who have only heard stories of the rich nature. Even after the loss of land those profound human-nature relations get sustained and

[10] Hihnavasotus means a calf-handling practice during spring calving season that was traditional way in Kemi Lapland region which was slowly abandoned when reindeer numbers grow and grazing grounds shrunk e.g. due to hydropower development (Pyhäjärvi, 2011, 19-20)

[11] *You wanted to be often there. Naturally we fished and hunter waterfowl, and such. We went cloudberry picking a lot, wherever you could reach by boat. It was quite ordinary, everydaylife*. [Myöthän sitä halus olla siellä. Luontojaanki siellä kalastelthiin ja vesilinnun pyynnissä ja muuta. Kuljettiin hillassa paljon, siellä mihin vennellä pääsi. Että se oli kuitenki aika semmosa arkista] SGM A.

reproduced through generations. The previous cloudberry mires have just transformed into *open ocean* [avomeri], like woman D from Yli-Kitinen verbalized the change.

Returning in memories to the former berry picking grounds (*marjapaikat*) is something that connotates nostalgia and is reminisced often. Those memories keep the attachment to places alive even if *hillajängät* and *marjapaikat* are now submerged under Lokka and Porttipahta. In a sense the memories rise with the annual cycle of nature, that used to define the rhythm of life and work in Sompio and Yli-Kitinen. The emphasized centrality of a place as a provider portrays how the attachments are connected to the physical features of a place as it is ensuring survival, satisfying needs and providing security for both individuals and communities (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, 5). Any rupture in this sense of security and rootedness can have significant implications.

5.2 Transgenerational traditional place-based knowledge

> No, I never got lost. I had a dog too, and I did it the way - father taught, he said that if you are in a place you don't recognize, you must always expand it a little. You cannot go straight ahead, but go around the nearby terrain, always a little at a time. That way you learn to know it. If you get lost, you must always stop. If you get lost, you must not move after that. You need to go to a place from where you can see. If you leave from there, he said that you must make *asento* [basecamp] immediately if you get lost. You must not go forward in any direction, but circle around, so that you learn to know the surroundings. Keep learning to know the environment so long until something becomes familiar. So, find high ground but if you can't reach high ground, then you must — not go in one direction, but circle. So that you know the area. So that you come across familiar place.
>
> *En, en eksynyt koskaan. Mullahan oli koirakin ja miehän tehin sillä lailla, kun isä opetti sillä lailla sano, että jos sie oot semmosessa paikassa, ettet tunne, niin pittää aina pikkusen laajentaa sitä,.Ei saa lähteä suoraan, vaan pittää tehhä siinä lähimaastossa ja aina vähän. Sillä lailla oppii tuntemaan. Jos eksyy, niin pitää aina pysähtyä. Jos eksyy, niin ei saa liikkua sen jälkeen. Pitää mennä niinku semmoselle paikalle, mistä näkee. Jos sitä lähtee siitä, niin sano, että pittää tehhä asento heti, jos eksyy. Siitä ei saa lähtiä eteenpäin mihinkään suuntaan, vaan pitää kiertää, että oppii sen ympäristön tuntea. Niin kauan opettelee tuntemista ympäristöä, että tulee jotain tuttua. Että jonnekin korkean päälle, mutta jos ei pääse korkean, niin sitten pittää niinku - ei saa lähteä yhteen suuntaan, vaan kiertää. Niin, että tuntee sen alueen. Että se tuttu paikka tullee vastaan*. FGW D, Yli-Kitinen

According to the interviews, knowing one's surroundings was essential to nature-based culture. Above quote binds the transgenerational traditional knowledge stewardship together with the specific place. The woman D described how her father taught how not to get lost with a method that was inherently connected into knowing one's surroundings and becoming familiar with it. It portrays how

traditional place-based knowledge was reproduced in intergenerational interactions while highlighting the everyday significance of the environment. Place becomes bound with knowledge and skills that can only be acquired through interaction with nature.

The stories of never getting lost were present across the interviews. Man, D from Yli-Kitinen recalled how he used to go fishing farther from home as a child, which did not raise any concerns among adults. He recalled that: "*Nobody asked if you know your way back home from there. You just had to know. Go home, if you got lost* [ei kukkaan sanonu osaako siellä kotia sieltä. Niin. Niin, se vain piti osata. Lähtiä kotiin, kun eksytti]". His quote illustrates the cruciality of knowing way back home from a young age.

From an early age, children were taught to work, manage life and co-exist with their surroundings. In the remote communities of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen, learning to *"cope and live* [pärjäämhään ja elämhään]", as woman E from Yli-Kitinen described it was a central part of life. Interviewees frequently reflected *pärjääminen*, which is a dialect concept in the Northern Finland that describes capacity to endure, manage, and remain self-reliant even in demanding conditions.

Notion of *pärjääminen* is inherently similar to the concept of *birgejupmi* or *birgen* that has further been theorized in Sámi scholarly discussions to refer to survival capacity and resilience embedded in social relations, community systems and reciprocal relationships with nature (Aikio, 2010; Guttorm, 2022; Henriksen, 2011; Lehtola, 2019, 92). Similar value structures to *birgen* were visible in Sompio and Yli-Kitinen through intergenerational knowledge transfer embedded in environment. Children were taught practical skills that increased independence and self-reliance, such as navigating forests and knowing how to act if lost. They were raised though cross-generation interaction with the environment to be independent and responsible, which is central to *birgen* (Lehtola, 2019, 92, Aikio, 2010, 7).

> Then he (father) taught that you must never, when going into the forest, step on a twig. You must always walk in a way that you watch where you step. If you want to see something, if you step on a twig, the bird will fly away.
>
> *Sitten se (isä) opetti, että ei saa koskaan, kun mennee mettään, niin ei saa astua risuun. Pittää aina kävellä sillai, että kattoo mihin astuu. Jos haluaa nähä jotain, niin jos risun päälle astut, niin lintu karkaa.* FGW D, Yli-Kitinen

Woman D described how father also thought her the importance of how to walk on the land the right way. Walking with care and not making unnecessary noises the natural life around would remain unbothered. Knowing the land, and the specific way of walking on it presents the detailedness of the

place-based knowledge, that slowly builds up attachments (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, 3-5 Low & Altman, 1992, 5-6). It also represents practicality. The skills to coexist with nature in a respectful matter, provided not only resources but adds experiences to life – such as seeing of different birds.

In the stories that people tell knowledge, resources, values and life are woven into a thick pattern that culminates with nature around, creating attachments. In many ways the narration indicates towards an attachment Scannell and Gifford (2010) have called "place attachment for survival and security", where the *behavioral bond* includes proximity maintaining to the area providing resources for survival. The knowledge and familiarity of the utilization of those amenities creates the *cognitive bond* with the place (2010, 5, see section 3.1). The active cross-generational participation in one's environment, filled with transgenerational knowledge, illustrates a practical connection to the environments of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen.

5.3 Community as home

> And that is perhaps the reason why one longs to go back. There were 11 houses, and we were all related to each other. Except for those who had married into the village – like my father. I have said it many times, and I think I have even written about it at some point that going to any house, was like going home.
>
> *Ja se ehkä on sitten syy, miksi sinne kaipaa. Siinä oli 11 taloa, ja me olimma kaikki keskenhään sukulaisia. Paitsi niinko isä ja jokku jokka oli naimishiin tulheet siihen. Molen monesti sitä sanonu, ja olen minä vissiin joskus siitä kirjoittanutkin, että joka ainuhan talhon meni niinko kothiinsa*. FGW B, Sompio.

Sompio and Yli-Kitinen were communities living in remote peripheric settings. However, neither can be described through a lens of solitude and loneliness. Self-sufficiency and self-reliance were high on the communities as trajectories of *pärjääminen* and place-based knowledge accumulation already show. Sense of community and reliance of other community members was an essential part of life which was recognized as one possible reason for longing back. By describing the intertwined family ties above woman B signals in-group memberships within her own village. This highlights the meaningfulness of community resonates with attachment and identification with the whole collective.

Characteristic of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen are in many ways similar and symbiotic. Still, the size of community was one notable difference. There were more people in Sompio than in Yli-Kitinen. Communities of Sompio were more tightly interwoven together. People often lived in villages, or

settlement clusters. Whereas in Yli-Kitinen, the only bigger village, was Laiti, and the others were minor settlement clusters, usually consisting of houses of one family lineage.

This different setting is apparent in interviews. The people from Sompio highlighted community ties more. Many of their memories were tied to the others in the village. The presence of other people was reflected in the interviews from Yli-Kitinen, albeit to smaller extent. Both communities expressed the practical ties of helping and relying on. If something ran out – sugar, for instance, - one could simply go and borrow some from a neighbor. Sense of community was high, like woman from Sompio described in the beginning quote, "going to any house, was like going home", dpicting the warm sentiments inside a village.

Visiting neighbors was part of everyday in Sompio which was contrary to Yli-Kitinen where visiting someone twice during the same summer, made people "*kyläluuta*". *Kyläluuta* refers to people, who are constantly visiting others, running after gossips and away from responsibilities (FGW D, Yli-Kitinen; FGW F, Yli-Kitinen; FGW A, Yli-Kitinen). Woman A from Yli-Kitinen attributed this to an overall feeling of the time: "*It wasn't that kind of time, when you would just go visiting* [Että ei se aika ole ollut semmosta, että on lähetty kylhään]". Usually the only visitors were relatives, or reindeer herders who were moving with their herds.

The social attachments, or *bondedness* were apparent in Sompio and Yli-Kitinen. Small communities were inevitably tight - many generations lived under the same roof. Children had cousins close by to spend time with. Usually, families had lived in the same area for generations and married within the community. Social ties, belonging and familiarity of the home area were constructed across generations which strengthens the place and community bonds (see Scannell & Gifford, 2010, 4-5; Hummon, 1992, 256-257). Sustaining the regional cultural distinctiveness and transgenerational community entanglements in Sompio and Yli-Kitinen is prone to strengthen the collective place attachment, which understood as a community process through which groups become attached to areas where they can practice and preserve their cultures (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, 2).

This reflects how people were not only connected to the physical aspects of the former home, but also to the surrounding community and cultural practices. There was a reciprocal identification where people both gave and received an identity based on the place, and sense of community (see Taylor, 2010, 2, 15; Low & Altman, 1992, 10; Scannell & Gifford, 2010, 4-5). They received a place-based identification as people from Sompio become identified as *sompiolaiset*, and people from Yli-Kitinen, as *ylikitisläiset,* while creating meaning to the community identification - locals constructed what *sompiolaiset* and *ylikitisläiset* meant. With the construction of reservoirs Sompio and Yli-Kitinen

were renamed as Lokka and Porttipahta, which reflects how the very identity of place transformed. It inevitably impacts on the individual and collective identification. The reshaping of the places that previously gave a collective identity raises the question of how one could be a *sompiolainen* or an *ylikitisläinen* when those places ceased to exist.

5.4 Rootedness to Homelands: home beyond a house

> That homeland, it just is there. It cannot be taken away.
>
> *Se kotiseutu, se on vaan se vaan on siellä. Ei sitä voi ottaa pois. FGW A, Yli-Kitinen*

Yli-Kitinen and Sompio were *kotiseutu*, homelands for both to the local communities, and individuals. The term *kotiseutu*, Woman A used in the above quote, is a word in Finnish that would directly translate into home region. However, the word *kotiseutu* itself encapsulates more than the physical sphere of region. It refers to something deeply embedded in temporally and spatially present realities, it is something indelible and culturally significant. Relocation was not just replacing the walls and the roof of a house. Conventional understanding of home, as the family house does not fit into the concept of home local communities had. Man, D from Yli-Kitinen expressed how home-house was "*Home slash visiting place. So, there was nothing more special than that* [se on koti kautta käymäpaikka. Että ei siinä sen kummempaa]". Emotions towards home were far sparsely directed to the landscape.

Tervaniemi & Magga (2019) have explored of similar notion of home and home region and belonging in the Sámi context. The Sámi understanding of home, goes beyond conventional western trajectories – homelands, and home are culturally bound with the environment, traditional knowledge and livelihood practices (Tervaniemi & Magga, 2019). Since life In Yli-Kitinen and Sompio was rooted in the annual cycle of nature, many spend more time outdoors than inside their house which made landscapes homes. Man from the second generation observed this as he emphasized how the forest around was closer place than the built house (*pirtti*) for many who actively spend time doing traditional activities:

> I think that to them it was still — it was like home to them, and many of those men, they spent more of the year out in the forest than in the pirtti [house]. It must have been for them, on some level, an even more important and intimate place.
>
> *Minusta se on niille ollut kuitenkin - sehän on ollut niille niinku koti, ja ne monet ukot, niin nehän on enemmän ollu vuojessa siellä mettässä kun siellä pirtissä. Sehän on ollut niille niinku jollaki tasolla varmaan tärkiämpi ja läheisempi paikka*. SGM A.

Land became filled with stories, memories and knowledge. Environment became familiar, as "*omat taskut*", - places were known as the back of one's hand, like man from Yli-Kitinen D verbalized. Walking on familiar lands filled with knowledge was experienced differently. Many reflected that in those places one knew the best game sites and richest lichen grounds for reindeer. Sompio and Yli-Kitinen were constructed into cultural environments through the interaction of people with the land- which can remain unrecognized from outside – by those lacking the place-based traditional knowledge transmitted through everyday practices (Tervaniemi & Magga, 2019, 82). Yet these environments constituted home so close that leaving seemed impossible.

> It felt like that – that it is the place in the world, that you would never leave. And when they began talking about the reservoir coming, it felt like – it cannot be true.
>
> *Niin se tuntui niin, että se on paikka maailmassa, josta ei koskhaan lähtis pois. Ja sitten kö aletthiin puhumaan siittä, että se allas tullee, niin se tuntu, - ei se ole totta*. FGW B, Sompio

Description above underlines how for many Yli-Kitinen or Sompio were places to feel at home and enjoy life. Woman D from Yli-Kitinen even connected later thriving (*pärjääminen*) through life with the happy childhood she had in Yli-Kitinen. This extended understanding of home represents the connection and roots to the land and cultural environment around.

Rootedness was transparent across interviews, and it was directly addressed as something dear to people. Especially transferring the knowledge of roots and enhancing the rootedness of new generations was deemed important. Answering question of "*who we are and where do we come from"* can be essential for concepts of self, identity and self-determination (Tervaniemi & Magga, 2019, 86). Woman B from Sompio expressed the importance to know ones roots as essential not only for her, but also for generations after: "*It is very important that the children and grandchildren too, know where they are from and what kind of conditions and life they were born into* [Se on erittäin tärkeä, että niinko lapset ja lapsenlapsekin, niin {tietää} sen mistä he ovat pois ja minkälaisista oloista ja elämässä on niinkö syntyny]". Interviews presented how it was mostly natural part of life that children and their children would know of family history and where the previous generations came from as it would help them to know more about themselves. Identifying and communicating one's origins did not, however, always come naturally.

During an intergenerational interview, I asked a mother who had relocated from Yli-Kitinen, if she had discussed life before moving with her children. She said that probably it has been discussed all the time to which her son expressed, that it is not true. According to him they had only began discussing Yli-Kitinen, Porttipahta and family history after he had started asking questions.

> No, she hadn't talked about it before I started asking, sometime in the 90s, when I became interested in genealogy. And only then have we started when I began asking and looking into it.
>
> *Ei, se ole puhunu ennen ko vasta sitten, ko mie olen alakanu kyselemhään joskus 90-luvun puolella, ko minä kiinnostuin sukututkimuksesta. Ja sitten on alettu vasta, ko mie olen alakanu kyselemhään ja selevitämhän* SGM B

This illustrates how new generations' own interest in family history has sparked the dialogue between generations over the old homelands and reservoirs, while it represents the meaningfulness of roots and rootedness in action. The second-generation man had become interested in his family history, which had led him to genealogy research. Which enabled him to know more of where his family originated while reconstructing his own roots.

The strong rootedness and bondedness has been transferred across generation through both verbal and non-verbal interactions even without physical connection (see Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Low & Altman, 1992; Siltala, 2016). Second-generation man A portrayed the significance of roots without the physical home as intergenerational attachment where one longs for going to those same areas, where generations before had lived in.

> And then if there can be such a thing as intergenerational trauma, then there can probably also be such a thing as intergenerational attachment. And something like — that you long for and need. Need, so that something positive comes, that somehow you get to hang around the same areas, that they somehow overlap.
>
> *Ja sitten jos voi olla joku ylisukupolvinen trauma, niin varmaan sitten voi olla semmone ylisukupolvinen kiintymyskin. Ja semmoinen, että kaipaa ja tarvii. Tarvii, että se niinko semmoen positiivisuuski tullee, että sulla on jotenki sie saat hengailla siellä samoilla alueilla, että ne jotenkin limittyy yhteen*. SGM A

The notion of intergenerational attachment is not pulled out of thin air. Intergenerational belonging and place attachment has been recently discussed in scholarly literature (e.g. Cook et al, 2025). In a culture that is based on storytelling, and traditional livelihoods intergenerational belonging would seem like a natural continuation for the people-place bonding.

5.5 Constructing the narrative of place

Yli-Kitinen and Sompio were places filled with stories, memories and traditional knowledge passed on through everyday practices. Life was connected to a network of social relationships in a close-knit community that was culturally rooted in the land, ensuring thriving (*pärjääminen*) in traditional, land-

based life. Together, these social, cultural, and physical aspects constructed narratives of homelands. The entire destroyed environment was considered home. The memory of those homelands remains, and knowledge of one's roots is passed down through the generations. The attachment to Sompio and Yli-Kitinen is not limited to those who lived there, rather it is actively transmitted and reproduced as second-generation man A described how he has always known that there is more to the reservoir areas – that those drowned lands used to be homelands. Next, I examine closer what it meant when homelands were taken away and how the impacts continue to unfold.

6 NARRATIVE OF ESSENTIAL LONGING

> There was no phone camera to you could have snapped pictures with. There were some quite nice looking pictures, some quite wild looking ones too. The forest was still standing and the birches were dead, trying to grow a few leaves still. And hell, it smelled like a factory. And the peat islands had risen up — they were floating around, hectares of them, there were these peat islands floating in the air, ones that had previously been peat bogs on the ground, but the flood had risen and they had risen up with it.
>
> *Ei ollu kännykkäkameraa, että olis saanu napsia kuvia. Sitä oli aika mukavan näkösiä kuvia, semmosia hurjanki näkösiä. Ko mettä on pystössä ja koivut kuollheet ja lehtiäki yrittäneet kasvattaa vähän. Ja haisi ko helevetti tehthaalle. Ja rimmit oli nousheet tuota – niitähän kellu semmosia, hehtaari kaupalla, oli ilmassa semmosia rimpiä, jokka oli ennen ollu kans rimpi, mutta se oli tuluva noussu ja ne oli noussu ylemmäs* FGM E, Sompio

In the beginning of the 1950s, when the post-war rebuilding was already far, the environment in Yli-Kitinen and Sompio began changing. First loggings began in Kielisenmaa, in Yli-Kitinen in the fall of 1954 (Kauhanen, 2024, 205). Two decades later rising water levels reached the top of trees that were left uncut after the harvest. First generation man E from Sompio described how trees still peaked out of water, and previously landscape defining wetlands persisted by pushing peat islands (*rimmit*) to float. Land that had been local homeland was changed drastically - once diverse landscape became a vast mass of water. Abundant berry picking grounds, rich fish rivers, nutrient dense reindeer pastures and foundations of houses submerged together - place people had attached to as their home, disappeared. This disrupts the place bonding that was strong part of identity, culture and everyday life as the previous analysis chapter discussed. Disruption of place attachment can happen in many ways and have diverse impacts depending on the magnitude and voluntariness of change. Erasure of place is one direct way of rupturing those attachments as happened in the case of Lokka and Porttipahta when those old homelands were turned into hydropower development projects. The multitude of impacts stemming from that are further affected by possible reconstruction of ties at the *postdisruption* level (Brown & Perkins, 1992).

In the theoretical discussions on place attachment disruptions the difference between voluntary and involuntary relocation becomes pronounced (see Brown & Perkins, 1992). Understanding the nature of relocations of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen helps grasping the magnitude, and possible lasting impacts. Voluntary relocations usually provide more time to detach and to begin constructing new sentiments. However, when relocation is involuntary, preparing for the loss does not happen so naturally (Brown & Perkins, 1992, 287-288).

In the case of Lokka and Porttipahta reservoirs relocations can be framed through forced displacement and involuntary relocations. Kemijoki Ltd began the purchasing of land and estates in early 1950s. The heads of most families, - often the father, signed contracts, to give up ownership. This was done without real possibility for denying as many pointed out during the interviews (see also e.g. Kauhanen, 2024, 341). The circumstances surrounding the signing of contracts were facilitated by threats of forced expropriation, word of God and alcohol – like elder man from Yli-Kitinen implied, when reflecting on the circumstances under which his father signed estate sale contracts: "*probably fair amount of cognac was consumed* [paljon siinä varmaan konjakkia meni]". This indicates how the estate sales were not always conducted under fully transparent or voluntary circumstances.

6.1 Disbelief at the scale of change

> I was still a small boy, when the men of Kemijoki Ltd came with a helicopter to our fields. I got to go to the helicopter. When the Kemijoki Ltd man said "Boy, before your beard is growing, there will be fourteen meters of water on top of your home cabin." My father always told, how I had answered: "I'm sure gentleman is mistaken." That my father always remembered and I am sure at that time I was sure that there would not be such a flood that would rise up to this hill.
>
> *Ihan pikkupoikaha mie olin sillo ko Kemijoki yhtiön miehet tuli helikopterilla siihen pellolle. Sillon mie pääsin helikopterin kyytiin. Sillon mie sanoin sille Kemijokiyhtiön ukolle ko se sano: "Kuule poika enneko sulla parta kasvaa, tässä kotitalos päällä on neljätoista metriä vettä." Sen se isä muisti monesti sanoa ko mie olin sanonu: "Kylläpä taisi setä nyt erehtyä." Sen se muisti ja kylllä mie varmasti olinki sillon sitä mieltä, että ei ole semmosta tulvaa että tähä mäenpäälle nousis.* FGM C, Yli-Kitinen

Construction of Lokka and Porttipahta significantly disrupted place attachment. The previous chapter showed the multifaceted importance that those attachments had. Reservoirs had been planned for decades, but for many the plans seemed implausible, as reflected in the recollection above. At the time, locals were not actively engaged or informed – first public hearing took place in 1955 in Sodankylä, and first hearing directed specifically toward locals was in 16.7.1957 in Korvanen Village in Sompio (Kauhanen, 2024, 81).

> You did not know what to think. It will just come – the water rises – and reservoir comes. That's it. It was a clear thing – when people who have lived out here in the forest, they did not understand even half.
>
> *Sitä ei osannut ajatella mitthään. Se vain tullee vesi nousee ja allas. Ja siinä ei. Sehän on selevä juttu, että ku täällä mettässä asunheet ihmiset, ei net kaikkia lähellekhään ymmärtäny FGM D, Yli-Kitinen*

Most people deemed it impossible that water levels could rise high enough to cover the entire landscape. Man, D described the difficulty of comprehending such a drastic change. Many simply did not believe in such a huge flood that would wipe out their homes. Lack of belief in the materialization of the project made the relocation and the witnessing the materialization of reservoirs more extensive and surprising. Many had years' time to anticipate the change, but in the end, the drastic nature of the change came as a surprise. The lack of anticipation, and voluntariness and the exhaustiveness of the change in place like presented, is something that can make the disruption of attachment more substantial (Brown & Perkins, 1992, 295). Evidently, the permanent nature of drowning represents profound disturbance to bondedness and rootedness with the socio-physical environment.

6.2 Extensive disruption – Total destruction

> You can't destroy any landscape or any forest except by drowning it. Well, it was total destruction. There hasn't been such destruction anywhere in Europe. Nor is there planned. They probably won't plan – such madness. But you see, we were out here in the periphery, and these people had no value, nor did the landscapes.
>
> *Se ei mithään maisemaa eikä mithään mettiäkään voi tuhota muuten kuin hukuttamalla. No täystuho on ollu. Ei Euroopassa ole tuommosta tuhoa vielä ollukhaan. Eikhä ole suunnitellukhaan. Eivät varmaan sunnittelekhaan. Nuin hulluja homma. Mutta katoko täällä olthiin syrjässä ja näillä ihmisillä ei ollu mithään arvoa eikä maisemilla*. FGM E, Sompio.

Quote above catches the permanent scope of drowning land - "*It was a total destruction*" that could only happen by drowning. Some interviews pointed out how many other environment-changing development projects entail hope for regaining the land back. Hydropower development does not encompass a direct hope for restoration. In comparison to other forms of displacement there is deeper permanence with drowning.

Often the experiences of reservoir refugees in Finland are contrasted to the experiences of Karelian refugees, that were displaced during the WWII (see e.g. Kauhanen, 2024, 341). Many experiences do overlap, but losing a homeland in a war still holds the possibility of revisiting, which is important for moving forward from place attachment disruption. This difference was well narrated by a woman from Yli-Kitinen (F). She remembered how at one-point busloads of war-evacuees and their descendants were revisiting their old homelands left on Russian side to which the thought: "*I was like, well, good, you go and see—I cannot even go and see it*. [Minä olin, että no hyvä, menkää kattomaan, että minä en pääse ees kattomaan]". She was happy for those who could revisit, while that possibility

was fully taken away from her. Even if she did often go by boat to Porttipahta reservoir with his son, familiar landscapes were gone.

The extent of loss and disruption people face is difficult to grasp. Since so many things constituted the attachment to the land, disruption not only changed home, but also identity, community, and livelihoods. In the interviews a woman C from Sompio, who had later become interested of the cultural history of Sompio recognized that the season-based life had been lost as the communities broke apart and scattered. Many were forced to change their livelihoods and learn a new way of making a living. Some succeeded better than others, for some: "*that happened to many—that kossu [Finnish vodka] turned into cognac* [No joo, se monelle kävi näin, että tuota, kossu muuttu konjakiksi]" like man D from Yli-Kitinen phrased. Yet some were able to build better lives for themselves than they would have had if they had remained in the remote communities.

Women E from Yli-Kitinen saw her thoughts during relocation reflected young-girl's wishful thinking of seeing what the world beyond her community had to offer.[12] Moving and leaving home gave possibilities and hope for better, and easier life. Interviews reflected how relocation could mean getting out of traumatic setting of boarding school, finding a spouse who was not related, or simply getting closer to other people, and life, that was not as remote.

The recollection of genuine benefit was still simultaneously tied with the irreversibility of the loss. Thought of *what if*, crossed mind of everyone I interviewed[13]. Some reminisced the nature and landscape, wondering what the landscapes look now, or how they could have looked whereas some wonder how life would have evolved, which families would have stayed and who would have moved anyway. Interestingly, everyone thought that even if they had moved somewhere else, they would have built a cabin somewhere in their old homelands. Their recollections speak of opportunities that were never given a change. At the same time, it tells how ties to the original place were maintained and imagined, even when relocation had been beneficial for individuals. The memory of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen is settled into everyday thinking. Often those thoughts get framed through ambiguity – not knowing what life could have turned into, and not knowing what has become of the land once walked in.

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[12] What did a young girl like that think? Well, at least you will get to see the world, you know! [Mitä se semmonen tyvärhupakko ajatteli? Näkkeepä maailmaa, kuule!] FGW E, Yli-Kitinen

[13] However, there are also some more positive outlooks to the change of land. FGM D, Yli-Kitinen remembered thinking, that "the water will then just be bigger [tuleepahan isommat veet vain sitte]" and the good hunting grounds just moved a bit further.

6.3 Loss

> It felt so bad, - our mother had to come get us from the doghouse or wherever we were hiding, and she almost just could not get us into the cars. Well, I would not—at least [wanted to move]. I was such a difficult case that they almost left me behind—like, fine then, just stay here.
>
> *Kyllä se tuntui niin pahalta, että äiti se sai meitä kyllä koirankopista ja, milloin mistäkin hakija, ettei meinannu saaha meitä millään autoihin. No en, minä ainakhaan ollu [halunnut muuttaa]. Minä olin kyllä niin vaikia tapaus kyllä, että ne meinas jättääkin minut – että pysy sitte täällä*.
> FGW A, Yli-Kitinen

In 1969 the last estate from Yli-Kitinen was forcibly expropriated by court decision, and the last family was removed in October 1970 (Kauhanen, 2024, 318). Already by the end of 1961 78% of Sompio and 85% of Yli-Kitinen estates were sold to Kemijoki Ltd (Kauhanen, 2024, 92). Estate sales and relocations happened in different phase for each family. Experiences of the actual loss of home conveyed through the interviews are all individual, but they hold many parallels. The quote above portraits the shattering departure from one's home as a child. Children were often left out of discussions, which was seen to be typical for the time like woman D from Yli-Kitinen remarked: "*those were times when adult matters were simply not discussed with children.* [Se oli semmosta aika, että lapsillehan ei puhuttu aikuisten asioita]".

When the time of moving came, many were reluctant to leave like woman A in the first quote. Woman D from Yli-Kitinen was young adult when her family relocated. She recollected how she refused to leave with her family and stayed behind and ended up walking some of the way to the new place with her family dog. In that way, she could hold to the homelands longer and do her own silent resistance while holding to her own agency in the time of forced displacement.

Reluctance to leave was accompanied by reproduced war-time relocation. Woman B from Sompio described how: "*it came back to my mind — and to some of my sisters' minds too — that same uncertainty from the wartime and the leaving. It was like the leaving repeated itself all over again.* [Se palas minun mielhen esimerkiksi ja minun joittenki siskojen mielhen palas se justiinsa se epävarmuus sitten tästä sota-ajasta ja lähöstä. Se aivan niinko toistu se lähtö taas]". For some reservoir relocation meant a double displacement, which reinforced skepticism toward the realization of the reservoirs. Being removed from the land multiple times, both connected with uncertainties has been "*kauhea palanen*" – a heavy burden to carry like woman A from Yli-Kitinen articulated - and perhaps time to time it was too heavy.

The parallel between war time evacuations and relocation was embedded to the very language used of the relocated communities, when they were named as *reservoir refugees* (allasevakko) as observed by the second-generation man A:

> They were even referred to as reservoir refugees. Usually, refugees are related to some war crisis. And it was kind of seen as a one-to-one thing, that you have to—I think the word evacuee really captures that, that you're forced to evacuate somewhere.
>
> *Niistähän käytettiinki nimitystä, että allasevakkoja. Että yleensä se johonkin sotakriisiin liittyy joku evakot. Ja se niinko nähtiin ihan tavallaan yksi yhteen, että joutuu, minusta se evakkosana kuvastaakin sitä, että väkisin joutuu evakoitua jonnekin.* SGM A

Relocation was forced evacuation under a man-made flood. It marginalized the local communities, *sompiolaiset* and *ylikitisläiset*, into undifferentiated mass of *reservoir refugees*. At the same time, the history of previous place removals was still fresh, accumulating the burdens of both individuals and communities. Reservoirs were experienced as "*new, different kind of attack* [uus erilainen hyökkäys]" like woman B from Sompio phrased it.

The foundation for life was dismantled when the shock of relocation, and ultimate loss of home materialized. Since the narrative on place attachments is connected on survival and security, it is no wonder, that the disruption was felt to be such a drastic one, that was contrasted into being *"Maybe the leaving was one-type of a war story.* [Ehkä se oli tämä lähtö yhdenlainen sotatarina]" or "*mini-world ending* [Mini-maailmanloppu]" (FGW F, Yli-Kitinen; SGM A). When disruptions to place attachments are as severe as in this case, changes can be so overwhelming that regaining stability can be more difficult (Brown & Perkins, 1992, 282).

The sense of security became threatened already when the first signs of proposed artificial lakes became visible. It intensified when the environment began to change as *allassavotat* reservoir clearance loggings started. Life in Yli-Kitinen and Sompio became restless. Many men who participated in *allassavotat* got accommodation from houses in the area. Use of alcohol was prominent. Girls were warned not to go to the side of house, where *savottamiehet* – men working at the timber harvesting, stayed (FGW A, Yli-Kitinen).

The narrative of the tremendous dispossession has been traceable for the generations after. It has been evident that relocation entailed far more than mere physical displacement. This sharp change did not only dislocate the place at the time of relocation, but it also ruptured relationship between past and future (see Brown & Perkins, 1992, 281). The story of the disappeared lands and lives has carried itself into the next generation. Second-generation man described how relocations were not just a move

from point A to point B. This is often overlooked by relocation authorities, that have trouble understanding how places as homes and communities hold social, cultural and physical rooting and meanings that can be difficult, if not impossible to reconstruct elsewhere (Brown & Perkins, 1992, 280, 298, 301). The loss extends far beyond the physical place when an area is destroyed.

Man, E from Sompio brought up how members of communities "*hajos ko pieru saharaan*"[14] – vanished into thin air and disrupted the whole sense of one tight community. He added what was lost by saying: *"Well the whole environment. Nothing more that that was lost* [No kaikki ympäristö. Ei sitä sen kummempaa ole menetty]". He both described the extent of loss while also downplaying the devastation – it was just the *whole* environment nothing more. The way he minimized the impact had an undertone that brought up the question of whether it stemmed from a need to control the degree of loss.

The cultural value of the preserved subsistence way of life was ruptured. Notion from woman C from Sompio, "*But in a sense, it all was cut off* [Mutta kaikki se tavallaan katkes]" holds the information of the severing of a whole way of being. Sompio and Yli-Kitinen defined both individuals and a whole community, with a history and traditional knowledge integral to the area. When those communities dissolved, the notion of identity was disrupted. Through their analysis of the impacts of Lokka and Porttipahta on Sámi culture, Tervaniemi and Magga (2019) raised this issue of cultural preservation. As my analysis also shows, culture and people are tied to the land. Severing the environment affects not only livelihoods and coping, but also cultural expression (Tervaniemi & Magga, 2019, 83).

6.4 Witnessing drowning and desiccating

> I must have gone there, you know, hundreds of times—I was – I went there almost every week to watch as the water kept rising every year. I have followed it very closely
>
> *Minähän kävin siellä varmaan kuule tuota monia satoja kertoa ko mie olin sitä, joka viikko melekeen kävin siellä kattomassa ko se aina aina vuosikerrallaan nousi se vesi. Mie olen seurannu sen niin tarkoin*" FGM E, Sompio.

Change of the roof above one's head and the walls around did not mean that the mental relocation had yet happened. Physical relocation was quicker than mental detachment. Brown & Perkins (1992) recognized emotional resistance to moving as response, that is often accompanied by set of different

[14] The expression "hajos ko pieru Saharaan" is more expressive than the translation vanished into thin air – it is directly translated as "scattered like a fart in the Sahara".

feelings, such as numbness, heartsickness or betrayal (1992, 289). This type of emotional resistance echoed across interviews and materialized differently – it was often expressed as refusal to leave.

When the dam sites were sealed and water began rising, it still took years before it rose to the desired levels. During that time many frequently revisited the area. Especially young men involved in subsistence activities, like man E from Sompio in the quote above, traveled the lands as long as he could. Following the rise in water levels was a meaningful process that slowly materialized the loss and disruption. It removed the need to adapt quickly.

> When we left, we didn't see it after that. And then the next time I came back, it was like this. I really should have come to see it at that stage—when they were raising it—come every few months, to see how it was progressing, where it was going, coming or however it went.
>
> *Kun me lähettiin pois, sitä ei sen jäläkheen sitä nähty. Ja sitten kun seuraava kerran kävin, niin se oli tämmönen. Se vaihe olisi pitänyt oikeasthaan käyä katsomassa siinä vaiheessa, kun sitä on nostettu aina jonku kuukauen päästä, että missä se on menossa, tulossa tai miten päin tää nyt menikään*. FGW A, Yli-Kitinen.

A woman from Yli-Kitinen described how her departure from the area was permanent. She recognized the importance of processing disruption by seeing the rise of water. It was something she lacked. Witnessing the drowning was part of grieving journey for some. It enabled them to grieve through a ritual-type of revisitations that made it possible to recognize a proper ending, and in a sense, see a beginning for reestablishing attachments.[15] Man C from Yli-Kitinen denied any constant yearning back but said how there had been active longing for years.

> Well, I no longer miss it. But when the dam was close. That must have been it. I think it was four years after army that only then I left the place - in a way - mentally.
>
> *Noh. En mie ennään kaipaa. Mutta sillon ko se panthin se pato kiinni nii. Taisi olla se. Olinkha mie neljävuotta armeijan jälkeen sitte mie vasta lähin sieltä oikiasthan niinko henkisesti pois sieltä*. FGM C, Yli-Kitinen.

The man from Yli-Kitinen demonstrated progress in overcoming the defining longing, but only after spending years observing the rise of the water while remaining mentally attached. Visting and seeing the gradual change eased the pain, even if at times heightened it. Woman from Yli-Kitinen described pain she felt, when she revisited her old home:

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[15] Brown & Perkins (1992) have recognized the ability of grieving and rituals that define ends and beginnings important for reestablishing attachments in the spheres of stability-change (297).

> The buildings were in very poor condition. I didn't feel I could bring myself to photograph them. I did not want to photograph them and see that they were in such bad shape. I kind of felt ashamed of it, and it felt really bad. What I do remember is that when I went there for the last time to pick cloudberries, one of the windows had been propped open and swallows were nesting inside. But I didn't go in
>
> *Ne olivat erittäin huonossa kunnossa ne rakennukset. Mie en kehannu kuvata niitä. Mie en halunnut kuvata ja nähä sitä, että ne on niin huonossa kunnossa. Mie niinku häpeisin sitä ja tuntu hirveän pahalta. Sen mie muistan, että siellä oli, ko mie menimme viimeisen kerran sinne hillaan, niin siinä ikkuna oli pönkätty auki ja pääskyset pesivät sisällä. Mutta minä en mennyt sisälle.* FGW D, Yli-Kitinen

The above description binds together the active losing of place. Woman D was picking cloudberries for the last time in the familiar abundant *hillajängät.* While visiting her childhood home for the last time, she observed the swallows – that were for her the first thing to resurface whenever she remembered her home (see section 5). Now those swallows were nesting inside the house, that was slowly decaying. The house was left in poor condition after the loggers had been accommodated there since her family moved.

The woman D spoke of shame and pain of seeing what had become of her childhood house, and home surroundings after they moved. She wanted to record the nature that would be soon lost, but recording of the degrading house symbolized something too painful to watch and reminisce. Later she regretted her choice. At the time shame was stronger than curiosity, as if "*it was my fault that it has not been kept in good condition* [Se olisi minun syy, että sitä ei ole pietty kunnossa]". It encompasses the relation between place and self-identification (see Brown & Perkins, 1992, Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Low & Altman, 1992). Home was connected into one's self-concept. Witnessing the degradation happening to one's home, directly stabbed one's self-image and self-worth.

Buildings were often left behind after relocation. Later, Kemijoki Ltd either burned the houses down or took the timber for reuse purposes. There are accounts of reservoir refugees burning down their own houses, which according to man E from Sompio was "*troubling* [hankalantuntonen]" and not "*uplifting experience* [mieltäylentävä kokemus]".

The decay of homes and lands advanced slowly. Little by little, all the accumulated place-based knowledge was emptied of meaning as the places gradually became unrecognizable. Man, D from Yli-Kitinen recalled a trip he took when the water levels had already flooded parts of the environment

he knew well. He described how he got lost on the land where he once learned how not to get lost[16]. Despite having moved through the same areas continuously, the rising waters and loggings had altered the environment so significantly that the place-based knowledge accumulated since childhood no longer held true. All that was familiar was slowly lost.

6.5 Essential longing

> When we then moved to the new place, and someone came to visit there, I went and hid in the wardrobe. I think I was probably for about a year so, that I did not really know whether to be or not to be. I didn't talk anything to anyone—I just didn't want to be.
>
> *Kun me menimmä sitten sinne utheen paikkhaan, ja siellä sitten joku tuli käymhään kylässä, niin minä menin vaatekaappiin piiloon. Mie olin varmaan yhen vuojen niin, että en mie tiennyt, että ollanko vai eikö olla. Että minä en puhunu kelheen mittään, mie en niinku mie en vaan halunnu olla.* FGW A, Yli-Kitinen

Homelands were not drowned overnight, neither were the pain and longing. This longitudinal nature of missing and longing, *kaipuu*, for homes came up as the prolonged leaving discussed in previous section. When following the gradual change was not possible, emotions folded out differently.

The new environment was experienced as overwhelming, which was amplified by the lack of anticipation for the relocation and knowledge of what was happening. This demonstrate how disruptive the change was – finding stability in the new place required a lot of effort. The expression "*I just didn't want to be* [En vaan halunnut olla]" from the recollection of woman A illustrates the emotional burden of displacement. Woman B from Sompio said that leaving everything behind and transitioning into a new kind of life felt like "shook."

Although time has passed, a noticeable longing that stirs something deep within people emerged throughout the interviews. It got conveyed already during interviews through small delicate non-verbal signs but was also traceable across deeper analysis of the interviews. The presence of longing signals of the profound depth of the rootlessness that displacement has created (Brown & Perkins, 1992, 290).

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[16] *Well, we even got lost. You didn't know how to do it. Everything was so strange*. [No mehän eksyimmäki. Eihän sitä osannu. Kaikki oli niin outoa] FGM D, Yli-Kitinen

Narratives reflect missing and longing towards the old places. Longing is not expressed as an active longing, and sadness - importance of moving on was emphasized. Like man C from Yli-Kitinen expressed it "*If you kept longing for it, you would die of grief.* [Jos sitä jää kaipaamaan, sitähän kuolis surruun]" He did also acknowledge that some have "*for sure* [no varmasti on]" died on that sorrow, and longing. There is a reflection in the place attachment disruption theorizations where grieving of the lost place is seen as capable of causing a conflict between devotion to past and obligation to present (Brown & Perkins, 1992, 294). The old ties, and embodiment of the place-specific aspects of life are still valued, but there is awareness that one must move on. The narration of man C mirrors this tension – he has realized that one could long forever, but that longing would cost the future. Not everyone was able to move on. Woman B said how she recalled seeing that in some *"the sorrow lived in them* [niissä asui se suru]".

Interviews also illustrated how feelings of sorrow have piled up for long and sometimes resurface. Woman C from Sompio described how decades after relocations sorrow resurfaced: "*It felt absurd. It came on with massive force, and incomprehensible sense of sorrow* [Se tuntuu aivan hullulta. Tuli niinku hirvittävän voimakkaana, sellainen käsittämätön suru]". This could be a framed through homesickness – as usually the feelings related to losing a place are (Brown & Perkins, 1992, 289). The way the feeling of loss has been narrated implies a deeper sense of belonging that has been ruptured, resulting in a sense of displaced belonging rather than mere homesickness. There is an experience of an abrupt permanent loss of something that draws cultural practices, traditional knowledge, intergenerational history and livelihood base together. Longing has essentially rooted into people, as something that from time to time resurfaces, but does not make life dysfunctional or filled with sorrow.

This essential longing back to old homeland is something that has been transparent for the generations after. Man from second generations recognized how he has seen the longing back generally in everyone he knows to have lost their homeland. Even when relocation gives benefits and satisfaction, stories told on visiting the old places later, are filled with sort of wistfulness and longing for something that is unreachable.

It becomes evident through the interviews how relocation both disrupted the attachments, and broke communities apart. Connection, that enabled practicing traditional land-based livelihoods was abruptly fractured. Change of livelihoods, and moving away from remote communities did not evolve

naturally[17]. People lacked possibility to return and revisit. Both disabling of proximity-maintaining behavior and the sharpness of change can make place attachments dysfunctional and create difficulties to re-creating, and restoring attachments (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, 4; Brown & Douglas, 1992, 298). This is evident throughout the interviews, in which people recalled feelings of instability and uncertainty, and the permanence of change was highlighted. These feelings have developed a persisting longing and a sense of displaced belonging. They are still connected to their homelands, yet they will never be able to fully reconnect. The complete lack of access and deep rootedness construct an ontological longing that is embedded in people. Now, those homelands can only be revisited through memories This formulates a narrative of essential longing for homelands, that once provided community ties, security and a fundamental sense of self in a place-based subsistence culture.

[17] In the 1950-60s there was an ongoing transformation of the livelihood structure and there was a tendency of moving out from remote communities – but compared to the natural change happening in small settlements, the relocation from reservoirs happened more abruptly and permanently (Kauhanen, 2024, 192; Pyhäjärvi, 2011, 26)

7 DROWNED HOMELAND – INTERGENERATIONAL NARRATIVE OF ENVIRONMENTAL TRAUMA

> I do think that for some people it may have been hard to get used to. And then it being such a big change in life. Leaving from here, from a familiar environment, where you had learned to do everything, all the work and more
>
> *Kyllä mie luulen, nii että joillekin voi olla ollu hankalaa tottua. Ja sitte ku se on elämänmuutos iso. Täältä kun lähethään tutusta ympäristöstä, missä on opittu tekemhään kaikki työt ja muut* FGM D Yli-Kitinen

The loss people experienced when they had to pack up their belongings and leave their homeland behind was substantial – a major change in life like man D framed it. It has left traces to the entire collective, accompanying individuals through life and even influencing generations who have always lived with reservoirs. This prompts consideration of how these impacts and experiences intersect and whether they may be interpreted as trauma traces. Building on the experiences presented in the previous section, I analyze the applicability of trauma as a framework for understanding the impacts of the Lokka and Porttipahta reservoirs.

7.1 Silences shaping the narrative

> Because it was societally so important, it was silenced. It was a taboo. It became a taboo. It was such a thing that you were not supposed to talk about it, because it went against the greater good if someone disagreed.
>
> *Ko se oli niin yhteiskunnallisesti niin tärkeää, niin se vaiettiin. Se oli tabu. Siitä tuli tabu. -- Se oli niin semmonen, että siitä ei sopinu puhua, koska se oli yleisen edun vastasta, jos joku oli eri mieltä.* FGW D, Yli-Kitinen

The narratives of loss and displacement carry emotions that are largely overshadowed by multifaceted silences resonating through the recollections. This is evident in the ways displacement and relocation have been discussed, and how they were witnessed within family dynamics. Sometimes, even mentioning the old home, and relocation was "*forbidden subject* [kielletty aihe]" like woman A from Yli-Kitinen described it. Silence was embedded into people, especially into those who had already built their lives into the area and were forced to give it all up. Most often this was the generation that had experienced war as young adults, and reconstructed lives afterwards. That generation was" double" burdened with silence, as woman B from Sompio pointed out.

The post-war era in Finland was entangled in silence over difficult and traumatic experiences — and this silence was indicated in most interviews as the presence of the war had been inevitable yet discussion of it were consistently brushed away (Kivimäki, 2018, 38-39). In contrast, woman C from Sompio described how wartime experiences, such as partisan attacks, were sometimes discussed, while talk about the reservoirs was not permitted. This was an actor that made the silence of reservoirs heavy.

Silence transforms into heavy and meaningful in interaction with other existing entities – "*silence is sound and talk of something else* [Hiljaisuus on siis ääntä ja puhetta jostain muusta]" (Kivimäki, 2018, 35). It seems that from time to time, difficulties of war were easier to discuss - silencing the experience of displacement. Silence was not only filled with recollections of the war. Rather many interviews brough up conversations about how things were now better. During one interview the interviewee repeatedly expressed how she and her family were satisfied with the relocations, and how they never spoke, that life had gone badly because of the reservoir. The frequent expressions of satisfaction raised a question – what remained unspoken under the repeated assertions that they did not long for the past and that they had gotten a better life? Especially as the old place was still reminisced with such intensity, and revisiting the reservoir area viewed as important. When I asked if there was any kind of longing – the response quickly turned to the observation that at least there was no bitterness. It indicates the observation of silence being talk of something else. At the same time, the lack of discussion can be partially part of the zeitgeist. It was not typical of the time to talk about past events, since the past was already gone.

Women B from Sompio connected the lack of talk being also part of protecting oneself, and "*some do not want to admit that they long back* [eikä haluta myöntää sitä, että on ikävä sinne tai on sitä]". Sometimes silence works as a coping mechanism (Kivimäki 2018, 36). By not talking about it, people have protected their emotional capacity to handle the emotions stirred by loss. Those emotions were often pushed away with work, so there was no time to dwell on it. People had both observed it in their parents but also done themselves like man, E from Sompio: "*well, there wasn't time for anything else than driving logs* [no eihän tässä joutanu ko tukkia ajamaan]".

Silence can also be political and related to asymmetries in power-dynamics – silencing of some experiences might be done for the "greater good" (Kivimäki, 2018, 41). The beginning quote of the section observed how the political importance of reservoirs produced the endured suffering as a taboo. It strategically denied any discussion that would have challenged the hegemonic social discourse.

The presence of silence tells that the experience of the whole relocation and reservoir construction process is loaded. Silence might have been the only way to ensure survival and moving on in life. This was often emphasized like woman B from Sompio mentioned: *"on the other hand, life cannot just stand still. I have seen people who cannot move forward. It's like it's you have to* [sitte toishaalta ei voi se seisahtuu elämä. Moon nähny ihmisiä jokka ei pääse eteenpäin. Se on niinko pakko]". This brings back to the culturally embedded trajectory of *pärjääminen.* The experiences of displacement have been so difficult and related to asymmetries in power relations, that there was no other way than to *pärjätä*, *birget*. Local communities were forced to endure and cope. When *s*tressful and difficult situations – like relocations force people into coping and managing alone thought the idea of *birgen*, transfers into *birgenbággu* a term developed by Minna Rasmus (Lehtola, 2019, 92). *Birgenbággu* forces to manage, and cope without help which can lead for trauma transfers (ibid). The forced *pärjääminen* and presence of multifaceted heavy silences connected to Lokka and Porttipahta indicate the intensity of the impacts of displacement that extend to entire communities and persist across generations.

7.2 Environmental trauma

> I think it was difficult for my father, as he was trying to find a place to live. He was trying to find a place. He wanted it to have somewhat familiar terrain, or something familiar—my father was a good hunter, he knew the landscapes there well. And then imagine him trying to find it. He really lost his temper, he was extremely nervous at the time.
>
> *Mie luulen, että se oli isälle vaikeaa, ko sehän yritti hakea sitä asuinpaikkaa. Sehän yritti löytää paikkaa. Se halus, että se on vähän tuttuja maastoja tai jotain tuttua – isä oli hyvä mettästäjä se tunsi maastot siellä. Ja ajattele sitten, ko se yritti löytää sitä. Sillähän meni ihan hermot kyllä, että se oli kauhean hermostunut sillon*. FGW D, Yli-Kitinen

The deep rootedness and essential longing documented in the previous chapter, accompanied by the multifaceted silences traced above raises increasingly pressing question whether it is possible to speak of a cross-cutting traumatic experience. Many interviewees spoke with certainty of traumatic nuances. Woman D from Yli-Kitinen observed in the citation above the emotional distress in her father, who did not live many years after the relocation that changed him fully as a person. There were many other recollections of people who have been dismantled because of relocation, and who have *"not known how to leave or be elsewhere* [ei ole osannu lähtiä tai osannu olla muualla]" as remarked by woman A from Yli-Kitinen. Woman B from Sompio discussed how those who were elderly at the time had more difficulty adapting to the new life

> Because when an elderly person, for example, is moved away from their home area and has to relocate, it causes a kind of psychological like a feeling that things are not quite well. And then, in my view, that one thing—perhaps a bit older people than I was at the time, who left there—were somewhat rootless afterwards, at least from what I encountered
>
> *Koska se, että vanha ihminen esimerkiksi muutethaan kotipaikkakunnalta ja pittää muuttaa, niin se aiheuttaa henkistä semmosta, että ei ole niinko kaikki hyvin. Ja sitte niin mun mielestä se yks osa – ehkä vähän vanhempaa ko minä sillon jokka lähti sieltä niin ne oli vähän juurettomia sen jälkeen mitä minä tapasin*. FGW B, Sompio

She saw that a change of environment could negatively affect mental well-being, and even directly expressed believing in traumas resulting from reservoirs. It is likely that it is easier to recognize traumatic effects in others than to reflect them onto oneself. Yet, some had directly pondered on the possibility of being traumatized like woman C from Sompio: "I *have thought of it as well, since I began crying and cried so much that am I then traumatized* [Ja mä oon miettinyt sitäkin just, kun mä aloin itkeen ja itkin niin kauheesti, että oonko mä niinko traumatisoitunut]". Defining oneself as traumatized is not a simple matter, as scholarly discussions of trauma already encompass a wide range of theoretical perspectives.

To actualize the traumatic recollections through interviews, I see the trajectories of *environmental trauma* to suit it best. It has already been used and developed within research of hydropower development and dam construction (see section 3.2; Autti, 2022a; 2022b). Applying this concept to the narratives resulting from the interviews is not far-fetched. Already the accounts on essentially embedded longing, and direct emotions connected to the relocations hold accumulation of negative impacts within. The emotions drawn from the permanent disruption of attachments after the land was drowned indicate development of environmental trauma.

The interviews also revealed a compelling point of the materialization of traumatic events: the psychological effects of flooding and the significance of lost places for identity was felt through dreams. Both the act of drowning and the old homelands were lived through sleep. Woman A from Yli-Kitinen told how she often revisited Yli-Kitinen in her dreams, but sometimes those dreams involved a sense of falling she could not explain. Her dreams reflect the unnaturally evolved place-relationship – dreams make home true again, while simultaneously encompassing even scary feelings such as falling in this case.

Dreams were also reflected by woman B from Sompio. She reminisced how she used to have nightmares of the drowning that had yet to happen. The stress emerging from the knowledge that one

day, home would be submerged paved way to dreams through "*kauhu-unet*", as she named them – the horror dreams.

> I sometimes had kind of horror dreams, where the water was rising and then everything drowns. In the dream, the shore never came, and the shore never came. And I felt like that I will drown before the shore comes. I guess they probably reflected what I had heard during the day
>
> *Näki joskus semmosia niinko kauhu-unia, semmoisia, että se vesi nousee ja sitte kaikki hukkuu. – Siinä unessa, niin se ranta ei tullut, ja ranta ei tullut. Ja minusta tuntu, että mie hukun ennen ko ranta. Että ne varmaan kerto siittä, mitä molin päivällä kuullut*. FGW B Sompio.

The story of seeing nightmares of drowning together with the environment hints towards extensive psychological stress, and fear. It gestures how the environmental trauma began evolving already from the threat to the physical surroundings– which is already alone enough for formation of environmental trauma (Autti, 2022a, 96).

The concept of environmental trauma goes beyond the psychological aspect of trauma and encompasses also the social and cultural impacts (Autti, 2022a, 97). Dislocating the place produces ripple effects on individual lives and to whole communities that share the same culture, practice and place. Woman C from Sompio reflected this by recognizing the cultural uniqueness that was embedded into the nature-based lifestyle: " *And in a way, when you think about Sompio, it was, in a sense, a kind of ethnographical remnant, with its way of life, where an old, traditional way of living had been preserved. A way of life and gathering food, hunting and fishing* [tavallaan, sitten kun ajattelen tuota Sompiota, niin se oli sillä tavalla niin semmonen ehkä semmonen kansantieteellinen jääne elämänmuotoineen, missä oli säilyny se vanhakantanen perinteinen niinkö tapa. Elää ja hankkii ravintoa, metsästää ja kalastaa]." She saw how that ethnographical remnant decayed, when communities relocated without a clear relocation plan across Finland, and beyond.

The construction of the reservoir formed an existential threat not only to the environment, but to the people as well. Relocation and the gradual loss of familiar grounds stirred up many emotions that still linger inside memories. The narrative essential longing accompanied with the tones of silence produces an overall narrative of environmental trauma, that has folded over time. It began when the first signs of threat to the homelands of Yli-Kitinen and Sompio appeared. Witnessing environmental destruction was a profoundly impactful experience which environmental trauma helps explain.

7.3 Intergenerational transmission of loss

> But it is such a sharp break, especially as I have listened to my parents' and grandparents' stories of all those places and areas, and how long that history is, how they have operated and lived there, and how stories and such are connected to everything. And then it just is that the continuity has been broken so abruptly. So does something like that leave a kind of void—and what is it then filled with?
>
> *Mutta se on niin jyrkkä se, kuitenki ko kuunnellu omia vanhempien, isovanhempien juttuja, ko niitä kaikkia paikkoja, alueita ja kuinka pitkä on se historia, kuinka ne on siellä operoinu ja toiminu ja kaikkiin liittyy semmoisia tarinoita ja muuta niin sitten ne on vaan niin ko sitten, se jatkumo on katkennu sitten niin jyrkästi. Sitte että, jättääkö semmoinen jonkun tyhjiö, että millä se sitten täytetään? SGM A*

The impacts of reservoirs have followed reservoir refugees throughout their lives. These effects have also been transmitted to the following generations, both directly and indirectly. In the quote above the second-generation man directly narrates the abrupt disruption that generations before experienced. It also shows how sudden discontinuity has fallen down the line, leaving intergenerationally experienced void, like he referred to it. That leaves an emptiness that can be substituted by many things – alcohol abuse at worst, research of family history at best, - the second-generation man B's interest in genealogy expresses the latter. Second-generation man A portrayed this experience as intergenerational failure, where he has not been able to connect and preserve his father's home, land, traditions and cultural heritage.

> I recognize something that triggers me. Probably even more as a man, it's one's father's home and lands and such. Perhaps there's come this kind of intergenerational sense of failure—that one hasn't been able to hold on to them or take care of them. Of the material and immaterial cultural heritage that was there and has been lost.
>
> *Kyllä mie niinko tunnistan semmosen jonkun, että se minua jotenkin triggeröi. Se on jotenkin niinku koska kuitenki niinku, varmaan vielä miehelle, on niinku oman isän koti ja maat ja sellainen, että siinä on jotenkin ehkä tulleeko siinä jotenki semmone ylisukupolvinen epäonnistumisen tunne tullut, että ei ole pystynyt piettämään niistä kiinni eikä huolehtia. Niin, ja mikä siellä se aineellinen ja aineeton kulttuuriperintö, mikä siellä on mennyt*. SGM A.

This recollection represents how closely tied the loss of homelands is to identity, and self-worth even among later generations. Losing contact with the surroundings that held transgenerational traditional knowledge — the distinct cultures of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen — was not experienced once. Rather it accumulates through time, and generations. The traditional knowledge bound to place, and other

cultural aspects are not that easily passed on when the place changed (Tervaniemi & Magga, 2019, 82-84). There is not just an experience of loss that has been transferred intergenerationally, there is also an inherited responsibility that cannot be anymore fulfilled.

Future generations will always lack something that previous generations had. They have been detached fully from their intergenerational attachments, while still holding recollection of deep roots. They parallel similar notions of loss as first generations, just at different levels and time. The generations after can only travel the lands in their imaginaries acquired through stories, and memories of others. The relocated generations are aware of the disconnect between generations which man E from Sompio emphasized: "*Look, for these who have been born later, this has always been here*. [Ei ko näillehän kato jokka on jäläkiä syntynheet, niin tämähän on ollu aina] ". The next generations are situated into distanced positions, that leaves them out of discussions.

> Others speak of an entirely different word and different time, which however has been physically quite close and present here, but is no longer there – and cannot return. And then, you know, you could only listen with your mouth open and wonder, as you were naturally completely excluded from that conversation.
>
> *Toiset puhhuu ihan toisesta maailmasta ja toisesta ajasta, joka kuitenkin fyysisesti on ollu tässä aika likellä ja läsnä, mutta jotei niinko ennään oo, ja joka ei voi ennään tulla takaisin, niin onhan se, ethän sie oo voinu ko monttua auki kuunnella ja ihmetellä, että sie oot ollut täysin ulkopuolistettu siitä keskustelusta luonnollisesti*. SGM A

The land and memories are unreachable, even if those might physically be close by. One might be on a boat on top of their parents or grandparents' houses, - in the environment they have heard stories, but that land cannot be reached, as it is lying tens of meters underwater. It highlights the importance of listening to reminiscences of others as above description shows.

For generations after, the burden has crystallized into their own lived experience of disrupted continuity and ruptured roots – while simultaneously confronting the accumulation of environmental trauma across time (see section 3.2; Autti, 2022a, 104 for accumulation of environmental trauma). Submerging homelands of parents and grandparents have permanently detached all coming generations from places that are intertwined with their own family histories, traditional knowledge, cultural practices and identifications.

Simultaneously the traumatic impacts embedded in silence and longing have been witnessed by the subsequent generations. Often intergenerational transfer of traumas is connected to "fractured identity" and "traumatic memories of previous generations" that are passed down as long as the

trauma remains unresolved (see section 3.2; Siltala, 2016). This transfer of trauma through stories and non-verbal communication is visible both in the narrations of second generation but also reflected on the first generation. What emerges across generations is a shared and transferred narrative of fractured roots – one where disrupted place attachment and unresolved environmental trauma have produced as inherited sense of disrupted place that persists because the loss remains irreversible and remains partly unacknowledged. It produces a cross-generation cutting experiences of inherited displacement; severed roots and transgenerational placelessness. Yet even within this transgenerational experience of placelessness the interviews consistently disclosed resilience of communities and individuals alongside the loss.

7.4 Getting used to excessive bodies of water

The presence of intergenerationally experienced environmental trauma does not mean that individuals or communities are paralyzed by those traumatic experiences. Interviews did not only reflect a trauma as disabling the whole community, rather there were stories of resilience and reconstruction of those places that were longed for. Although the reservoir scenery was also deemed as "too large water [*liian iso vesi]*" like woman E from Yli-Kitinen said. Revisiting and continuing the attachment to some degree was emphasized important for moving on, even if visiting evokes essential longing, which is recognized to help coping with loss and disruption (Brown & Perkins, 1992). All interviews included a story of the first visit to the old home places. The very first visit after relocation was difficult, but also meaningful. Continued visitations present a way of coping with the loss, and environmental trauma. Woman A, who visits Porttipahta regularly still mentioned, how the very first time each summer is filled with emotions.

> Well it is really the first time when I get to come here in the summer. So that first time - it's a bit tearful and messy, and there's a kind of longing. That's how it is. But then, since I've been here again like now, and I have been able to visit right there at top of my home place.
>
> *Oikeastaan se on ensimmäisellä kerralla, ko mie pääsen aina kesällä käymhään täällä. Niin se on se ensimmäinen kerta, se on vähän semmoinen itkunen ja tuhrunen ja haikeus semmonen, että se on se. Mutta sitten ko mie olen nytkin täällä käynyt ja olen päässyt siellä just siellä kotipaikan päällä käymhään* FGW A, Yli-Kitinen.

Woman A described how longing culminated on the first visit during the summer into tears and missing, but how she felt that all visits to Porttipahta, were empowering and gave her strength for everyday life. She narrated resilience through loss well – returning even when some difficult emotions arise shows an active coping and proactiveness. People were not just victims of loss and trauma.

Looking across the interviews, the substantial nature of loss, and its multifaceted cross-generational impacts. Narrations portray the traumatic loss of connection to the environment and definitive rupture of community. The generations after having witnessed the impacts of disruption and depict the transfer of loss intergenerationally. Even if there is a strong emphasis on all that was lost, and feelings of essential longing, there is also a strong nuance of moving on, and not dwelling on things that cannot be changed. Staying silent and not facing emotions can deepen trauma transfer, but proactiveness towards meaningful future is fundamental to overcoming the disruption of people-place bondedness (Autti, 2022a, 104; Siltala, 2016, 29; Brown & Perkins, 1992, 289-296).

There is a narrative of environmental trauma emerging from displaced place attachments. The wound persists alongside an enduring, active connection to a homeland that exists now more in memory, practice, and longing than in accessible physical surroundings. The displacement from Sompio and Yli-Kitinen has created an environmental trauma, which for most part is not actively disabling relocated communities, but it is still present and resonates intergenerationally as commonly expressed narrative of *drowned homeland.*

8 NARRATIVE OF DISPOSSESSED HOME, AND CONTESTED AGENCY

> There is (all kinds of things at the bottom of the reservoir), there are surely quite a few skeletons to be found.
>
> *On (althaan pohjassa kaikenlaista), sieltä varmasti löytyy luurankoja jonkun verran. FGM E, Sompio*

The construction of Lokka and Porttipahta has been justified in many ways. The building of the reservoirs falls within a period where hydropower was being constructed at an accelerating pace across the world (see e.g. Kauhanen, 2024; Cohn et al, 2020; Ma et al, 2005; Össbo, 2025). The modernization drive and the expansion of electricity production which was achieved by drowning entire communities and vast areas of land, are tightly linked to colonialist power structures and extractivist ways of thinking. Man, E from Sompio described the presence of skeletons in the bottom of reservoirs – he was referring to all the animals that drowned after the water rose. However, skeletons in the case of Lokka and Porttipahta might also reflect further understanding of the asymmetrical power relations and unjust practices. After all, at the time even the presence of drowned animals was contested (Aikio, P, 1991, 103).

In the following chapter I analyze how power imbalances, injustices and different colonial notions were reflected in the Lokka and Porttipahta case. By exploring the intertwined role of Kemijoki Ltd and authority I draw attention to power asymmetries and examine how an extractivist mindset was embedded in the goals and practices surrounding the reservoir constructions and the colonial dispossession over the homelands of the local communities.

8.1 Sutki Kemijokiyhtiö – cunning Kemijoki Company working within extractivist rationalities

> Well, it is a cunning company. There is nothing more to tell
>
> *No se on semmone sutki yhtiö. Ei siinä muuta tartte kertoa*. FGM C, Yli-Kitinen

State-led company Kemijoki Ltd became the driving force of the construction process of Lokka and Porttipahta, after Pohjolan Voima Ltd and Imatran Voima Ltd had begun the extensive damming of rivers in Northern Finland (Alaniska, 2013; Kauhanen, 2014, 92-95; Kauhanen 2024, 78). Government was involved already from the start in the damming work or "modernization goals" Kemijoki Ltd was pushing forward with the support of Urho Kekkonen (Alaniska, 2013, 261-262). From the perspective of the state, Kemijoki Ltd was a means to accelerate the hydropower

construction in the North and increase the energy production capacity of Finland. For local communities, however, the company was perceived as an unreliable actor. Man, C from Yli-Kitinen concisely culminated this by naming Kemijoki Ltd as a "*sutki yhtiö*" – a cunning company. Different accounts consistently repeated a similar negation towards Kemijoki Ltd.

Man, E from Sompio compared the company to a gang – something you stand before powerless: "*it is a gang. But that's just how it is — whose bread you eat, their songs you sing. It's a gang. Nobody can do anything about it* [Se on semmone kopla. Mutta sehän täytyy olla se, kenen leipää syöt, niin sen lauluja laulat. Koplahan se on. Ei sille voi mithään kukkaan]." He pointed out with his description the power structure behind the company – as he said "*whose bread you eat, their songs you sing* [kenen leipää, syöt niin sen lauluja laulat]" which could also be translated as: *he who pays the piper calls the tune.* It suggested that there is a complex line of power that was enforcing the hydropower development – people were following orders and working through the framework of what was believed to be necessary. Second generation man A made this notion visible by stating that: "*farmhands and cossacks do what they are told — in that style, what has been found to work and what they are instructed to do* [Rengit ja kasakathan tekkee mitä käskettään ja niillä, sillä tyylillä, mikä on hyväksi havaittu ja mitä ohjeistettaan]". Through a clearly context-specific example he articulated how ultimate decision-making has been done somewhere higher up — with workers simply following instructions and operating principles — even though these practices have in many respects been unjust, reinforcing inequality through the systematic distortion of power relations. Kemijoki Ltd is merely a faceless entity that cannot be fully held accountable. However, Kemijoki Ltd reflects the materialization of resource logics, and extractivist notions that were pressured down from governmental level.

Through many interviews Kemijoki Ltd was constructed as a company that took power away, by acting within calculated obscurity and secrecy. Woman A from Yli-Kitinen elaborated this by saying: "*But it is just that everything was done so secretly that people simply could not. And at that time people were so far from each other* [Mutta se on, että se on vaan tehty niin sallaa kaikki, että eihän - ei ihminen voi. Ja siihen aikhaan ihmisiä oli niin kaukana toisisthaan]". She reflected on how scarce information was and locals were unable to react. They also lived in sparsely populated areas where information was not easily accessible.

The actions carried out on the name of Kemijoki Ltd were in many ways deemed unforgivable. For instance, a woman F from Yli-Kitinen proclaimed that for her Kemijoki Ltd would be the last place to work at. For her work there would have been against her values. The company was still

overshadowed by the past wrongdoings – she said that "*the sins of the past weigh heavily for long time* [menneitten synnit painaa aika pitkälle]". By doing so she recognized the continued weight of past actions, *sins* in an extensive way. Likewise, woman B from Sompio explained that: *"I just cannot bring myself to respect them. There are good ones among them too, decent ones, humane ones, but—* [Enkä jaksa niinko sillai kunnioittaa heitä. Onhan niissäki hyviä isäntiä, sillai niinko inhimillisiä, mutta-]". The lack of respect includes deeply rooted exhaustion from experiences of mistreatment which forced relocation produced. However, some interviewees did also point out how Kemijoki Ltd has later financially assisted reservoir refugees, for example by organizing community gatherings. Yet notions of unjust practices and power-imbalances were implied throughout.

Local communities lived a different reality from the one navigated by a big state-led company. From the perspective of Kemijoki Ltd Kitinen and Luiro were seen as "stuff-waiting-to-be-sold-and-used" they were means to an end (Szeman & Wenzel, 2021; see section 3.3). Damming the natural flow of the free rivers was framed as a necessary response to the rapidly growing demands of modernization (see e.g Kauhanen, 2024). Embedded within the narrative of reservoir construction was a resonance of necessity and inevitability – against which, however, the interviews brough to light the company's and state officials' own pursuit of profit and resource exploitation. It pins actions of Kemijoki Ltd to extractivism framework, of exploitation and abuse of nature within capitalism (Szeman & Wenzel, 2021, 5; see for more section 3.3). This extractivist outlook of Kemijoki Ltd was implied in the interviews directly through their instrumental and reductive valuation of nature. A zero threshold (*nollaraja*) was imposed on the trees, above which they were redeemed worthless and left standing (see e.g. Kauhanen, 2024; 296-297; section 2.4).

> They were worthless because they were fiberwood and birch. It was not of any use. There must have been millions of cubic meters of birch alone that went under. Because the birch groves were so dense that you could barely fit through them with a boat.
>
> *Ne oli arvottomia ko ne oli kuitua ja koivua. Ei se käyny laathuun. Siellähä meni koivuaki varmaan miljoonakuutiova. Ko siellähän oli niin tihiä koivikoja ettei meinannu venneellä sopia menemhään millään.* FGM E, Sompio

The practice of leaving trees standing beneath the reservoirs resonated throughout the interviews as a concrete form of criticism directed at Kemijoki Ltd. It functioned as a clear example of the wrongdoings, and overlooking the importance nature held for the locals, which was done to a much larger extent. For example, in case of reindeer herding, the traditional knowledge of reindeer behavior and importance of different types of pastures was overlooked and not acknowledged (see e.g. Kauhanen, 2024, 268-295). The way any damage to nature was counted was in many places'

contradictory to the locally embedded knowledge and value-base, which came across the interviews as well.

> When the damages were calculated, it was not calculated at all what damages would come to people. And then even those calculations turned out to be wrong. And then there was the fact that so much timber was left there.
>
> *Kun laskettiin niitä vahinkoja, niin ei yhtään laskettu, mitä vahinkoja ihmisille tullee. Ja sitten neki meni pieleen ne laskelmat. Ja sitten se, että sinne jätettiin niin paljon sitä puuta sinne.* FGW D, Yli-Kitinen

The way woman from Yli-Kitinen in her narration encompasses the fully failed damage assessment and overlooking the human-aspect, and failure of acknowledging the impacts on nature with the trees left uncut shows the precedent water forests constructed. It embodies the perceived superiority of Kemijoki Ltd over nature which enabled the company to exploit resources in economically optimal ways. The company failed to recognize the value of traditional livelihoods, while the significance of the lands for community cohesion, individual wellbeing and quality of life remained outside the scope of consideration.

The same logic that overrode local rights in favor of corporate and national interest remains materially present today. The Lokka reservoir did not fully submerge the village of Mutenia — the houses still stand, but they are now owned by Kemijoki Ltd. The road into the village is locked with a barrier, and the keys are held by the company. The people from Sompio returned to this repeatedly. In their view, it would have been just for those houses to have remained with the families rather than as "*playground of Kemijoki*". Woman C from Sompio presented this notion of injustice well by wondering how Kemijoki Ltd had the right to those places, when the families with long lineages did not: "*On what right does the Kemijoki Ltd claim it for them as some kind of playground, where they go hunting, partying, and fishing? So what right do they have, if people there have roots going back hundreds of years* [Että millä oikeudella Kemijokiyhtiö omii sen itselleen tämmöseksi leikkipuistoksi, missä he käy metsästämässä ja juhlimassa ja kalastamassa. Niin, että mikä oikeus heillä on, jos ihmisillä on siellä niinku satojen vuosien takaa juuret]". A similar sense of injustice surfaced in the interviews with people from Yli-Kitinen, where some of the houses were demolished unnecessarily — they ended up sitting above the established water levels. These expressed feelings of injustices describe the land dispossession and remark ongoing colonial undertones in the actions of Kemijoki Ltd. Kemijoki Ltd was, and remains, even today, a company working within extractivist mindset.

8.2 Blind trust in the authority of "Herrat"

> Here they were always called *herrat*, the gentlemen. Some hydropower company *herrat*, gentlemen. And why were they even called *herrat*? That already shows the setup — that they were probably thought of as clever, fair gentlemen, educated and learned and thinking.
>
> *Täällähän aina sanottiin, että ne oli ne herrat. Jotkut vesivoimayhtiön herrat että. Ja miksi niitä sanottiin, ees herroiksi? Sekin jo osoittaa sen niinko sen asetelman, että varmaan ne on niinko on ajateltu, että ne on fiksuja, reiluja herroja ja lukeneita ja oppineita ja ajattellee.* SGM A

The interviewees not only reflected the invalidation towards Kemijoki Ltd, but also addressed the blind belief and trust of authority, including Kemijoki Ltd. As the second-generation man demonstrated, language itself constructs a subordinate position for the local people in relation to the authorities. At the time it was widely believed that the higher-ranking officials – *herrat* - possessed the relevant knowledge and authority, and their judgments could, and should not be questioned. This similar notion of *herrat* was present across the hydropower development expansion in Finland, directly creating a lesser position for locals compared to Kemijoki Ltd, governmental officials – like Kekkonen (Autti, 2013, 100-123). This asymmetrical power dynamic, within which people had to seek their own agency was articulated in many interviews. Woman B from Sompio stated this directly, when she pondered over, how it had been possible that lands were submerged and people displaced – just after surviving the horrors of the war.

> It should never be done again. Anyone's lands should never be drowned or people forced out. The war was so recent. How did something like this get through? - The gentlemen are in power and these people have only been used to bowing down and doing as told.
>
> *Ei ikinä sais ennää niin tehhä. Ei ikinä sais kenenkhään maita upottaa eikä pakottaa. Sota oli niin lähellä. Miten tämmönen pääsi? Herrat on vallassa ja nämä ihmiset on tottunu vain nöyrtymhään ja tekemhään* FGW B Sompio

This statement echoes the inevitability that was both embedded into the justifications of reservoirs, and lack of agency local communities had. A second-generation man A also addressed how people were still burdened by the terrors of war. They were just happy to be alive and fighting yet again, this time against their own government and the "demand for the good of nation" might not have been a feasible action to take, and after wartime experiences the loss of homeland might have seemed secondary. Weight of war, accompanied with faith in authority, and lack of sufficient knowledge further stripped-down agency. Several believed that the situation would be different today, as attitudes and awareness have since shifted — in the past, local people were in a far more directly inferior

position. Man D from Yli-Kitinen verbalized this: "*If people had the knowledge and the attitudes that are now, there would certainly have been resistance. But back then... How would forest people have known*? [Jos tällä tievolla ja näillä asentehilla, mitä nyt tuota on, niin kyllä siitä olis vasthaanpantu. Mutta tuota eihän silloin. - Mistä ne mettäihimiset tiesi?]". He saw the lack of information and the attitudes of that time enabling locals to resist more.

There was an interesting cross-cutting pattern across interviews with older men tying them to the power asymmetries directly and deeply. Throughout the reservoir building process, they seemed to possess more active role compared to many others, which can be related to age, gender, and active role in subsistence livelihood. Despite their active participatory role, they consistently and uniformly gave voice to lack of agency. There were several recurring impressions of passiveness, repeating deterministic lack of agency saying: "*there is nothing to be done about it*" which depicts how otherwise active people could not grasp their agency in relation to the fact, that the reservoirs were made.

Interestingly, they did extend this disempowerment into relations to the reservoirs now. Man C, from Yli-Kitinen saw taking a stance now in his late 70s meaningless: "What's done is done. There's no point in having any opinion. It's pointless to start having any opinion [*Ko ne on tehty niin non tehty. Ei kannate olla mithään mieltä. Son turha alakaa olla mittään mieltä]*". Man, E from Sompio carried in his narration similar feeling of succumbing to that what is done, is done: "*You see, there is nothing you can do about what has been done. That's just how it is. You have to believe that it is there, and it will stay there for some time* [Katoko, ei sille voi tehylle yhen mithään. Niin, se on tämmöinen. Täytyy uskoa, että se on tuossa, ja se jonkun aikaa pyssyy]". While these accounts reflect the imbalanced power, they can also protect the sense of self from the threads of traumatic experiences. It is a coping mechanism for the fact that they were once fully powerless to prevent the drowning of their homeland.

8.3 Violated nature, violated communities

> The justification was that it was needed for reconstruction, it was needed, and for Finland to rise. Pfft! — energy to the south. And Kekkonen was behind it, owned shares in Kemijoki Ltd. And the old men were plied with drink. Karppinen walked around with a leather briefcase and got men drunk to sign papers and so on. Yes, it was quite something like — in a way like structural violence against people who had come through the war — having rebuilt everything.
>
> *Perusteluksi tarvittiin jälleenrakentamiseen, tarvittiin ja Suomi nousuun. Plää! - energiaa etelään. Ja Kekkonen oli sen takana, omisti osakkeita Kemijokiyhtiöstä. Ja ukkoja juotettiin. Karppinen kulki nahkasalkun kanssa ja juotti miehiä allekirjoittamaan papereita ja näin. Kyllä*

> *se aikamoinen tavallaan niinko sellasta rakenteellista väkivaltaa niinku ihmisiä kohtaan, jotka on tullut sodasta – kaikki rakennettu uudestaan.* FGW C, Sompio.

This narrative of woman C from Sompio brings together the deepest power asymmetries of reservoir construction. From it emerges the justifications for reservoirs, considering the center-periphery dynamic between the south and the north. The role of state – specifically Kekkonen – emerges as a sustaining and enabling force. She describes a concrete manifestation of imbalance through the estate sales. In many respects they did not proceed according to principles of good faith and fair practice. Taken together, these observations illuminate institutionally rooted violence that woman from Sompio directly recognizes and names as structural violence.

The previously recognized perception of environmental trauma, dislocation, and detachment of culturally, socially, and practically embedded place and identifications not only indicate the presence of power imbalances, but also notions of violence. Structural violence constructs needs-deficits (e.g. through exploitation) that can create traumas, when the need-deficits materialize abruptly (Galtung, 1996, 200). The driving force towards the immediate rupture in way of life was generally tied into structural, culturally accepted forms of violence that marginalized locals and nature as dispensable (Galtung, 1996; see section 3.3). In case of Lokka and Porttipahta the materialization of violence was tied onto three pillars: forced relocation, nature destruction and the temporal continuum and accumulation.

The experienced violence was embedded into the political and power structure, namely relating it to structural violence where relocation for the greater good was culturally constructed justification (Galtung, 1996; see section 3.3; see Kauhanen, 2024 on justification process). Already the act of displacing whole communities disrupts the notion of safety and constrains the well-being of people. The narratives of injustice and dissatisfaction with the estate sales and practices around them in the interviews spoke clearly of a systematic divide-and-conquer tactics that reduced the local agency. The lack of consistency and involuntariness represents violence as the foundation of the relocation mechanisms.

The devastating nature destruction, that some of the interviewees called even *crime against nature*, was a cornerstone in the whole Lokka and Porttipahta scheme. Woman C from Sompio saw the connection between witnessing violation of nature and mental distress: "*in a way, when you saw it—like, what had happened—a violated environment. Even though it brought economic benefits, like new houses, indoor toilets, and running water—material prosperity—there was still that kind of mental distress*. [Tavallaan se, kun näki sen, niinku mitä tapahtui, raiskattu ympäristö. Vaikka se toi

taloudellista tuli uudet talot ja sisävessat ja vesijohdot, taloudellista hyvinvointia, niin sitten se semmonen henkinen pahoinvointi]". Her description linked violence against nature as something personally wounding. It shows how violent acts did not have to be only directed directly towards people for them to wound communities and individuals. That violent act towards nature overlooking livelihoods, and cultural continuity can be placed as environmental violence (Narchi, 2015). Nature was exploited, and the harm was left for communities, - and environment, to carry further.

Since communities and individuals were deeply entangled with the land, the drowning of nature folded into inevitable violence against people (see further section 3.3; MacNeil, 2018). The force behind reservoir was working within extractivist frameworks, - like the imperfect loggings initiated by Kemijoki Ltd. The violence local communities were faced with was indirect and embedded into structures and slowly marginalized people into reservoir refugees. However, the land was directly violated by large-scale human-made environmental destruction. Shelin MacNeil named this direct physical violence "*inflicted on people by extractive industries wanting access to land*" as extractive violence, which directly violates nature, and/or people and animals and is powered by extractivism (2018, 86). The extractive violence destroyed the nature-based life in Sompio and Yli-Kitinen.

The remark on extractive violence especially in case of Lokka and Porttipahta is closely connected to the idea rooted in settler colonialism theory how "*contests for land can be – indeed, often are – contests for life"* (Wolfe, 2006, 387). Hydropower development disabled the very means of life leaving long-lasting mark on the dispossessed communities for generations to come. Interviews reflected and observed the slow cultural destruction brought upon by drowning lands. By destroying the land that carried generations of knowledge, memories and identification, it did not only demolish the place but slowly crumbled a whole way of being. Impacts continue to be folded across time, transferring many burdens for new generations to carry while placing the occurring violence within the temporality of slow violence (Nixon, 2011; see section 3.3). The importance of the environment for passing traditional knowledge and continuing culture was overlooked by the authorities (see Tervaniemi & Magga, 2019, 83). It was structurally redeemed that the land and communities were not that valuable, that they should have been conserved from extractivist expansions.

8.4 Drowning homelands for a "greater good"

> Well, you cannot. What is done cannot be undone. Look, those bogs and all—they have formed over hundreds of thousands of years. The river will manage, sure as hell—it will open its channels if it cannot get through otherwise, if you start looking at the bottom there. But since it has been

> done for the common good, then yeah, damn it, sure, it is of some use. But I reckon it is not all that much. At least I doubt it.
>
> *Eihän sitä voi. tehtyä ei saa tekemättömäksi. Kato ko se on satojen tuhansien vuosien aikhaan saannos tuo, nuot jängät ja. Jokihan kyllä seleviää saatana, sehän aukoo reikänsä ko se ei muualta pääse, jos se pohjaki katotaan tuosta. mutta eihän se ko se on yhteiseen hyötyyn tehty, niin totta siitä saatana on hyötyä. mutta minä luulen, ettei siitä niin kauhiasti ole. Ainaki minä eppäilen*. FGM E, Sompio

The pressing need of Lokka and Porttipahta culminated into discourses of "greater good"[18]. Sacrificing local livelihoods, and homes was deemed necessary and acceptable loss. The narration by man E from Sompio speaks of the long history of the nature itself, that was stripped by something irreversible – yet he sees how the river persists. The riverbed is still flowing in the bottom of the reservoir. Everything else was sacrificed for the greater good, which is something man E is not sure if he believes in. In any case, the reservoirs were made within the trajectory of sacrificing Yli-Kitinen and Sompio to accommodate the demands of rising living standards and to maintain the 'better life' of others.

Whether reservoirs had done any good and truly boosted Finland's growth was reflected across the interviews. During the interview woman C from Sompio was pondering over the idea of "greater good", and she humorously noted how nowadays Kemijoki Ltd would have embedded the whole "greater good" ideology into marketing: "*Finland needs this. Finland rising again through reservoirs – would probably nowadays be a slogan* [Suomi tarvitsee tätä. Suomi nousuun altaiden kautta -iskulause ois nykyään varmaan]". Her narrative paints vividly how much weight the argument of national need had. Even if that argument is contested by locals. At the same time interviews conveyed a wish that reservoirs were truly made from necessity and forced by perhaps wider geopolitical circumstances. Second generation man expressed how knowing that there was an actual reason behind it would make accepting all the endured loss easier for everyone. In that case the reservoirs would not only be an embodiment of resource colonialism and suppressing one local culture into margins. First generation woman F from Yli-Kitinen thought that the importance of reservoirs would not be

[18] Terra Nullius companied the national development justification of reservoirs. Jouni Kauhanen has further researched this justification narrative (2024), and identified a series of rhetorical justifications — rooted in terra nullius: the logic of numbers, economy, and power; the discourse of necessity and inevitability; the framing of wilderness as empty and uninhabited; the construction of bog areas as worthless; sparse settlement and the marginality of local livelihoods; the harm logic of small numbers; the promise of increased employment and tax revenues; and the emphasis on authorities own expertise

denied today – Kemijoki Ltd and the state have the means to always highlight the greater good of hydropower development.

> Sure, they can immediately explain how important this puddle is for the national economy. If it were even the case that locals in Lapland would actually benefit from it – so that we would have cheaper electricity because of the power plants. But we don't.
>
> *Kyllähän ne osaa heti selittää, kuinka kansantaloudellisesti tärkeä tämä lätäkkö nyt on. Jos se ois edes niin, että nämä lappilaiset hyötyis tästä niin, että meillä olisi halvempi sähkö näitten voimalaitosten takia. Mutta ei ole*. FGW F, Yli-Kitinen

It was widely acknowledged in the interviews that the sacrificing done in the name of electricity production is at least not producing any benefits back[19]. This illustrates how the sacrificing of Yli-Kitinen and Sompio was not only done from an extractivist outlook but reflects broader colonialist structures in Northern Finland.

When asked, if Lapland is a resource reservoir (resurssivarasto) for southern Finland, second generation man A observed that at least the produced energy is not used locally: "*I doubt that those electric mills have ever produced anything that has ended up benefiting any locals* [tuskinpa se ainakkaan se net sähkömyllyt on ikinä jauhannut että ne jollekin paikalliselle olis sitte tullu]", while all the promised good has vanished, "*It has leaked somewhere – but has it then gone into the common good and shared pot* [Jonnekin se on valunu, mutta että onko se sinne yhteiseen hyvvään ja pottiin]". This pinpoints how reservoirs were built from a framework that recognized northern peripheric settings exploitable. It subjected the local communities to dispossession.

8.5 Marginalization towards resource reserve

> There was need for electricity. It was necessary. Driven by necessity, since technology already existed. And Kekkonen was a strong boy pushing it forward. I do think though that it is not entirely fair. Since it is produced here and we have lost all these rivers because of it, then there should be getting at least some benefits. But now there is not—it just goes off somewhere.
>
> *Sähköä piti saaha. Se oli välttämätöntä. Pakon sanelemaa melekeen, koska tekniikkaa jo oli siinä. Ja Kekkonen oli kova poika ajamhaan asiaa. Sitä minä ajattelen kyllä sillä lailla, että se ei aivan*

[19] Some did recognize that the reservoirs did bring a rich fishing culture with them, but man C from Yli-Kitinen who had worked as a fisherman at the reservoir for over a decade noted:" *What did the fish matter anyway. You could get fish from there before too* [Mitä se vaikutti se kala? Siitä sai ennenki kallaa]". For him, getting a new commercial livelihood did not add more value than what was lost.

> *oikeuenmukasta ole. Että kyllä meän ku täältä tuotethaan ja tämä on menetetty kaikki tämä joet, niin kyllä etuki pitäs olla vähän. Mutta nythän siitä ei, se mennee tuonne*. FGM D, Yli-Kitinen

These trajectories of marginalization for sacrifice do not only speak of resource logics of Kemijoki Ltd, accounts of multiple violences or peak of power asymmetries in estate sale processes as singular detached accounts. Rather together these situate the whole Lokka and Porttipahta reservoir building towards colonial framework. Reservoirs have been "*robbery* [ryöstöjuttu]", where land was viewed as "*this is empty land, there is no one else here than reindeer* [tämä on joutilasta maata täällä, että täällä ei ole kettään muita ko poroja]", as woman A from Yli-Kitinen emphasized. There were multiple accounts on how locals lacked any meaningful negotiation possibilities.

> The negotiating parties have been so unequal — on one side there are some reindeer herders who have for most of their lives have only skied around the fells and forests, and on the other side there are top lawyers who read their papers like the devil reads the Bible.
>
> *Neuvotteluosapuolet on ollut niin epäsuhtaset, että toisella puolella on jotakin palakisen poromiehiä, jokka on suuremman osan elämässä vain hiihtänyt tuolla ympyrää tuolla tunturissa ja mettässä, ja toisella puolella on huippulakimiehet, jokka lukee kyllä niitä ko piruraamattua kaiken maan papereitansa*. SGM A

This was accompanied by feelings of injustices, and wrongdoings that were carried out through interviews. Woman B from Sompio described these by acknowledging how wrongdoings were forced upon: "*In my view, such a great injustice was done there. And it shows that no matter what one did, it did not help. It did not help* [Mun mielestä siinä on tehty niin suuri vääryys. Ja se kertoo, että vaikka se ois tehnyt mitä, niin ei auttanut. Ei auttanut]". Experienced injustices have left traces of bitterness, which has been difficult to direct at any concrete actor. This is painting a picture of something broader, that would grasp the multitudes related to the damming.

The post -1900 has been called "*an extractive colonial regime"* where terra nullius rhetorics paved way for the intensifying land dispossessions (Sörlin et al, 2023, 37). In Finland Lokka and Porttipahta represent the most consequential materialization of this extractive colonial regime. They have set the precedent for continued colonial dispossessions in Northern Finland and showcase the marginalization of Northern Finland into resource reserve – as man E from Sompio said – "*you cannot really imagine it being anything else* [ei sitä muuksi voi kuitenkhaan kuvitella]". Ever since Lokka and Porttipahta the accumulation of extraction projects has become part of the lived realities. There is a narrative of colonial dispossession integrated with contest over survival, power and belonging in Northern Finland.

8.6 Regaining agency and persistent resilience

> I have genuinely thought that these reservoirs will still be dismantled one day. And I do not consider it impossible at all.
>
> *Kyllä minä oikeasti olen ajatellut niin, että nämä puretaan vielä nämä altaat. Enkä minä ollenkaan piä sitä mahottomana* FGW F, Yli-Kitinen

Even if locals have endured suppressions and been subjected to many forms of violence, and hold deep essential loss within them, it has not marginalized them into victimhood. If trust in authority and *herrat* prevailed previously, that notion has been turned upside down. Second-generation man A pointed how the word "*herra*" has regained a certain twist today. Words have become now filled with complete lack of trust and respect – the knowledge from the past wrongdoing is carried into everyday action within the continued industrial development. In a sense, changing the meaning of the word *herra* is not only telling of shift in the mindset and attitudes, but signals slowly rising resistance.

The experience of the blind authority trust of *herrat* has retrospectively understood as something unjust and not trustworthy. It presents how the knowledge and experience from hydropower development have slowly enabled resistance – there is now knowledge, what can be lost, and how exploitation can happen structurally through disabling communities. People also believed that today, such a drastic land dispossession would not materialize. Local communities have now better means and more knowledge of impacts and their rights that resistance can be feasible. According to many, now the decision makers would be forced to listen voice of locals.

Slow regain of agency, and power resonated within interviews as hope for place restoration. The above quote of woman F from Yli-Kitinen was just one example of the repeating narrative that one day Lokka and Porttipahta dams will be taken down, and the land will be restored. People reflected how they had heard, and even actively researched how elsewhere in the world there has been successful dam removals (see e.g. Magilligan et al, 2017) – others recollected that possible terrorist attacks, or security breaches could lead onto blowing up the dams.

After all the changes, injustices and difficult experiences of loss interviews still showed the resilience of people, which has been both a necessity for them to survive in the post-war setting, and coping with the loss of homes and a culturally embedded value of *pärjääminen*. Second-generation man described the earlier generations as extremely strong people, which conveys a *narrative of contested agency within the reality of colonial dispossession.* It establishes how agency and adaptability were restricted, while pointing to a gradual reclamation of agency and resilience.

9 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

> Only memories were left behind.
>
> *Ei sinne jääny ko muistot*. FGM E, Sompio

This research explored the enduring intergenerational consequences of reservoir induced dispossessions. Through thematic narrative analysis guided by three conceptual approaches I identified four main narratives that capture and explain the historically rooted and persisting impacts of Lokka and Porttipahta. The loss of the environment understood as homeland, did not only disrupt the place attachment formed through intergenerational traditional knowledge, meaningful memories and multigenerational community bonds. The drowning of this culturally and socially produced environment dislocated identity and roots in a way that many other relocations cannot. The lived land was erased, leaving an ontologically embedded essential longing - not only to the physical environment, but for the homelands where distinct cultural practices were sustained within tight-knit communities.

This has fractured roots for future generations, leaving them with an intergenerational void – anchored in preserved knowledge of the old family homeplaces while distancing from lived contact with anything other than the now artificial lake environment. This massive human-produced environmental modification generated an intergenerational environmental trauma echoing colonial power asymmetries that eroded agency and forced displacement. The practices that once marginalized the local communities of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen continue to be reproduced while, resilience gradually works to restore the agency that was eliminated. Lokka and Porttipahta are products of politically embedded extractivist instrumentalizations of nature - induced by resource colonial mindset that continues to be reproduced in current resource exploitation projects.

These findings both reflect and extend existing frameworks. For local communities, place attachments were formed through everyday practices and the accumulation of place-based knowledge that enabled coping and coexisting (*pärjääminen*) with the land. Sompio and Yli-Kitinen cannot be reduced to geographic locations, as they have long been embedded with identity, belonging, and self-understanding across generations. The findings of this thesis demonstrate how memories and belonging continue to be reproduced intergenerationally despite displacement, and inherent loss of the land.

While the lost environment was in many regards irreplaceable, authorities approached it through what Sörlin et al (2023) would call a colonially framed resource logic — a mindset that viewed nature as

inherently inferior and exploitable. Massa (1994) identified early on how hydropower development was framed through technical and economic development perspectives in his classical study where he situated the environmental history of Northern Finland within the context of extractive economy that he referred to as *ryöstätalous* – exploitative economy. The extractive political atmosphere facilitated bypassing the significance of nature for local livelihoods. Yet those livelihoods had to adapt to the newly created reality of having less ground and more water. At the time, livelihoods were also undergoing a natural transition related to broader societal change and modernization. Hydropower development, however, intensified the change. Reindeer herding was one of the most permanently impacted livelihoods since the whole herding culture changed, and different co-operatives went through turmoil when extensive amounts of rich grazing grounds were lost. Adapting for the sudden degradation of pastures took time and is still ongoing, while land use pressure continues to increase. The accumulation of negative spill-off from extractive expansions is built upon the lost pastures under the reservoirs which form restrictions to adapt to any new land use developments.

The place attachment literature identifies especially how involuntary relocations form feelings of grief, homesickness and disrupt identity and destabilize the sense of security (Brown & Perkins, 1992; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). The loss of homelands reflects something beyond mere homesickness revealing how the complete inaccessibility of submerged homelands produces what this thesis calls *essential longing*, an ontologically embedded yearning that persists when return is fundamentally impossible. Rootedness and belonging are sustained through essential longing which embodies the continued identity-defining significance of dismantled roots.

Anguelovski (2013) has discussed similar dynamics noting that destruction generates "*personal and collective loss and confusion over where one belongs*" sparking fear of erasure, and feelings of dispossession (2013, 223). The complete absence of the old homelands and the remaining sense of rootedness form a longing towards the socially and physically rooted sense of home that is only accessible through memories. It resembles longing that is tied into the very being of people. Despite the ontologically embedded essential longing, local communities are not stuck in what Brown and Perkins (1992) called the *dysfunctional limbo* rather efforts have been made to ensure moving on from the loss.

The drowning of homelands created a bundle of emotions and caused the collapse of a culturally grounded way of being. This made place-specific knowledge empty and impossible to transfer across generations, rendering it, in a sense, meaningless. This not only posed an existential threat to the physical surroundings, but also to people, underlining the presence of environmental trauma resulting from displacement. While interviews reflected loss, displacement, transferred longing and even

extreme sadness, it does not necessarily mean that individuals are traumatized for good. Rather than reducing communities and individuals to paralysis and victimhood, communities have demonstrated remarkable resilience. They *pärjäsivät*[20], persevered, which demonstrates their capacity to adapt and slowly regain agency. This has enabled a mental shift away from the excessive *nöyrtyminen*, the silent submission and bowing down to the deemed authority of *herrat* which can be understood as one form of "slow resistance" (Fung & Lamb, 2023, 1663). The term recognizes slow resistances to be more strategic and cumulative than everyday forms of resistance. It often builds on top of already experienced development and displacement (Fung & Lamb, 2023, 1663-1664). Past experiences have activated locals to participate more in negotiations and resist the erasure of their communities and livelihoods, already experienced once.

Not only have the experiences of rootedness and environmental trauma been passed down through but also the lived reality of colonial dispossession has been transmitted on multiple levels. Hence, the environmental trauma from the construction of Lokka and Porttipahta should be viewed through the emerging decolonizing trauma trajectories to see beyond the Eurocentric perspective that is tends to overlook the ongoing, traumatizing violence embedded in daily life (Lea, 2020, 736). In accordance with Lea's (2020) discussions environmental trauma should not be reduced to fixed personal dysfunction, rather extended into collectively reproduced condition that reflects the scale and cumulation of the environmental and social disruption. The loss of homelands is not only a singular historical event but rather it is a persisting reality. Understanding why this loss persists requires situating it within the broader political and colonial structures that both produced and continue to reproduce it.

9.1 Colonial precedent of Lokka and Porttipahta

Hydropower development in Northern Finland has been underpinned by unequal power dynamics and the sacrifice of local communities, culture, and nature in pursuit of national development goals, as framed by resource colonialism and extractivism. Situating Lokka and Porttipahta within this context connects them to broader discussions of Arctic as a resource frontier where interests have historically collided (e.g. Sörlin et al, 2023; Gritsenko, 2018). Dislocated communities highlight experiences of injustices and lack of recognition of local rights within the discourses that enabled the marginalization of northern livelihoods and environments. This history has shaped sense of contested agency. Lokka and Porttipahta serve as precedent that shape the understanding of displacement,

[20] Section 5.2 has clarified the term *pärjätä*.

disrupted livelihoods and transformed belonging in Northern Finland. Hydropower development as a political decision embedded in modernization discourses dispossessed the local communities by destroying nature closely linked with well-being and identity (see e.g. Narchi, 2015, 8-9, has discussed the link between colonial powers, environmental violence and dispossessions). The ways in which reservoirs were developed reflected the many forms of violence, most notably extractive violence, closely connected to environmental and slow violence. The term of slow violence yields a possibility to link the historical displacement into the intensifying extractive trajectories in Central Lapland Region.

Lassila (2025) recognizes how the global drive towards greener energy solutions has increased mineral exploration and wind power development which has become increasingly visible in the Central Lapland region. Now green transition and security discourses are actively used to justify new extractive projects, and, in a sense, they follow the footsteps of Lokka and Porttipahta and accumulate to the past losses. The sense of necessity and urgency for development at the expense of the local communities is reproduced. This amplifies the role of Northern Finland as resource reservoir not only for the southern Finland, but increasingly for whole Europe (see Lassila, 2025; 2021). The way local landscapes and communities are left with accumulating and slowly unfolding damages, while the benefits flow out of the region reflects what scholarly discussions of slow violence identify as the temporal dimensions of extractive and environmental harm (Nixon, 2011; Narchi, 2015; MacNeil, 2018).

The colonial and extractivist outlook and continued reproduction during current land use pressures intertwine evidently with reindeer herding. The exercise of power and marginalization during hydropower development was quite explicitly dispossessing the local Sompio and Yli-Kitinen communities that were in many regards' cohesive communities. They had a distinct land-based culture and belonging that got fragmented. Similar land dispossession within resource colonial regime is continuing in the same area today, but the cultural landscape of localities has changed and the number of extractivist projects has grown exponentially. Situating the ongoing dispossession with reindeer herding can provide a clear lens for contrasting past and present. Reindeer herding has still held tightly the importance of place-based traditional knowledge, and cultural distinctiveness, while depending on the environment for survival. In a sense, it most clearly represents the distinct cultural and traditional place-based locality of the central Lapland region.

Lokka and Porttipahta form part of a broader trajectory of resource colonialism in Finland, setting a precedent for continued and reproduced land dispossessions. Communities carry the weight of past displacement and historical power asymmetries — making them increasingly wary of current land

use processes while slowly activating resistance. Yet northern local communities and their livelihoods remain repeatedly deemed sacrificial, as they were before. The land is a base of existence, and disputes over nature become fundamental questions of survival and belonging. These questions have not remained in history but have deepened. Willow's (2018, 2) observation that "*sites of ongoing extractivism almost always become contested, politicized landscapes*" describes a dynamic that encapsulates the gradual but profound challenge extractivism poses to local communities in Northern Finland.

By recognizing Lokka and Porttipahta as a product of unbalanced power synergies rooted in extractivism, the prospects of addressing the colonial dispossession can be framed. This thesis makes visible the silences and lack of recognition surrounding both the past and ongoing land dispossessions, which in in turn call for a broader political and societal conversation. The damage to local communities, livelihoods, culture and environment should be better addressed, and perhaps even retroactive compensation, especially to the disrupted livelihoods, could be in place. It would also be essential to ensure that similar sacrifice of local communities and livelihood for the benefits of others would not happen and that the rights of local communities are respected. This would require drastic policy changes, recognition of the resource colonial frameworks and departing from resource logic mindset. Addressing these questions sufficiently still requires a deeper inquiry into histories and present-day embodiments.

9.2 Future research

Lokka and Porttipahta have been explored in many ways yet new questions and need for knowledge emerge constantly. For every question answered in this thesis new gap was revealed. The recognized extractivist nature of Kemijoki Ltd could be broadened towards the modern-day role of Kemijoki Ltd. Especially as currently the company is planning pumped storage power plant into Kemijärvi to Ailangantunturi regardless of strong local resistance (see e.g. Saukkonen, 2026). Role of Kekkonen as the political force behind Kemijoki Ltd would form an additional analytical focus that relates to questions interviewees also raised. As memories were central in this thesis, going deeper into memory politics could further show power dynamics, and increase the understanding of the context, while also address questions of justice and equality more broadly.

Researching place attachment opened space for new relevant questions relating to the locations and distance of the newly established homes – it would be worth to extend the inquiry to see how the new place has impacted creation of new attachments and moving on from the experienced loss. To expand

research to the role of age when moving, could also be interesting – as it seemed that those who were children or young adults at the time of relocation experienced the change more devastating compared to those who were teenager or just stepping into young adulthood. This research was limited to two generations, so reaching inquiries to cover third – or even fourth generations could be valuable.

Revisiting the livelihoods and the changes experienced even more specifically than before would be in order. In case of reindeer herding the research, focus had been mainly on Lappi co-operative, so further extending that into the other affected districts would be in place. Especially as the interviews did raise narratives of how reindeer herding, especially in Sattasniemi co-operative drastically changed and is still shaped and limited by the loss of pasture lands. Situation of Oraniemi and Kemin-Sompio would also be meaningful research focus as they are also experiencing existential pressures from extractive industries. It would be interesting to see what the actual losses were and how those reflect the losses recognized by compensation. That could give place for discussions about retroactive compensation.

The unequal distribution of the existing literature between Sompio and Yli-Kitinen should also be addressed further. This could be contextualized through the mystification of Sompio that literature from the 19th and 20th century specially constructed (e.g. Paulaharju). This not only raises the question why Yli-Kitinen has been left to margins, but also represents how Sompio has been mystified, which calls attention to relate it to colonial powers.

This research aimed to address the lack of research of in extractive and colonial contexts in Northern Finland outside the Sámi homeland area, while making the gap more visible. Lokka and Porttipahta are located into the border zone of Sámi homeland region, - yet there has not been that much research done over them especially internationally, even though they would suit into a broader body of literature on post WWII hydropower development across the world. The specialty of Northern Finland requires more situating the marginalized role as resource reservoir of Southern Finland and increasingly for whole Europe of Northern Finland, particularly the Central Lapland region. This is something that could be perhaps addressed through reindeer herding, as the central Lapland region is legally recognized as an area specifically intended for reindeer herding – there reindeer herding has specific land rights, and long tradition woven into the cultural reality (848/1990, 2§). All of this raises an unresolved question: if there is a limit to adaptability of communities would be interesting in the context of the ongoing intensification of extractivist industries – how much giving up for the greater good is too much?

9.3 Reflection on intergenerational loss

In the beginning of one interview, I was asked what most surprising finding for me would be. After a short reflection I answered that perhaps most surprising would be if these interviews would connect with my own reflections as a third-generation person, who has regularly been around the reservoirs and heard memories and stories of the lost lands. The person I interviewed concluded that maybe this thesis is for you a way of preventing you going crazy – in a sense, this has been my way of processing the transferred trauma traces and essential longing. Although it did couple of time make me reflect the whole trauma trajectory – I had to stop to think, if I or any researcher to that matter has the right of determine who is traumatized and how, and under what type of trauma, should all recollections of difficult traumatic events be put.

This research reflected the loss of homelands, and the displaced roots that are experienced even by the generations that were themselves not relocated. Importance of knowing ones' roots was highlighted, even if that might come with the burden of essential longing – longing for something that you can almost see and touch, but somehow it will always remain out of grasp. This observation was perhaps one of the surprising findings – of which the one interviewee asked of. In a sense through my own experiences and observation of my own family, I had witnessed longing and missing, that was more than nostalgia and homesickness, but after conducting many interviews I just began to understand that longing better as something that was repeated throughout generations. Findings tied rootedness and bondedness into place and communities that do not exist anymore in the same sense as they did, which I could see echoing in my own lived reality. My personal reflections are, in a sense, evidence of the research finding rather than separate from them.

Results also reflected the marginalization of Lapland as resource reserve. This made me understand better the environment where I operate as a reindeer herder in the current hotspot of mineral exploration and the intergenerational burden cumulating from Porttipahta and Lokka. By making displacement, power dynamics and intergenerational consequences visible, there can be hope for recognition and reconciliation.

In this thesis I recognized the role of Sompio and Yli-Kitinen as homelands. The permanent loss drowning induced has fundamentally transformed the place-based subsistence life while constructing traces of intergenerationally transmitted environmental trauma. The bond to home and roots runs so deep that it continues to be passed on across generations, persisting in memories and in the relationships with the reservoirs. Communities demonstrate a resilience that endures strongly despite

the presence of essential longing, the sharp dislocation from community and livelihoods and the ongoing reproduction of colonial dispossession.

Sámi poet Áillohaš, Nils-Aslak Valkeapää has written a poem that presents well how land is lived and how it connects to heritage. It depicts well the meaning that Sompio and Yli-Kitinen have as homelands. I am including the poem in the original northern Sámi, in Finnish, as the specific northern dialect that holds cultural and regional identity aspects within has been integral part of this thesis and in English language, so the content remains accessible.

71. eanan	71. maa	71. the land
lea earálágan	on erilainen	is different
go das lea orron	kun sillä on asunut	when you have lived there
vánddardan	vaeltanut	wandered
bivástuvván	hikoillut	sweated
šuvččagan	palelluttanut	frozen
oaidnán beaivvi	nähnyt päivän	seen the sun
luoitime loktaneame	laskevan nousevan	set rise
láhppome ihtime	katoavat ilmestyvän	disappear return
eanan lea earálágan	maa on erilainen	the land is different
go diehtá	kun tietää	when you know
dáppe	täällä juuret	here are
máttut	tyvet	roots
máddagat		ancestors

Nils- Aslak Valkeapää

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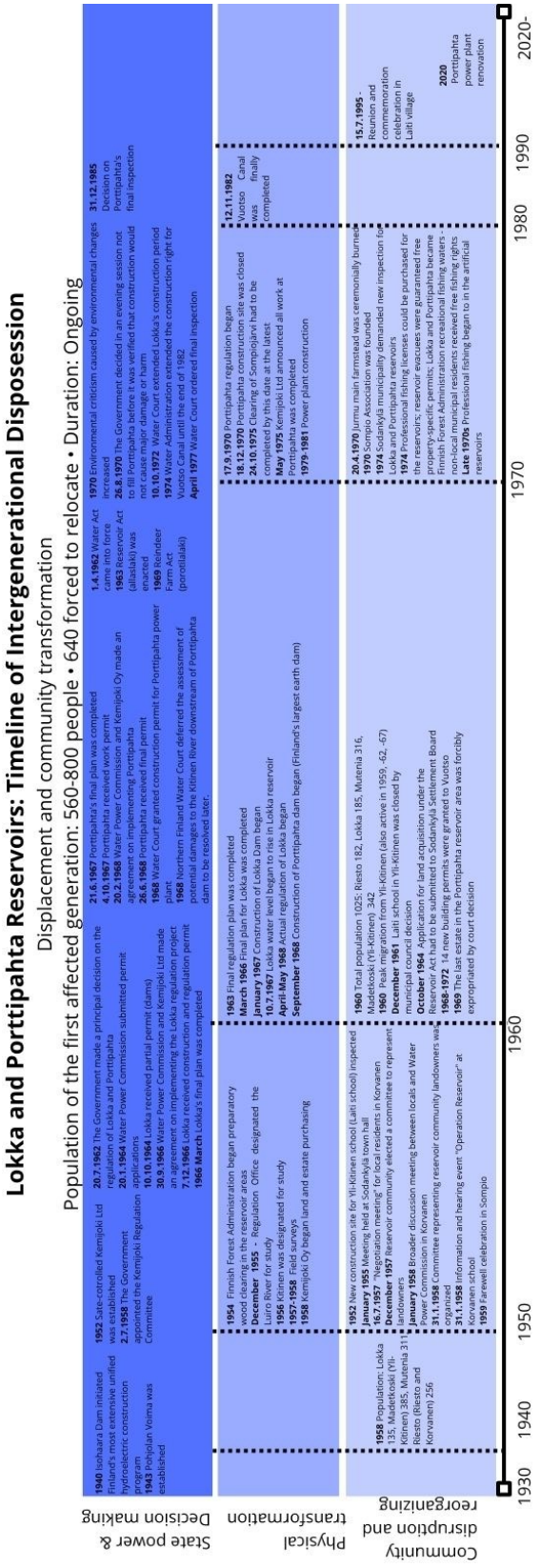
11 Appendix

Appendix 1. Timeline of Lokka and Porttipahta construction



Appendix 2. Consent form in Finnish

Pro-Gradu tutkielma: Porttipahdan ja Lokan tekoaltaiden ylisukupolviset vaikutukset poronhoitoon sekä paikallisyhteisöihin

Tutkija: Viola Ukkola

Osasto: Lapin Yliopisto yhteiskuntatieteiden tiedekunta – Arktinen Maailmanpolitiikka I Arktinen Keskus, Arktinen antropologia

Tietoa suostumuslomakkeesta

Tässä Pro-Gradu tutkielmassa tutkin, minkälaiset vaikutukset Porttipahdan ja Lokan tekoaltaiden rakentamisella on ollut ylisukupolvisesti poronhoitoon sekä paikallisyhteisöihin. Tutkin siis allasrakentamisen pitkäjänteisiä vaikutuksia allasalueelta muuttaneisiin ihmisiin sekä yhteisöihin. Tarkoituksenani on tutkia, minkälaiset suorat seuraukset allasrakentamisella on ollut heti rakentamisen aikaan sekä jälkeen. Tutkin kuitenkin myös sitä, kuinka tekoaltaat ja allasrakentamisen historia ovat edelleen läsnä ja minkälaisia vaikutuksia tekoaltailla on vielä nykyäänkin. Tutkin myös niiden yhteyttä muuhun teolliseen maankäyttöön Lapissa. Pyrin tutkimuksellani tuomaan esiin tekoaltaiden merkitystä kulttuurin ja elinkeinorakenteen muutokseen Lapissa sekä kuinka ne edelleenkin vaikuttavat paikallisten elinkeinojen ja ihmisten elämään.

Seuraavassa osiossa käydään läpi sinun rooliasi tutkimukseen osallistujana. **Jos sinulla on kysyttävää tai tarvitset johonkin selvennystä, voit kysyä milloin vain.**

Vapaaehtoinen osallistuminen

Tutkimukseen osallistuminen on *täysin vapaaehtoista*: sinun ei tarvitse osallistua tähän tutkimukseen. Voit myös kesken tutkimuksen päättää, ettet haluakaan enää olla osallisena, kunhan vain ilmoitat siitä. Sinä et ole velvollinen selittämään, miksi et enää halua olla osallisena. Jos päätät lopettaa tutkimukseen osallistumisen, kaikki tiedot (johon kuuluu suostumuslomake) poistetaan.

Yhteystiedot

Jos sinulla on kysyttävää, tai muita huolia tutkimukseen liittyen, voit olla aina minuun yhteydessä

Suostumus

1. Saako keskustelun nauhoittaa? Valitse, millä tavoin keskustelun saa nauhoittaa:

Muistiinpanot	Ääni	Video	Valokuva
❒ Kyllä	❒ Kyllä	❒ Kyllä	❒ Kyllä
❒ Ei	❒ Ei	❒ Ei	❒ Ei

2. Saako näitä tietoja jakaa muille tutkijoille tutkimushankkeeseen liittyen?

❒ Kyllä

❒ Ei

3. Saako näitä tietoja käyttää tulevissa tutkimushankkeissa?

❒ Kyllä

❒ Ei

4. Saako nimesi esiintyä tulevissa tutkimusjulkaisuissa?
❒ **Ei.** Ainoastaan tutkija, joka on kerännyt tutkimusdatan tietää, että tiedot tulevat sinulla. Kaikki, sanomasi ja mielipiteesi pysyvät muuten anonyymeina.

❒ **Kyllä.** Jos haluat osallistua tutkimukseen koko nimelläsi (etu-sukunimi) ruksi tämä laatikko. Mahdollisesti käytän joitain sitaattejasi sekä kuvamateriaalia. Voit aina myöhemmässä vaiheessa valita, ettet halua esiintyä nimelläsi tai kuvallasi. Voit myös valita esiintyväsi ainoastaan etunimelläsi.

❒ **MUU.** Valitse tämä, jos haluat osallistua tutkimukseen ainoastaan etunimelläsi

Täten vapaaehtoisesti suostun osallistumaan tähän tutkimukseen. Olen huomioinut ja ymmärtänyt yllämainitut kohdat. Minulle on annettu mahdollisuus kysyä kysymyksiä, joihin vastattiin asianmukaisesti ja selkeästi.

Osallistujan etu- ja sukunimi: _____

Päivämäärä: _____ Allekirjoitus: _____

Olen todistanut että yllämainittu osallistuja on ymmärtänyt tiedot oikein. Osallistujalla on ollut mahdollisuus kysyä kysymyksiä. Osallistujan puolesta vahvistan, että osallistuja on antanut suostumuksensa tutkimukseen vapaaehtoisesti.

Tutkijan etu- ja sukunimi: _____

Päivämäärä: _____ Allekirjoitus: _____