

## The Isukasia iron ore mine controversy: Extractive industries and public consultation in Greenland

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**Abstract:** The development of oil, gas and mineral resources is a stated aim of the Government of Greenland. Since the introduction of Self-Rule in 2009, which has given Greenlanders greater autonomy within the Kingdom of Denmark, the exploration for and exploitation of non-renewable resources has been a cornerstone of government policy. A number of mineral exploration and mining development licences have been granted to international companies and exploratory work for oil has continued off west Greenland and will take place in coming years in northwest Greenland and off the east coast. While energy companies and Greenlandic politicians and business leaders remain optimistic that discoveries of commercially-viable oil will be made, mining activities and energy development plans have provoked political and social debates within Greenland about the nature of such development, the absence of appropriate public consultation and regulatory processes, concerns about the impacts of extractive industries on traditional hunting and fishing activities, rights of participation, social and economic benefit agreements, skills and education, and the shortcomings of social and environmental impact assessments. This article discusses this debate with reference to the Isua Iron Ore Project. Located at Isukasia some 150 km northeast of Greenland's capital Nuuk, this project has been implemented by London Mining and is currently under review by the Greenlandic authorities.

### Introduction

In recent years, Greenland has assumed geostrategic importance as a new resource frontier to be opened up and developed for the global economy. International energy and mining companies have identified the potential for this Danish self-governing territory to be a significant source of new mineral and oil extraction and interest has grown in the possibility of developing mines and in oil exploration opportunities in offshore waters (Nuttall 2012). Media reports often call attention to climate change as being one reason for such global interest

in Greenland, accounting for it in terms of the trope that resource development is being made possible and profitable by an Arctic regional warming trend that is eliminating sea ice, melting glaciers and reducing the thickness of the inland ice, hence allowing multinational corporations to venture into places previously considered remote and inaccessible (and thus reproducing the discourse of a “rush to resources” in the Arctic). Yet Naalakkersuisut, the Greenlandic government, implements policies that actively promote exploration and investment in extractive activities and climate change merely brings into focus

the speculative and capital penetration motives for what is essentially an ongoing process of frontier expansion and resource development evident in other parts of the world (Browder *et al.* 2008; Hirsch 2009).

In this article, I draw on current and ongoing research in Greenland that explores the social, political and environmental dimensions of climate change and resource development – in particular, how the country is anticipating and discussing resource development and is (or is not) preparing for large-scale projects. In this work, I am concerned with a consideration of both the political discourse surrounding resource development and the emergent public responses to it, especially debates over decision-making processes (e.g. Nuttall 2012). As I shall show, with specific reference to a planned iron ore mine northeast of Greenland's capital Nuuk, public disquiet in Greenland over lack of appropriate consultation (and criticism over the absence of information about planned megaprojects), as well as over government debate on legislation for large-scale projects, is leading to a situation where demands for greater public engagement and participation in discussion and decision-making on extractive industries as a foundation for Greenland's future are increasing.

## **Climate change, politics and extractive industries in Greenland**

In summer 2012, scientific reports on the lowest recorded extent of Arctic Ocean sea ice, NASA satellite images of 97% of

surface melt of the Greenland inland ice, as well as international media coverage of a “monstrous” iceberg that calved from the Petermann Glacier in northern Greenland, all seemed to add to recent scientific concern that a “tipping point” in Arctic climate systems is being approached with alarming speed (e.g. Wassmann & Lenton 2012). Greenland is one region of the global North that has come to represent both the image and reality of catastrophic and irreversible climate change (Nuttall 2009; Bjørst 2011). Scientific climate models suggest that average temperatures in Greenland will rise by more than 3°C this century. This warming trend would increase ice melt on the inland ice, which covers around 80% of Greenland's total area and, together with glacial activity, more freshwater is likely to be introduced into the surrounding fjord and coastal systems (ACIA 2005; AMAP 2011). There have been marked changes in temperature and precipitation patterns which will induce further changes in snow cover and in the distribution of lake ice and sea ice. These changes in the physical environment will have far-reaching consequences and will be apparent in the biodiversity and function of marine, terrestrial and limnic ecosystems. Climate change is already having profound impacts on society, economy and culture in some regions of Greenland which are likely to be magnified in the near future (Nuttall 2009; AMAP 2011). While these impacts have negative consequences for some communities and economic activities, opportunities also arise – in particular, climate change is often cited as opening up areas in Greenland that allows for the development of extractive activities.

However, identifying climate change as the reason for why Greenland is becoming accessible to multinational corporations is far too simplistic. The unprecedented growth of interest expressed in Greenland by international extractive industries in the last five to ten years is also largely a result of an active international marketing campaign by the Bureau of Minerals and Petroleum (BMP), a Greenland government agency under the Minister for Industry and Mineral Resources. The Employers' Association of Greenland (GA), the country's biggest trade organization, also plays a large part and has positioned itself in a new role as providing a link between Greenlandic and foreign companies.

While we should not dismiss climate change – together with the “greening of Greenland” discourse – entirely, the gradual marking out and the industrialization of the Greenlandic resource frontier is more the result of a Greenlandic nation-building and state-formation process underway since Greenland achieved Home Rule within the Kingdom of Denmark in 1979, one which also involves a political redefinition of environment and resources with the potential for far-reaching consequences for human-environmental relations. In 2009, Greenland achieved greater autonomy in the form of Self-Rule, but the Greenlandic economy remains dependent for almost 60% of its budget revenue on a 3.5 billion DKK annual block grant, which was frozen with the implementation of self-government, and other transfers it receives from Denmark. The most significant challenge to securing and sustaining greater self-government is overcoming this reliance on the Danish block grant and replacing

it with revenues generated from within Greenland and derived from new forms of economic development. Many Greenlandic politicians and business leaders believe the exploitation of oil, gas and minerals will be the answer and the development of extractive industries is now a stated aim of the Greenlandic government. Greenland took over control of sub-surface resources on 1st January 2010, thus paving the way for direct negotiation between the Greenlandic authorities and companies interested in developing Greenland's resources.

Foreign companies involved in extractive industries are being courted by the Greenlandic authorities and business leaders and are being invited to explore for and invest in oil and minerals, but it is the very *idea* of Greenland becoming greener and warmer as a result of climate change that often frames political discourse about economic opportunities (Nuttall 2008, 2009). As such, climate change is viewed as empowering by many Greenlandic politicians and business leaders and the current trajectory of political and economic development involves embedding Greenland deeper into global networks and circuits of resource extraction and commodity production. Ambitious for industrial development within the context of its new form of self-government, Greenland is experiencing greater interest from multinational corporations engaged in a search for oil, gas and minerals. These companies imagine, approach, and represent Greenland as a new resource frontier and make promises of great economic benefit, wealth creation, and new educational skills and job opportunities for local people. Greenlandic élites (politicians and business

leaders) and international companies (largely those involved in extractive industries) are engaged in a collective enterprise of conceiving, imagining and actualizing the future of this Arctic region (Nuttall 2012). In this way, plans for resource development in Greenland represent the enactment of a resource frontier as a relational zone, “produced through scaled interactions which are simultaneously material and representational” (Barney 2009: 147). While self-government and the financial return from resource development may mean a greater degree of independence from Denmark in the long-term, along with new employment opportunities, extractive industries nonetheless pose considerable threats to society and environment. The construction and operational phases of large-scale projects may also mean the beginning of new forms of dependency relations as multinational corporations and foreign investors broker deals and exert influence over Greenlandic politics and business.

## **The iron ore mine project at Isukasia**

In 2006, the United Kingdom-based company London Mining obtained an exploration licence for an iron ore deposit at Isukasia, an Archaean banded iron formation (BIF) located approximately 150 km northeast of Nuuk. The deposit lies on the edge of the inland ice, in a mountainous area located in the Isua Greenstone Belt, a region accessible from deep in the Nuuk Fjord (Nuup Kangerlua), the longest fjord

in southwest Greenland and one of the biggest fjord systems in the world. At some 3.8 billion years old, Isua contains some of the world’s oldest geological formations, including a green rock called Grønlandit, which is possibly the world’s oldest precious stone (Appel & al. 2008). Carrying out research in Nuuk since February 2012, I have followed the twists and turns of what has become the Isukasia iron ore mine controversy.

In this area of great geological antiquity, the presence of unoxidised magnetite on the surface reveals tantalizing glimpses of what lies below. Isukasia was first explored in 1962 by Kryolitselskabet Øresund (KØ), a Danish cryolite mining company which later discovered the Isua BIF outcrop in 1965 following an aeromagnetic anomaly. The discovery of this 2 billion tonne iron ore deposit attracted great interest in the geology of the larger Isua area of which Isukasia is part and prospectors became interested in the potential for other minerals and precious stones. KØ continued its exploratory activities and mapped Isukasia in 1966. A hematite ore body was first postulated from surface boulder terrain and in 1970 Marcona, a company from the United States, was attracted to the project. Marcona conducted drilling and metallurgical work in 1971, and over the next decade research was carried out on the inland ice and glacier terminus, along with open cut and underground feasibility studies, as well as hydropower studies. In 1995-97, RTZ/Rio Tinto drilled through the inland ice to reach banded hematite, having postulated its existence from gravity data and studies of the glacial moraine.

With this baseline geological data confirming the potential of Isukasia, and guided by feasibility studies carried out by the Quebec engineering firm SNC-Lavalin (e.g. SNC-Lavalin 2010), London Mining plans to produce 10 million tonnes of iron ore concentrate a year from an open pit mine with backing from Chinese investors. Having carried out environmental and social impact assessments as well as all relevant technical studies required under Greenland's Mineral Resources Act, London Mining submitted its application for construction and operation of the mine to the Greenlandic authorities in the summer of 2012. Beyond the development of the open pit mine itself, which covers an area of 2 km<sup>2</sup>, the project will involve major infrastructure in a licence district of 26 km<sup>2</sup> in the form of processing systems and tailings ponds, an oil-fired power plant, accommodation for several hundred employees, deepwater port facilities in the innermost part of Nuuk Fjord, an airport and heliport, a 103 km long road from the port to the mine, and a slurry pipeline of similar length that will deliver the product from the processing plant to the port, from where it will be shipped to foreign markets. The mine is expected to have a lifetime of 10 years, with a possible extension to 15 years. Furthermore, the mine will lie south of an area of proposed hydropower development for Alcoa's planned aluminium smelter near Maniitsoq further up the coast from Nuuk, adding to the marking out, delineation and development of a central west Greenlandic industrial heartland.

The central part of the Isukasia deposit outcrops as a mountain at the surface, but is covered by the inland ice in the northern

and southern parts to a maximum depth of 130 m. To extract much of the ore, the mountain will be gradually cut away and the surrounding ice will have to be removed. As the open mine pit is deepened, the rate of glacial ice inflow will increase to something like 5 m a year, which London Mining estimates will mean some 3.5 million tonnes of ice will have to be removed annually. The large-scale, intensive nature of both construction and operational phases of the project raise considerable local concerns over environmental disturbance both on land and sea, especially from pollution, in an area already experiencing the effects of climate change. As well as the mining and processing of the ore, large ships will sail regularly in and out of Nuuk Fjord bringing in supplies and taking away the concentrate.

Isukasia and the Nuuk Fjord are important social, cultural and economic environments which many people from Nuuk and the village of Kapisillit in the inner part of the fjord depend on to sustain their hunting and fishing livelihoods. Place names and local narrative accounts of seal hunting, tracking reindeer, or fishing, or travelling by boat or walking across the land, attest to the historical and contemporary use of the area. Harp and hooded seals are a significant catch mainly in areas close to Nuuk, in the outer fjord and around the skerries, while ringed seals are also hunted close to the town but also in the innermost parts of the fjord. Atlantic cod, salmon, Greenland halibut and other fish species are caught throughout the wider Nuuk Fjord system, with fishermen ranging deep into the ice fjords, while berries and edible plants are picked around the Isukasia area.

Some local people also gather rocks and stones for making jewellery and other crafts and the Isua area is of particular importance to local carvers because of its soapstone. Because of Nuuk's population of around 15,500 people, the Nuuk Fjord system is also the most intensively used area in Greenland for recreational purposes. While local people are concerned with the impacts the mine will have on all these activities, Isukasia is an important area for reindeer, which are hunted during late summer and autumn. In public meetings and in media debates, local people have often identified the potential impacts the mine and its associated infrastructure, such as the all-weather haul road, pipeline and 24 hour mining and production activity, will have on reindeer as something they worry about most.

## **Information sessions and public meetings**

Greenland's 2009 Mineral Resources Act makes no mention of public consultation (although it talks of public opinion), but BMP guidelines for environmental impact assessment (EIA) do require companies to involve the public throughout the process, and public comment on the EIA should be considered and addressed. However, the nature of public consultation – indeed, what actually constitutes public consultation – is not defined and the BMP guidelines seem to equate consultation with information, leaving it more or less up to the companies involved in extractive resource projects to determine the extent of public consultation to be carried out. Since obtaining its licence

to explore, London Mining has held several public information sessions in Nuuk. Naalakkersuisut announced that four public hearings would be held in September and October 2012 and that public comment was invited and would be taken into account when parliament discussed legislation for large-scale projects and deliberated on a decision on the Isua Iron Ore Project during its autumn session. Naalakkersuisut delegated responsibility to organizing the hearings to London Mining, but in a token nod to democratic and public consultation the company was told it could not itself preside over the hearings. Instead, a local consultancy firm with clients in the mining sector was hired to chair proceedings, raising questions about the independent nature of the process.

At the hearings, which were held at the University of Greenland, company employees and consultants from Denmark and Canada, hired by London Mining to carry out the environmental and social impact assessments and the engineering work for the project, summarized several thousand pages of technical reports in a dizzying array of short, colourful PowerPoint presentations with detailed digitized topography maps, providing summaries of aeromagnetic surveys, information on the pipeline route and the deepwater harbour, and examples of the equipment needed, including high pressure grinding rolls and triple drum magnetic separators. Understanding of the scientific and technical vocabulary was often hindered by problems in translation from Danish to Greenlandic and vice versa. Yet what was significant about the hearings is that they were not really hearings at all – they were essentially information sessions – and

they highlighted the reality that Greenland has yet to develop and implement regulatory procedures and public hearings overseen by an independent review panel that guides decision-making processes. While Denmark ratified the 1998 Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in October 2008, Greenland is not a party to it (United Nations Treaty Collection n.d.). As Greenland is self-governing, it implies *inter alia* that environmental affairs in general and the areas covered by the Convention are governed by the right of self-determination. At each public hearing for the London Mining project, many people who attended expressed their frustration about a lack of democratic participation – for example, the audience was told that questions could be asked towards the end of the meeting, but would not be answered until the following session, which was sometimes two weeks away, thus constituting a one-way flow of information from the proponent to the public.

Each hearing was scheduled for around three hours and the chairs of the sessions kept each presenter to a strict time. For example, at the third hearing held on 24<sup>th</sup> September, presentation of the EIA was kept to 35 minutes – “I do have additional slides,” the consultant said after running quickly through his talk, “but I am being told I have run out of time.” Hence, people left at the close of the meetings having heard simplified and distilled accounts of highly complex aspects of the project and many questioned the social legitimacy of the process. As one man, a hunter in his early forties, told me immediately after the

third meeting, “This was not a hearing, it was a public information session. It was a one-way process and the organizers wanted to be in control. They wanted to avoid a debate.” Another hunter remarked, “The environmental impact assessment raises significant questions of concern and this should be an independent, objective process.”

In the public information sessions and hearings, what struck me most (apart from the absence of an independent review panel) was the way that Isukasia, and the wider Isua area, was represented and talked about by London Mining and its consultants. The area, people were assured, was “a wilderness” and “virgin territory” where nobody lived. Hence, people were told they need not worry about social impacts because it was a place far from populated areas. Furthermore, consultants from Denmark who had only carried out short-term studies remarked with apparent authority that the area was low in biodiversity. Thus a cursory experience of Isua by outside consultants was accorded the authority of specialized knowledge that was privileged over the local knowledge of people who live, travel and move around in the Nuuk Fjord region. It was emphasized that at the end of the project the site would be cleaned up according to the most rigorous environmental guidelines and that there would be no sign of the mine and its infrastructure ever having been there. When one man in the audience commented that a mountain would be removed and a huge hole in the ground would be made, one of the Danish consultant engineers responded that “Meltwater from the inland ice will fill the hole. Meltwater and icy conditions will

eventually erase the signs of where the hole has been and there is an expectation that the ice will move towards the mine pit and eventually cover it.”

Such comments about the easy erasure of the site conspired with the downplaying of environmental impacts in the brief overview given of the EIA to present a scenario that the impact of the mine on the area would be minimal. The consultants peppered their presentations with assurances that “the effects on the mine will be limited to a small area”, and that “there will be no disturbance to wildlife habitat.” In response to the representation of the environment as empty and to the downplaying of environmental impacts, many people took the opportunity to contradict the consultants by pointing out that the Nuuk Fjord system, including Isukasia, was vital to the continuation of many people’s livelihoods as hunters and fishers. As one man remarked, “The hunters in Nuuk know and say that the area has a rich biodiversity in terms of animals, plants and berries.”

Three comments from people who represented local hunting and indigenous organizations stand out from the meetings I attended as representative of public feeling. The first was an expression of concern that “The licence area will be out of bounds to us. One of the largest hunting areas in Greenland will no longer be available to us because of the mine,” pointing to suspicion that a subtle process of the commodification of the environment is underway, what Harvey (2003) calls ‘accumulation by dispossession’. The second, representative of other comments on the concept of free prior and informed consent, emphasized that “As indigenous people we have rights.

One of the rights is that development has to take place in accordance with the wishes of the people. One of the things we lack is a clear description of the decision-making process. When, how, and by whom are decisions made?” The third underlined this issue of legitimacy: “One of the things we are missing is the presence of experts who can oppose the information that is presented. Some of the material that is available is unintelligible, many questions remain unanswered, and we need to see some experts who are independent of what is being presented here.”

These comments speak to general concerns about a restriction of hunters’ rights to access traditional hunting and fishing areas, with rights to Isua and parts of the Nuuk Fjord being assigned to London Mining instead, to feelings that the public is allowed little or no say in decision-making processes, and to frustration over what some see is already a done deal, that a decision has already been taken to give London Mining permission to develop the Isukasia site. As one member of the audience at the hearing on 24<sup>th</sup> September asked, “Have we already been bought and can’t change any decisions that have been made?” At a minimum, public involvement must provide an opportunity for those directly affected to express their views regarding the proposal and its environmental and social impacts. As the hearings illustrated, some people were able to make their thoughts and feelings known, and to ask questions, but these were merely recorded by the organizers. No comments were returned and no answers were given.



## **‘Stop London Mining!’**

In the late afternoon darkness on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2012, on a day when strong winds and freezing rain had turned the streets of Nuuk to sheet ice, cancelling bus services and making driving treacherous and walking dangerous, some 20 people assembled outside the Greenlandic parliament building to demonstrate against London Mining’s project and to express their dissatisfaction with the way parliament (Inatsisartut) was debating legislation for large-scale projects. The demonstration was organized by ‘Forening 16. august’ (the ‘16th August Association’, so called after the date a few years ago when the Bureau of Minerals and Petroleum banned local people from gathering red rubies and other stones in an area attracting the interest of Canadian company True North Gems) and included participation by Nuup Kangerluata Ikinngutai (Friends of the Nuuk Fjord), a group formed to oppose the development of the mine and to protect the Nuuk Fjord, and Avataq, Greenland’s national environmental organization. It was the third such protest against large-scale projects since the previous March. The first two had been organized by Nuup Kangerluata Ikinngutai and had drawn larger crowds of demonstrators. ‘Forening 16. august’ had hoped for at least 100 people – earlier in the day I had talked with friends who said they had planned to go, but by 4pm it seemed that the main concern for many was getting home safely in increasingly difficult weather conditions.

Jan Hansen, the chairman of ‘Forening 16. august’, was not optimistic that government nor parliament would be

influenced by the demonstration or take much notice of the demonstrators and their placards declaring ‘Stop London Mining!’ and ‘Our fjord, our livelihood’, but he maintained that Naalakkersuisut had to recognize the rights of the Greenlandic people whose views were not heard at the public hearings and that it seemed the only way to express those views was through the right to assemble (Petersen 2012). Furthermore, the demonstrators articulated their dissatisfaction that the decision for approving the mine will be based on discussion and negotiation between government and industry, not on public consultation, public participation and community inclusion.

Beyond a concern with the possible environmental and social impacts of the mine itself, arguments put forward by citizens’ groups crystallize around a central demand that decision-making for large-scale projects should be an effective and formal dialogue and engagement between project proponents and the public, making for legitimate citizen engagement in analysis and agenda-setting. Around the same time as the demonstration was held, Greenlandic media reported that an unnamed company had submitted an application for an exploration licence to the BMP to assess prospects for a high calcium feldspar mine at Innajuattoq, the largest bird cliff in Nuuk Fjord located at the entrance to Ilulialik, which is near the site for the Isua project’s deepwater harbour. Avataq and Timmiaq (Greenland’s national bird conservation organization) expressed concern and regret that public consultation had not been carried out prior to the application. The Mineral Resources Act states that if an activity is considered

to have an impact on nature, a licence can only be issued after the public, authorities and organizations have had an opportunity to express their opinion.

It turned out to be an interesting week for both those protesting against the Isukasia mine project and for those in support of it. Two days after the demonstration, the Greenlandic newspaper *Sermitsiaq* published the results of a poll on mineral development in which 73% of respondents (there were 1032 who participated) did not believe that Greenland would benefit or profit from mining. The poll was conducted following the airing of *The Theft of Africa*, a documentary shown on Danish television and also broadcast in Greenland on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> November in which it was argued that Zambia had fallen victim to multinational mining corporations with no obvious benefits for society, environment or the national economy (Duus 2012a). Greenland's premier Kuupik Kleist appeared on television later that evening denying vociferously claims from critics that there would be a similar "theft of Greenland" and arguing that the country would reap rewards from extractive industries. Kleist and his government, however, began to feel the pressure to account for the legitimacy of the decision-making process between his government and London Mining. On Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> November, the news broke in Canada that the former chief executive officer of SNC-Lavalin had been arrested in Quebec on charges of fraud, with another former high-ranking executive similarly detained by the Swiss authorities. The news came as no surprise in Canada, where it had long been asserted in the press that SNC-Lavalin employees had

been suspected of corruption, fraud and tax evasion in negotiating and developing projects in Africa and India. However, a report to the effect was broadcast in Greenland by television news company Nuuk TV the following day, prompting an outpouring of public outrage and a call by opposition MP Doris Jakobsen for a new independent feasibility study to be carried out for the Isua mine. Specifically, Jakobsen asked questions about how far London Mining and its partners could be trusted and demanded that parliament defer its discussion on large-scale project legislation (Langhoff 2012).

On Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December, Inatsisartut voted to approve the new law. Among its provisions, it allows foreign companies to decide on whether they wish to develop projects with foreign labour rather than employing a local Greenlandic workforce. However, the legislation will need the approval of the Danish government before it can be implemented.

In addition to civic action groups, both the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) and the Employers' Association of Greenland have been leading calls for public debates about the nature of consultation processes in the country today – in October 2012 ICC launched a new project in collaboration with WWF-Denmark to call for improved hearings processes for large-scale resource development – while Transparency Greenland acts to raise awareness of corruption in business practices and has also argued for citizen participation in discussion of legislation for large-scale projects (Duus 2012b). A recent report produced for the Employers' Association argues that while the existing consultation

process in Greenland is not illegitimate, it does not go far enough in its attempts to allow a process of deliberative democracy (Bjørn Aaen 2012). In particular, the report endorses the view expressed by many organizations (including ICC, Avataq, and Nuup Kangerluata Ikinngutai) that asymmetries of power exist, illustrated by the fact that the government has delegated administrative responsibility to the BMP for promoting Greenland to the international extractive industries sector, for dealing with applications for exploration and exploitation licences, and for organizing formal consultation processes rather than this being done by an independent regulator. The report is critical of instances where significant information has been excluded from public view, and where other public consultation meetings have been poorly and inappropriately designed and organized, which has had the effect of limiting the ability of the public to contribute to debate and influence the decision-making process, just as many people feel is the case with the Isua Iron Ore Project.

## Conclusion

Greenland appears to be an industrial nation in the making based on the extraction of hydrocarbons and minerals. Resource stakeholders (politicians, government bodies, local businesses, multinational companies) imagine, speculate, define and actualize Greenland as a new frontier where new forms of property relations

and rights of access and new perspectives on the environment shape resource exploration and commodity production. An increasing number of international companies involved in extractive industries are expressing interest to explore and work in Greenland during a significant moment in the country's political, economic and social development. Indigenous and local rights, however, are overlooked in this process of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2003). Through the Mineral Resources Act, Greenland's parliament aims to ensure that resource exploration and exploitation activities are "securely performed as regards safety, health, the environment, resource exploitation and social sustainability as well as properly performed according to acknowledged best international practices under similar conditions." Yet the public participation and consultation processes for large-scale projects remain lacking, while free, prior and informed consent appears to go unrecognized as a fundamental prerequisite for building relations between companies and local communities. The development of extractive industries as a basis for economic development is an issue that divides communities and, as more applications for exploration licences are submitted, it raises the prospect of further contested and controversial debate about how Greenland should not only prepare for a future society characterized by the presence and dominance of mining and oil companies, but how that future society will also manage and govern resource development.

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