**Title**

Deconstructing biodiversity offsets: An exploration of ontological conflicts and alternative approaches to conservation in Finland and Colombia

**Abstract**

Together with other market-oriented approaches to conservation, biodiversity offsets (BO) have become popular (e.g., CBD, 2022). Previous research has however documented dispossession of local communities and increased inequalities as possible outcomes of BO (e.g., Bidaud et al., 2018; Fairhead et al., 2012). This presentation explores local consequences of BO and shows how local communities can offer alternatives to BO. Within the framework of two case studies in Finland and Colombia the ontological dimension of the politics of BO is scrutinized. The Sakatti mine by AngloAmerican and related compensation buy of forest in the Sámi homeland as well as the Cerrejón mine by Glencore and related offsets in the territory of the Wayúu are studied. Applying a political ontology perspective (e.g., Escobar, 2016), company documents and environmental permit applications but also accounts of local communities are analyzed to reveal how BO are an example of the ‘modern ontology’ (e.g., Blaser, 2016) in action. BO create concrete stakes, stakeholders, and environments that serve economic growth and “sustainable development” and obscure the pluriverse of other ontologies. Drawing on interviews with and observations of representatives of local communities, it is further shown that local communities struggle against the hegemonic political project of BO and resist the erasing of their alternative human-nonhuman entanglements through BO. Literature on degrowth and other alternatives to development (e.g., Kothari et al., 2019) is utilized to highlight how in these ‘ontological conflicts’ (e.g., Blaser, 2009), the explored place-based communities modify BO and show potential ways into just and sustainable futures.