

Protected Aapa Mire

The *Protected Aapa Mire* project deals with the interests of nature conservation and mining in the same area in Viiankiaapa, in the municipality of Sodankylä in Finnish Lapland.

Viiankiaapa

Viiankiaapa (65,95 km²) is one of the largest and most versatile aapa mires in Europe and therefore belongs to both the National Mire Conservation Programme and the EU Natura 2000 network. Viiankiaapa belongs to the Central Lapland Greenstone Belt. Green schist rich in ore is an ideal growing medium e.g. for the various marsh orchid species growing in Viiankiaapa. The same areas are valuable from the viewpoints of biodiversity and geology.

Since the year 2004 British-based, globally operating Anglo American has been searching for ores in the protected area. The nickel-copper deposit discovered so far is considered significant, and the company (AA Sakatti Mining Oy, Anglo American's Finnish subsidiary) aims at starting mining operations in the area.

According to the company, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the Sakatti mine planned for Viiankiaapa will be completed during 2020. Then it is assessed whether the mining project will be granted environmental and mining permits. Granting of a mining permit for the protected area would also put many other Natura 2000 network areas in danger, as similar economic and employment aspects could be used as criteria.

Protected Aapa Mire -project

Kaija Kiuru made her first works of art commenting on the conflict between protection and mining plans in 2012 and gradually, individual works came to form an entire project. *Protected Aapa Mire* consists of Kiuru's five exhibitions and a book about Viiankiaapa, which will be published in 2020/2021. The book, which connects art and science, will be produced in cooperation between Kaija Kiuru and PhD Timo Helle, who is Adjunct Professor of Animal Ecology and a nature writer.

The *Protected Aapa Mire* project is a result of Kaija Kiuru's desire by means of art to take a stand on mining plans concerning a nature conservation area. One role of art is to bring about a social debate, in this case on the position of protected areas because of land-use pressures increasing for different reasons. Viiankiaapa is near and local, but at the same time also global, as we encounter similar clashes between human activity and the natural environment all over the world.

In addition to her own mire experiences, the origin of Kaija Kiuru's works of art is in scientific research knowledge, the livelihood and cultural history of Viiankiaapa, and mining plans threatening the area. She selects her ways of working and materials to be used according to current ideas. Her works of the project are installations, photographs, sculptures, video and environmental art.

Exhibitions of the *Protected Aapa Mire* project:

2014 Galleria G, Helsinki

2016 Northern Photographic Centre, Oulu

2017 Museum Gallery Alariesto and the Library, Sodankylä

2017 Gallery Napa and Studio Mustanapa, Rovaniemi

2019 Photographic Gallery Hippolyte, Helsinki

The Finnish Cultural Foundation, the Arts Promotion Centre Finland and Majaoja Foundation have supported Kaija Kiuru's working in the project. The Association of Finnish Non-fiction Writers has supported Timo Helle. In 2018–2019 the project is supported by the Kone Foundation.