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Kulturminister og Kirkeminister
Fru Mette Bock
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12/02/2018

Save the “Polar-Route” / ”Arctic Circle Trail”¹

In the light of plans for the construction of an ATV road Sisimiut - Kangerlussuaq and the nomination of "Aasivissuit - Nipisat" property for the World Heritage List

Dear Mrs. Mechtild Rössler, dear Mr. Alessandro Balsamo, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kære hr. premierminister Kim Kielsen, kære fr. minister Doris Jakobsen, mine damer og herrer ministre,²

Kære hr. Formand Lars-Emil Johansen, mine damer og herrer, parlamentsmedlemmer²

Kære fr. minister Mette Bock,²

between July 2016 and July 2017 300 hikers on the “Polar-Route” (“Arctic Circle Trail/ACT”) in West-Greenland, Qeqqata Municipality, signed a memorandum³ / petition concerning plans to construct an ATV road between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq. In our view, this will be the end of one of the most important hiking trails in the Arctic and in the world, the “Polar-Route” (“Arctic Circle Trail”), and it would destroy the cultural landscape, which this trail is crossing. Partly (i.e. the stage via valley of Nerumaq) the hiking trail will be displaced by the planned ATV road in rough terrain and thus made impassable for the general public. Apart from that, the parallelism of ATV road and hiking trail would devalue the latter. I mention that the memorandum was started, before the nomination of the Aasivissuit-Nipisat-property was sent to UNESCO⁴. Therefore the memorandum does not refer to the nomination explicitly. But with the nomination the memorandum got additional actual meaning and needs clarification.

Already before the Memorandum was closed for signing in July 2017, it was sent to Qeqqata Municipality with 214 signatures on 17 January 2017. Nearly at the same time, in January 2017, the application for listing the site on the World Heritage List was sent by the Danish Government to the UNESCO. (For quoting of the application see footnote 4).

¹) Our association has preferred to use the genuine name “Polar-Route” instead of “Arctic Circle Trail” for calling the trail and the association. When the trail was marked as a modern hiking trail, this was not guided by the idea to hike just on 66°33'39" N latitude. Far more it is a hiking trail through a unique cultural landscape, which forms the heart of Greenland. The term “Polar-Route” will be understood in nearly all languages. The americanization “Arctic Circle Trail” came more recently in use by a German guidebook. However, if there was an accepted name in Greenlandic / Kalaallisut language, we would prefer that.

²) I ask for your understanding that this letter (like the nomination to UNESCO) is written monolingual in English.

³) A copy is attached to the Original of this letter. But downloads are available in Danish: <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/memorandum-da.pdf>, English: <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/memorandum-en.pdf>, German: <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/memorandum-de.pdf>, and trilingual: <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/memorandum-3l.pdf>

⁴) The application is available as a book (Aasivissuit – Nipisat . Inuit Hunting Ground between Ice and Sea. For inclusion on the World Heritage List) with ISBN 978-87-8751-986-1 and as PDF-file “Aasivissuii-Nipisat_Final.pdf”, 89 MB, to be downloaded from https://www.geqqata.gl/-/media/UNESCO/Aasivissuit-Nipisat_Final.ashx?la=da. To make quoting of the nomination-text more convenient, references to it are not in footnotes but in brackets with the page number only.

Together with the Memorandum the evaluation of a census, what had been carried out in summer 2016, was sent to the municipality. By this census the number of hikers on the trail has been counted the first time based on statistical methods. The census arrived at a number of 1290 hikers per year⁵, much more than anyone had estimated before. Though one should not on first hand measure the value of the Polar-Route by monetary benefits, its attractiveness for hikers from everywhere also leads to some economic results. Therefore this too was measured by the census. The yearly benefit for the Greenlandic GNP generated by the hikers on the Polar-Route is about 11 million DKK, far more than the estimated benefit from the planned ATV road and the business projects surrounding the nominated UNESCO World Heritage site and inside of it.

Before a detailed justification of this appeal/application is presented, a summary of the statements and proposals, desires and claims of hikers on the "Polar-Route"/"Arctic Circle Trail" is prefixed. A more detailed review of the "road project", in particular of its economic meaning, is added in an Annex: "The Road Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq and the Alternative to it ". I am also pointing to the "Management Plan for Kangerlussuaq June 2010" (see footnote 8).

10 Statements and proposals

(1) We consider it disappointing and unacceptable that in a proposal to register a 4500 years old nomadic migration area as a cultural landscape in the World Heritage List, one of the most famous hiking trails is proposed to be sacrificed to an economically ultimately pointless ATV road.

(2) On the other hand, we demand that the Greenland Government - similar as for the World Natural Heritage Property "Icefjord Ilulissat" - issues an ordinance on the basis of the Nature Conservation Act, which prohibits the construction of roads and buildings (except huts as shelters) in the protected area.

(3) Furthermore, the once existing shipping connection from Kangerlussuaq to the coast should be restored by a local boat line (at least in summer or by using a hovercraft also in winter), which between once a week and once a day connects all eight towns and villages (byer and bygder) of Qeqqata municipality.

(4) The nomination proposes the registration of the property as a "cultural landscape", i.e. as an integrated and functional unity of cultural elements and natural phenomena that have been an outstanding expression of a cultural identity and way of life for almost 4500 years. This cultural landscape gives the world a unique example of sustainable economy and responsible use of nature. It can not be that, especially in connection with the inclusion of this area in the World Heritage List this principle is broken.

(5) The nominated area was determined by the selection of seven "representative" archaeological sites out of many hundreds of sites in the entire cultural landscape. This reduction of several hundreds of archaeological sites to a selection of seven is unacceptable as well as the exclusion of the widespread natural phenomena, especially the hunting grounds itself, with which this cultural landscape is only possible. In contrast to the "tentative" area, the nominated area is only a narrow corridor through the cultural landscape, but it is not the cultural landscape itself. We see this as grossly violating the principle of integrity and demand a redefinition of the borders of the nominated area. Compared to 10210 km² of the tentative area, an area of 4178 km² has been nominated, of which about 2200 km² lie outside the

⁵) The report/census, written in English and German, can be downloaded under <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/census-2016-e-d.pdf> .

tentative area. These "additional" areas are either inland ice or open seas, for which protection measures are obsolete, or they were previously protected (according to the Ramsar Convention), so that there was no economic interest in their use. And besides that a buffer zone is excluded, as we see, without sufficient reason.

(6) We also see it as a violation of point 63 of the Guidelines, according to which only an area can be nominated, which was previously reported as a tentative area, because the overwhelming part of the nominated area's surface did not belong to the tentative area.

(7) The nomination text (p.4) merely states that the boundaries of the area in relation to the tentative area were changed in 2013 by a decision of the municipality. This was accompanied by the change of the name of "Aasivissuit - Arnangarnup Qoorua Inuit Hunting Grounds" to "Aasivissuit - Nipisat Inuit Hunting Ground between Ice and Sea". It is not said why this happened. We miss transparency here⁶. This raises the question of whether the restriction of the area could be due to economic interests. This is suggested by some informations of the municipality on an ATV or "nature" road⁷ as well as the management plan⁸ and other sources on the search for mineral resources in the area south of the boundaries of the nominated area.

(8) We call for a more transparent debate. From this debate should e.g. not the tourists / hikers are excluded as this has happened.

(9) The planned ATV road not only uses the current route of the trail for about 60 km and runs for about 50 km parallel to the boundary of the nominated area, but also crosses this area on 35 km between the lakes Tasersuaq and Aasivissuit. And that's not just a simple traversal. Here, access roads to the two lakes will be built, as well as landing stages for boats, campsites, trash cans, rest areas and much more. This means that practically this narrow corridor, which forms the nominated area through the cultural landscape, is cut into two parts. It is recalled that the cultural landscape of the Elbe Valley near Dresden has been removed from the World Heritage List for a similar reason. This should be avoided for the area in West Greenland.

(10) The site should be managed cooperatively by a board of representatives of the Greenlandic Government (including its department for nature protection), the municipality and by participation of civic society engagement of tourists / hikers.

⁶) This applies, for example, in comparison to the management plan, which has produced this transparency excellently. See footnote 8.

⁷) Two of the municipality's publications about it can be seen / downloaded under https://www.qeqqata.gl/Emner/Om_kommunen/Kangerlussuaq_vej?sc_lang=da (Kangerlussuaq vejproject, 1st article) and <https://www.qeqqata.gl/-/media/Naturvej/Samfundskonomisknaturvejdk.ashx?la=da> (Samfunds-økonomiske Konsekvenser - Naturvej mellem Sisimiut og Kangerlussuaq, 2nd article). For those, who don't understand Danish, English working translations (1) <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/atv-natureroad.pdf> , and (2) <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/socioeconomic.pdf> are available. The correctness of the translation is my responsibility. The author of the first, pointing to the second publication is also chairman of the Steering Committee for the UNESCO nomination so that in some way they can be seen as the nomination's interpretation.

⁸) This excellent Management Plan ("Forvaltningsplan for Kangerlussuaq. Juni 2010") was found only a few days before closing this paper on the municipality's website (www.qeqqata.gl) as a PDF-file (14-07-2010_dk.pdf). It is the only document, in what I found a map sketch of the Tentative World Heritage Site 2003 (Annex 5). It is written in Danish. Therefore I made a working translation as excerpt available to interested readers, who do not understand Danish: www.dl.polarrouten.net/files/managementplan.pdf .

The justification of the statements and proposals

At the same time, when the memorandum was sent to the municipality, the nomination of the property “Aasivissuit – Nipisat, Hunting Ground between Ice and Sea” was sent to UNESCO for inclusion on the World Heritage List by the stateparty Denmark, because only Denmark, which has a “Rigsfællesskab” with Greenland, has signed the Convention on the Protection of World Heritage. Both, the existing hiking trail and the planned ATV road, are crossing the area of the nominated World Heritage property, but if you look at the whole cultural landscape of a traditional “Inuit Hunting Ground” in Middle-Greenland, they are both located inside this area, not only crossing it.

In November 2015 the association Polar-Routen e.V. received an email from the destination manager of Qeqqata’s “Arctic Circle Business” (ACB)⁹ that next year an ATV road should be built (but it still is not built), which in part should parallel the hiking trail, and in part replace it. Instead of the former trace of the trail the hikers should use an alternative route, about what a German guidebook had said that we were strictly recommended not to use the so-called southern route, which was even in some parts dangerous for our lives¹⁰. So I had to inform the hikers about it and the municipality about their reactions¹¹. The hikers were shocked about the plan without any exception. This changed the preconditions for starting our initiative for civic engagement on the trail completely. How could we convince hikers to keep the trail in a good condition, when one year later they have to expect bulldozers on the trail. And we had to do, what a civic engagement initiative has to do in such a situation, directing discontent towards a productive aim: writing a petition - the “Memorandum” – and sending it to the municipality.

While we were waiting in 2017 for a response to the memorandum and got the information about the UNESCO-application, we saw a new conflict potential: that between the road- and the UNESCO-project. I sent an email to ACB with a copy to the municipality, seeing a contradiction between the UNESCO project and the ATV road project, and raised the question, what of these projects has priority. I received an email as answer, in what was promised that the memorandum should be advised to the municipal council in October 2017. And further there was to be read: *“We have openly told UNESCO about the road project, and there is no doubt among the politicians and the citizens: If UNESCO cannot accept the road project, then we don't have a UNESCO project. The road is more important than an UNESCO nomination. Sorry. But that said, we do not see it as a choice between two projects.”* Unexpected, but clear words. The hikers hope unisono that it will not happen like that, that the site will be listed on the World Heritage List, and that the road will be stopped. But the man, who sent me the mail, is chairman of the Steering Committee for the UNESCO nomination. I had to respect that, even if I could not accept it.

As a compliant petitioner I waited for a response from the municipality and restrained therefore from further activities. But I received no response from the municipality since then, nor was there in the municipal council’s protokolls (published on the website) any information about such an issue in the meetings in October, November, or December 2017. That made me believe that petitioning to the municipality was not the right move.

⁹) www.arcticcirclebusiness.com

¹⁰) Grönland: Arctic Circle Trail. By Meike Woick, Oliver Schröder & David Kuhnert. OutdoorHandbuch Band 137, 2nd revised edition 2014, ISBN: 978-3-86686-137-4, page 79 f.

¹¹) This obligation to inform the hikers is not only based on common sense. Our rental contract with the municipality concerning the Campsite says in § 4: “Brugeren formidler kommunens bekymringer til gæsterne på campingpladsen og vandrere på Polar-Routen og dissers bekymringer til kommunen.” In English: “The user [of the campsite] communicates the concerns of the municipality to the guests at the campsite and to the hikers on the Polar-Route and their requests to the municipality.” So by starting the Memorandum we were performing an obligation of our contract with the municipality.

And, even if it was not a response of the municipal council, in some way the quoted email was an answer of the municipality.

On the other hand, the municipality has already announced that it will begin with construction of the ATV road in the summer months (that is, after the thaw-period) of 2018. Thus, a clarification without delay is required, as otherwise accomplished facts would be created.

I interpret the signatures of the 300 signatories of the memorandum as a mandate to take further steps that are needed. All the consultations with them showed that I should follow up on the matter. And this is happening with this appeal. The appeal and the reaction to it will of course be communicated to the signatories and the interested public. And so far as necessary, their feedback will also be reported to you.

The request to UNESCO goes back to a recommendation of the Nordic Council of Ministers of 1996:

“In 1996, the Nordic Council of Ministers published the report ‘Verdensarv I Nord’ – World Heritage in the Nordic Countries, proposing new Nordic properties, which the nation states were recommended to nominate to UNESCO. The report contained three proposals for Greenlandic World Heritage properties, one of which encompassed Aasivissuit – Arnangarnup Qoorua, Inuit Hunting Grounds in the former Maniitsoq and Sisimiut Municipalities, now Qeqqata Municipality.” (p. 4).

The two other properties are Ilulissat Icefjord and “Kujataa Greenland: Norse and Inuit Farming at the edge of the Ice Cap” in South-Greenland, which was included in summer 2017.

Ilulissat Icefjord has been included in 2004 on the UNESCO-list as Natural World Heritage. The text on the UNESCO website lists a number of legislative and administrative steps, which the Greenlandic Parliament and Government have adopted to protect Greenlandic nature in general and this property in particular, and they can serve as a precedence case for the “Aasivissuit – Nipisat”-site. The nomination of Ilulissat property says:

Integrity

The property is of **sufficient size** to adequately represent the geological process of the ice fjord, ...

Along with climatic limitations and the fact that **no roads exist at the site**, the area’s physical features retain a high degree of natural integrity.

The property has effective legal protection and a sound planning framework, including the **prohibition of any mining in the protected area**. However, increased management will be required as pressures from tourism and resource harvesting continue to grow.

Protection and management requirements.

The property is protected and conserved by an established framework of government legislation and protective designations and by local planning policies. The main legislative measure is the **Greenland Parliament Act No. 29 of 18 December 2003**¹² on nature protection. This act is the foundation framework for the protection of species, **ecosystems and protected areas**. Ilulissat itself is protected under the **Greenland Home Rule Government Order No. 10 of 15 June 2007 on protection of Ilulissat Icefjord**¹³. The area bordering the property is further controlled by national regulations on waste disposal, use of snowmobiles, building constructions and **landscape protection**. Extensive hunting and fishing occurs in a portion of the property, and a special hunting law is enforced and monitored **to ensure that the exploitation of biological resources in the area is**

¹²⁾ <http://lovgivning.qi/lov?rid={B285FE79-D0A5-4C4A-92B4-B93D0C018161}>

¹³⁾ <http://lovgivning.qi/lov?rid={C6681D09-AD38-44AA-88C1-0B5F9B0AC554}>

sustainable. The property itself is **managed cooperatively by a Board consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Nature and the Municipality of Ilulissat.**

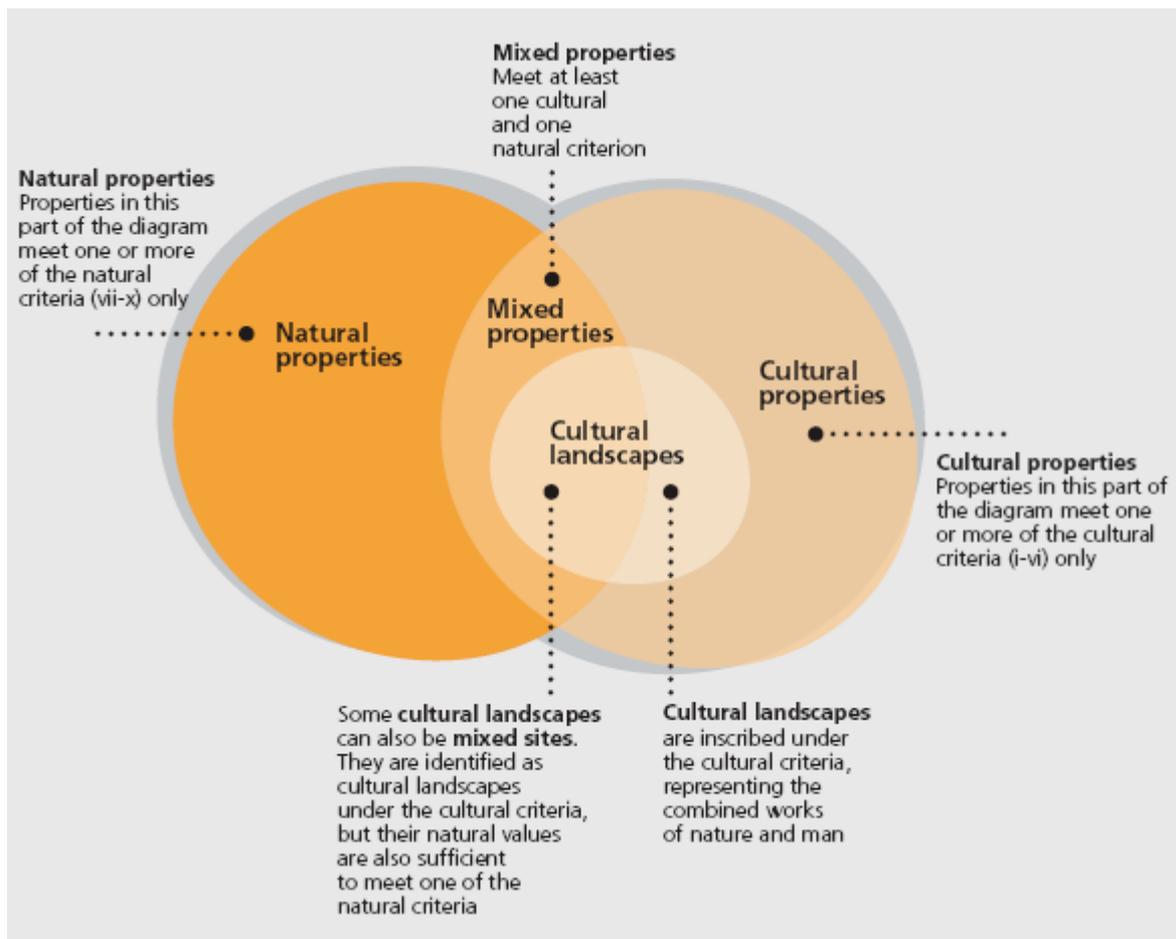
... **Particular attention was paid to the rapidly increasing tourism in the area,** and in particular pressures **emanating from cruise ships** visiting the site and helicopter traffic. Regulations concerning visits to the property by boat, foot, helicopter and dog sledge; the management of waste and waste disposal; building constructions; exploitation of biological resources in the area, and protection of the cultural heritage sites within the property have been put into place. ...

All land in the reserve is state-owned and **no permanent settlements are allowed.** Nearby construction is also strictly controlled. Visitor access to the area is limited by the wilderness character of the landscape, with **no roads or human-made structures.** ...¹⁴

I myself have been there several times and have been able to convince myself of the good protective measures that have been taken there. I could not imagine that there would be built an ATV road that leads through the middle of the UNESCO area.

We urge Parliament and Government of Greenland to establish regulations for the UNESCO site "Aasivissuit - Nipisat", which are the same and binding in the same way as those for the UNESCO site "Ilulissat".

The Asivissuat-Nipisat-property has been nominated to UNESCO with reference to criteria iii and v applicable to Cultural World Heritage. But it is nominated as a so-called "**cultural landscape**". The following sketch explains the specific meaning of "cultural landscapes":



ICOMOS & IUCN: PREPARING WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATIONS, 2nd ed., 2011activity-643-1, p. 34

¹⁴) <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1149/>

This term was introduced as a tool for inscription by UNESCO in 1992: “Since 1992 significant interactions between people and the natural environment have been recognized as cultural landscapes.”¹⁵ “The *Operational Guidelines* define cultural landscapes as cultural properties which represent the ‘combined works of nature and of man’ as designated in Article 1 of the Convention (Paragraph 47).

...

There are three main types of cultural landscape:

- landscapes designed and created intentionally by people;
- organically evolved landscapes; and
- **associative landscapes**¹⁶.

The picture above visualizes the concepts of natural, cultural, and mixed properties – as well as cultural landscapes.

This means, cultural landscapes are not only constituted out of artefacts, but they are interrelated systems of cultural and natural phenomena. Especially within the associative cultural landscapes the constituting natural phenomena have not been changed by human activity, they are still pure nature, but they have a distinct cultural meaning in a belief system or a lifestyle of a particular culture, which cannot survive without them.

Ergo: because natural phenomena too are constituent elements of cultural landscapes, they have to be protected in the same way as Natural World Heritage sites. Greenland’s nature protection act no. 29 is applicable to the cultural landscape “Aasivissuit-Nipisat” in the same way as to the Ilulissat property (see p. 142). And a governmental order comparable to that for the Ilulissat-property has to be issued for the “Aasivissuit-Nipisat”-property. The nomination-text says besides something, what can be done (but – at least in part – is not done): “The executive order on cultural heritage protection of the prehistorical and historical area Aasivissuit – Nipisat is presently being written, after which a public hearing will take place before it can be issued.” (p. 144). I did not hear, if it has been issued meanwhile. And this also means, this executive order will only protect some cultural remains, but not the cultural landscape, as it has been defined here.

We regard the description on the backside of the cover of the nomination-book as an excellent description of this cultural landscape:

“The Aasivissuit – Nipisat area is a unique cultural landscape in an arctic setting. It lies at the heart of the largest ice-free area in Greenland which, in combination with the transitional coastal zone between the open-water area and the high-arctic area of land-fast winter ice, has made it an exceptional hunting ground for people through millenia.

Aasivissuit – Nipisat provides the most complete and best-preserved record of arctic hunting traditions from 2500 BC onwards, demonstrating sustainable land use based on seasonal migration between the coast and the interior. ...

Today, hunters and their families continue these seasonal journeys, staying and hunting in the same places as their predecessors and thereby forging a tangible link between the past and the present.”

But the area outlined by the nomination with 115 coordinates represents only a selection of seven archaeological sites out of hundreds and not a complete and integer “Inuit Hunting Ground”. The wild game, the grazing land and the animal crossings¹⁷, especially of the

¹⁵) UNESCO: The Criteria for Selection. PDF-file.

¹⁶) ICOMOS & IUCN: PREPARING WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATIONS, 2nd ed., 2011 activity-643-1, p. 27

¹⁷) Even the term “animal crossing”, which derives from the European cultural context, when applied to the region, shows its peculiarities. “Animal crossing” suggests that the trails of animals necessarily cross the human trails, being in conflict with each other. But in this region they do not. The trails of animals and of humans there are still parallel. You can see it, when you hike on the Polar-Route. They use the same trails for their hikings, and their footprints point into the same direction. This evidences a high degree of

reindeer, are also part of this cultural landscape. A cultural landscape as a traditional hunting ground without an intact and complete biotope of big game, grazing land, animal crossings etc. is as incomplete as the landscape of a fishing area without water. And if these are excluded, the property has no integrity.

To substantiate this point, I compare now the Tentative World Heritage property "Aasivissuit - Arnangarnup Qoorua, Inuit Hunting Grounds", reported on 29/03/2003, with the 2017 nominated property "Aasivissuit - Nipisat, Inuit Hunting Ground between Ice and Sea". The nomination says in its preface on p. 4:

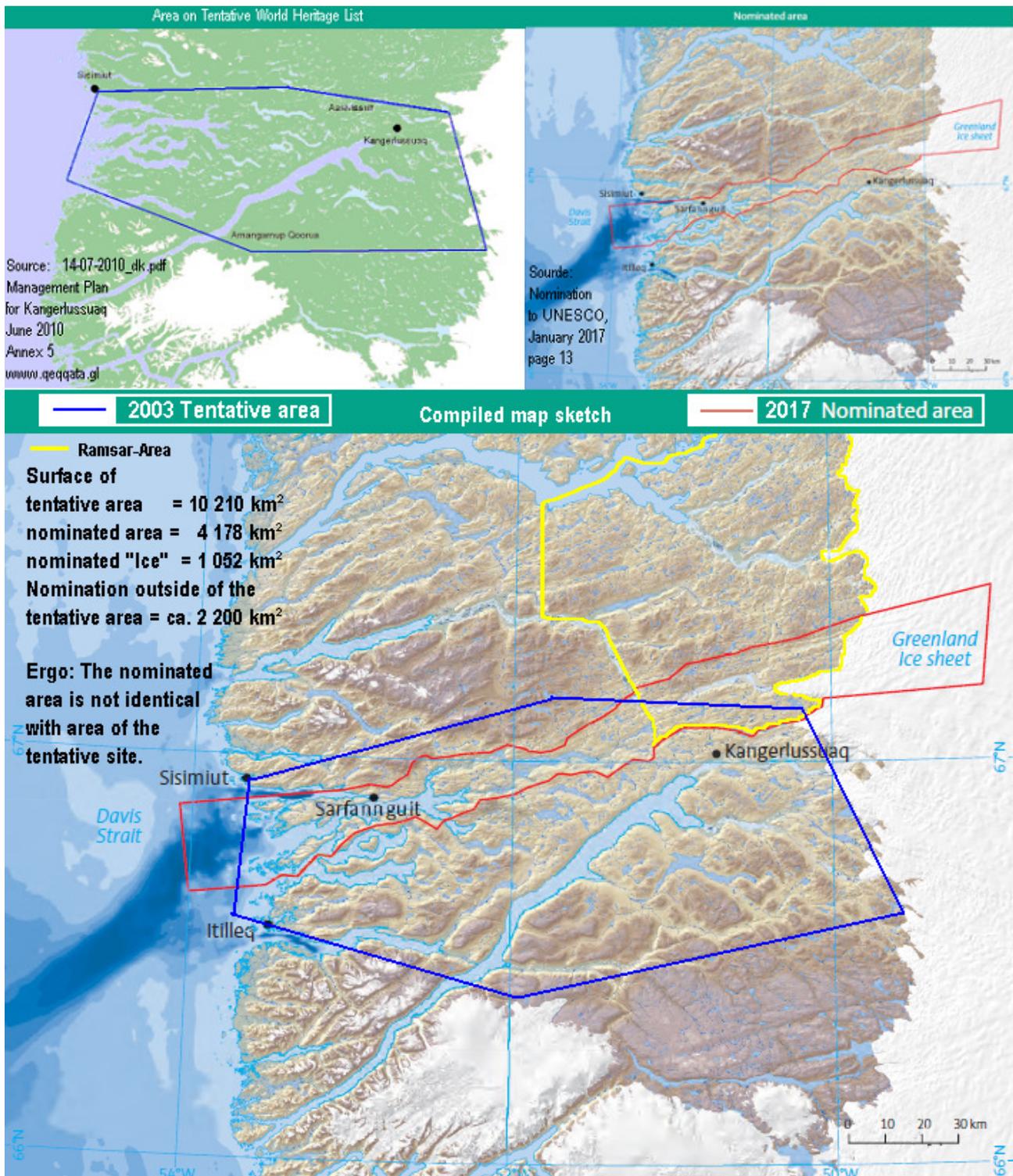
"In 2010, Qeqqata Municipality began comprehensive physical and economic planning of the future for the region, its people and its assets. This involved new discussions with the Greenland Government about the shape and size of Aasivissuit – Arnangarnup Qoorua. Prior to the final decision, Qeqqata Municipality conducted a number of meetings and workshops with citizens, local politicians etc. on many issues, with the nomination for World Heritage status being one of the major subjects. A new report was drafted on the cultural history of the area, with suggestions as to the boundaries of the new area (Andreasen 2013). It was also decided to include part of the inland ice sheet and of the open sea, and to change the title to: Aasivissuit – Nipisat. Inuit Hunting Ground between Ice and Sea."

There exists today a natural reserve "Arnangarnup Qoorua" with a surface of 91.9 km² in Paradise Valley. But the decision to exclude "Arnangarnup Qoorua" from the nominated area does not only concern this small area. Excluded is the whole area south of Watson River and the fjord Kangerlussuaq. This area forms the center of the world's biggest population of musk oxen, a threatened species and the last big game of the ice age, which has survived it. Attempts have been made at several places (Norway, Sweden, Siberia) to secure the survival of this species. But the attempt near Kangerlussuaq was the most successful one. This also might justify a registration on the World Heritage List under criterion x (Natural World Heritage).

The proposal of Claus Andreasen from 2013 to the municipality, which formed the base for the decision to exclude the southern part of the tentative area and to refer instead of it to Nipisat, is not accessible to me. Therefore, I can not respond to the reasons stated therein.

While the nomination for 2017 includes a map sketch of the area with 115 coordinates, the entry in the 2003 Tentative World Heritage List does not contain a map sketch, but only an approximate description: "This region divides naturally into 3 parts, Aasivissuit and Arnangarnup Qoorua (the Paradise valley) in the east, close to the ice cap and the outer coast in the west." But there is a map sketch included in the "Management Plan for Kangerlussuaq. June 2010" as "10.5 Bilag 5". The following sketch contains the 2003-area and the 2013/2017-area in small sketches and a compiled sketch, which shows the limits of both areas: Because the sketch from the Management Plan and the map from the nomination used different systems of projection, the borderlines of the tentative area look somewhat different on the two sketches.

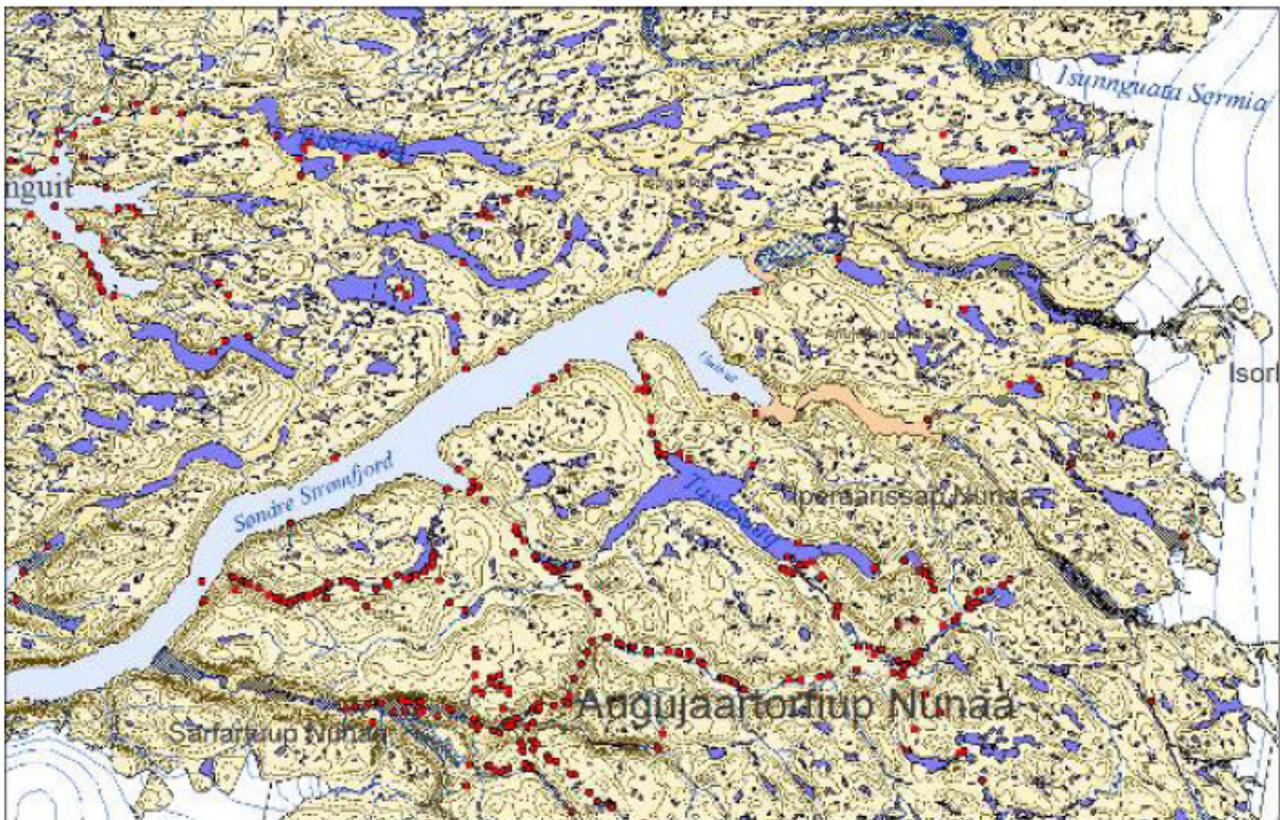
sustainability of this cultural landscape. If this condition of the property has been lost, its integrity has ended to exist.



The surface of the area nominated in 2017 is much smaller: 4,178 km², compared to 10,210 km²; and this only because the area was enlarged to the inland ice in the east (1,052 km²) and to the open sea in the west. And a large part of the "rest" – the area north-east of Aasivissuit – is already protected by the Ramsar Convention. If you look at the nominated area, then it is only a narrow corridor through a cultural landscape, stretching from east to west, from Aasivissuit to Nipisat. While the north-south-extension over the ice is 28 km, and 24 km over the open sea, the narrowest north-south-extension of this corridor is less than 7 km at the lake Tasersuaq, much too narrow to include a hunting ground for reindeer or musk oxen. And only within this corridor the seven selected "representative" archaeological sites are located.

Concerning the extension of the nominated area on the inland ice the nomination states that 4500 years ago the border of it was ca. 40 km more eastwards and: *“Radar images of the subglacial topography reveal that huge valleys, lakes and rivers, and therefore human hunting grounds, must have extended to the east of the present ice margin.”* (p. 28). But this also means, at least 2000 years ago all remains of settlements there etc. have been destroyed by the ice. It is an interesting fact that there probably once existed settlements, but this does not lead to the necessity of protecting them today. The ice, so far as it has not destroyed the remains, will protect them better than any protecting authority. But it is really absurd that the Steering Committee wants to protect hunting grounds, which might have existed, but surely do not exist today, by including them – if they existed - in the property, while it excludes unique and still existing hunting grounds from the nominated protection zone and thereby exposes them to the planned threat of off-road vehicle (ATV) traffic and unrestrained tourist activity (as will be reported below). Nearly the same holds true for the extension of the nominated area on the open sea (apart from the coastal hunting zones for sea mammals).

The corridor contains seven archaeological sites, two of them former summer camps, the other five, at least in part, were used in winter. The nomination states that there are hundreds of registered archaeological sites in this area (not only the corridor), and I will add that there is also an uncounted, but big number of unregistered archaeological sites, more in the inland, less at the coast. Though the nomination not even presents one archaeological site outside the nominated area, the management plan presents in chapter 6.2 with fig. 6.3 a sketch on protected prehistoric sites in the area:



Figur 6.3 Fredede fortidsminder (Grønlands National Museum og Arkiver)

Figur 6.3 Protected prehistoric sites (Grønlands National Museum og Arkiver)

Even an archaeological layman will recognize that the complete exclusion of the multitude of sites, especially south of the fjord, cannot be compensated by the selection of seven representative sites in an economically uninteresting corridor through the cultural landscape. It might be true that the seven selected sites represent quite well a representative selection of the main cultural-historical periods out of hundreds of sites in

the area as a good presentation in a museum is a qualified selection out of a large number of artefacts in the magazine. But this selection of archaeological sites is not a cultural landscape. It seems that the surface of the area to be protected for a successful nomination should be reduced to a minimum – an area with the least economic interest.

And besides that the applicant is “nominating the property without a buffer zone”, what is stated with almost the same words at four places (p. 14 f., 18, 93, 125) within the text¹⁸. The reason for not nominating the property with a buffer zone should be that the land there is owned by the state. Well, all land in Greenland is owned by the public. In Greenland exists no private property on land. Therefore it is much easier to define a buffer zone in Greenland than in other countries. But this is no reason not to define a buffer zone. The nomination text of the property of Ilulissat, what I have quoted before, quite clearly recognizes the necessity of defining buffer zones – and defines them.

I come to the conclusion: **The nominated area is not large enough, especially not without a buffer zone, to preserve the integrity of the cultural landscape.**

This guides to the question, how far do the 115 coordinates define the borders of the nominated area to protect it, and how far do they protect interests and plans for activities against limitations, which a World Heritage nomination necessarily produces, because plans and activities will not be possible within the nominated area, and even not within the buffer zone. I will not present here a definite answer to this question, but I want to raise the question.



Fig. 4.8., p. 134

It is true that the application has mentioned, for instance, the “road project”. But the pictures, which have been drawn and presented there, are not always quite adequate. And in some cases you can take this quite literally.

On page 2 of the nomination for instance you see a phantastic photo so that everyone will say: “Wow! This must be listed as World Heritage!” I know this place quite well. It shows a very nice place at the Russells Glacier. I have often been there, and I possess also some pictures of it. But unfortunately it is outside the nominated area – the first photo in the nomination covering a whole page.

Another photo is – at least objectively – a fake; I don’t know if intentionally a wrong picture was

¹⁸) See:

“The 417,800 ha property is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes that convey its significance, and it does not suffer from the adverse effects of development or neglect. **Together with the fact that there is just one landowner (Government of Greenland), these factors have been crucial to nominating the property without a buffer zone.**” (p. 14 f.)

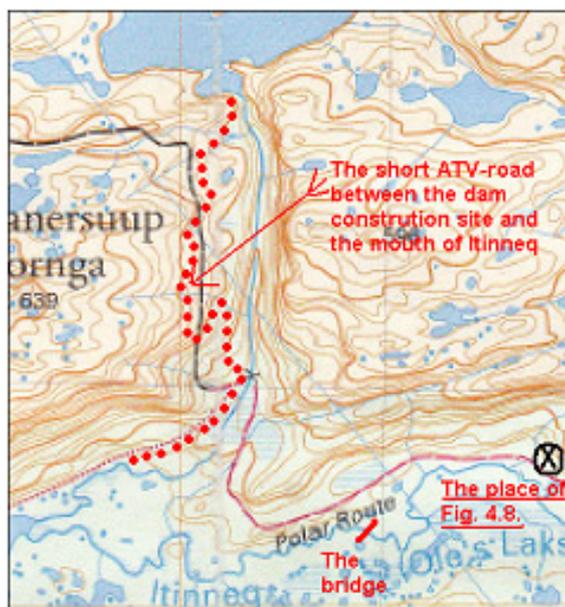
“The property has an area of 417,800 ha and is therefore of an adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes that testify to its significance, and it does not suffer from the adverse effects of development or neglect. **Together with the fact that there is just one landowner (Government of Greenland) and that any future industrial development in the area has been explicitly rejected, these factors have been crucial to nominating the property without a buffer zone.**” (p. 18)

“The property, with its area of 417,800 ha, is of adequate size to ensure complete representation of the features and processes that convey its significance, and it does not suffer from the adverse effects of development or neglect. **Together with the fact that there is just one landowner (Government of Greenland), these factors have also been crucial to nominating the property without a buffer zone.**” (p. 93)

“The property has an area of 417,800 ha and is therefore of an adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes that testify to its significance, and it does not suffer from the adverse effects of development or neglect. **Together with the fact that there is just one landowner (Government of Greenland) and that any future industrial development in the area has been explicitly rejected, these factors have been crucial to nominating the property without a buffer zone.**” (p. 125)

presented there. It is presented in the nomination on p. 134 (see picture to the left). The nomination says that already two dirt roads exist in the area (p. 133). One is the road from Kangerlussuaq to the icecap (but in fact it does not belong to the nominated area.) and: “The other track connects the northern shore of Maligiaq via Itinneq to a small dammed lake north of the nominated area. It was built as a maintenance road in 2009, when the dams were constructed. Today the road, or rather the path, is mainly used by hikers, hunters and scientists (Fig. 4.8).” (p. 133).

On the next page, describing the picture, you can read: “The 2009 track running northwards from Itinneq (Ole’s Lakselv) to a small lake further north is no longer in use for vehicles, and the vegetation is now recovering. The original impact of the vehicles on the ground will be visible for years to come. The track is now part of the Arctic Circle Trail, a hiking route between Kangerlussuaq and Sisimiut.” (p. 134). Unfortunately the presented picture is not from the ATV-track between the mouth of the Itinneq and the dam construction site, but from a place approx. 3 km west of this track in the valley of Itinneq (see sketch right hand, extracted from a map). You even can see a photo of the area, where the picture has been made, in the nomination-book (on Fig. 4.11, p. 135). The traces of an ATV at this place in the Itinneq valley were already visible, when I hiked there the first time in 2006, and I suppose there was no ATV traffic on it meanwhile. The mentioned ATV-track between the mouth of the Itinneq and the dam construction site is not covered with vegetation except a few plants of horsetail. This road is still looking like an open wound in the landscape. Because it does not look nice, I did not make photos, which I could present you here.

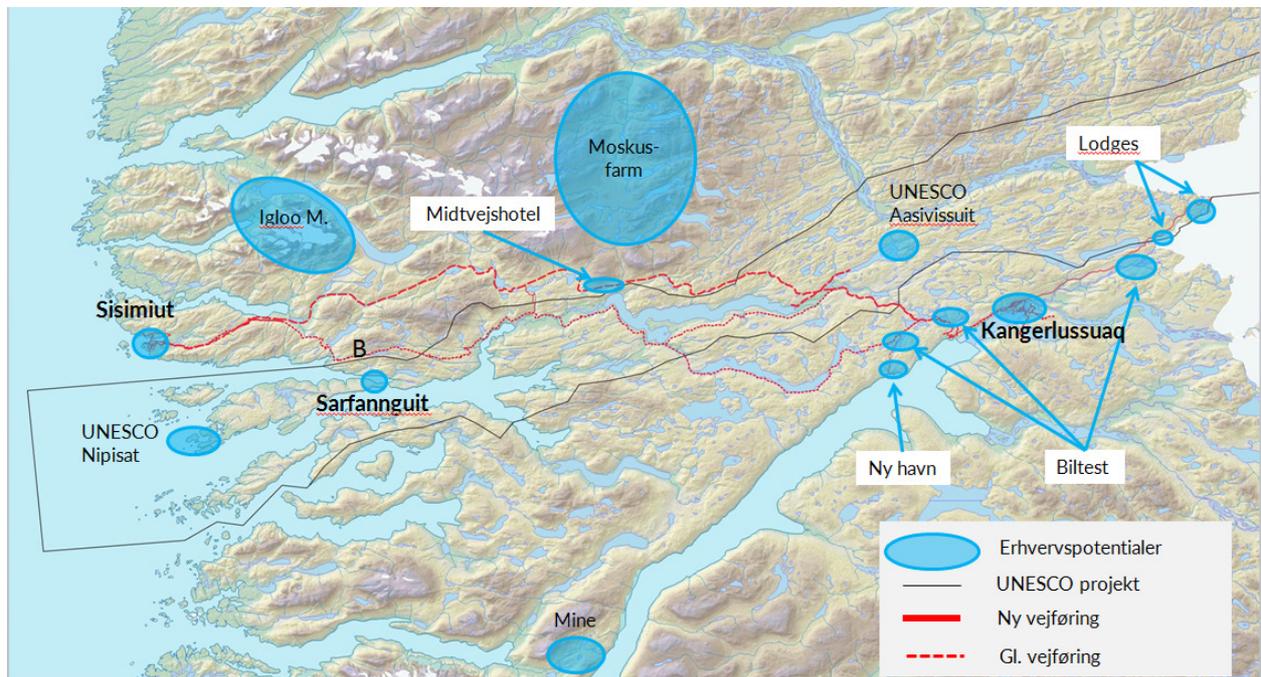


The photo to the left is a satellite photo from Google Earth. It shows the first part of the short ATV-road between the dam construction site (what you can see) and the mouth of Itinneq. Even on the satellite photo you can see that the road is not recovered by vegetation. If you want to see satellite photos of the whole road, download this file http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/small_atv_road.pdf or look for it under Google yourself.

Figuratively a false image is presented in the application, because the road is described as a necessary infrastructure project supporting the aim of protecting the UNESCO World Heritage site, as you can read: “There is very little infrastructure in Aasivissuit – Nipisat and most parts of the area can only be reached on foot or by helicopter. **Nomination of the site for**

inclusion on the Unesco World Heritage List also includes the planning of the infrastructure and visitor centres to accommodate increased numbers of visitors.” (p. 134). Sorry, it should exclude it, as about the Ilulissat-UNESCO-Site is said: “Visitor access to the area is limited by the wilderness character of the landscape, with **no roads or human-made structures.**”¹⁹ And here, about Aasivissuit-Nipisat, quite the opposite is claimed to be necessary - for protecting the site.

A few years ago, as I remember in 2015, an article on the “Kangerlussuaq road project”, i.e. the planned ATV-road between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq, was published on Qeqqata Municipality’s website²⁰. And in 2017, although the main arguments of this first version of the article are still a part of it, almost literally, the article underwent some slight changes²¹. First the word “ATV-road” was substituted by the word “nature road” (“naturvej”), at least in the first part of it; at the end the author has looked over it. But the meaning did not change. And then the actual version of the article also contains a chapter (socio-)economic consequences of the ATV-road/nature-road, including the following map:



On this map the UNESCO-area is surrounded by a lot of “business potentials”. And within this area even the two archaeological sites of Aasivissuit and Nipisat, after which the designated area is called, are shown as “business potentials”. It seems the ‘border’ does not protect the cultural landscape inside, but the business potentials outside against restrictions of the UNESCO area. And this is not all. Compare the map above with the completed map on page 17! **Practically the UNESCO project is transformed to a business park, of what the ATV road is the central element.**

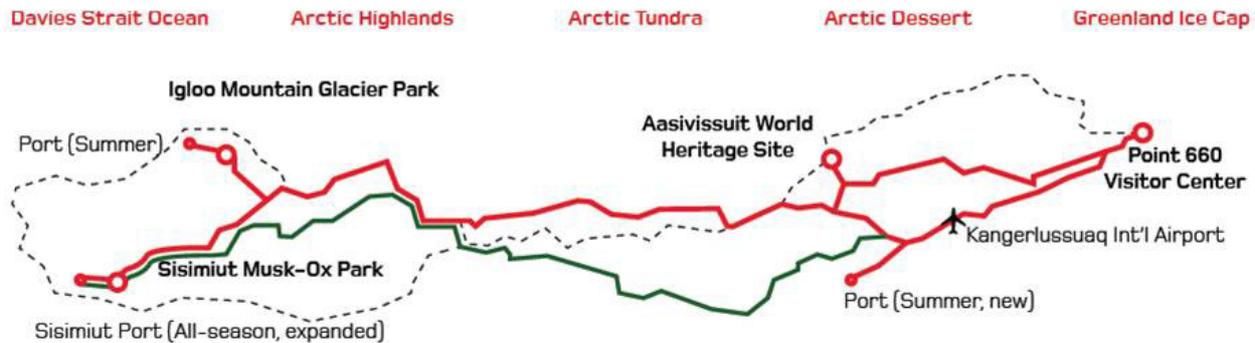
Those “business potentials”, which surround the nominated UNESCO-area, start with the planned project called “Igloo-M”. It is worth to be mentioned that the word written as “igloo” is not Greenlandic, but is in use in Canada and Alaska/USA to designate snow-houses.

¹⁹) <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1149/>

²⁰) I have preserved this article as a pdf-file, what you can download under <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/atv-road-da.pdf>, and for readers, who don't speak Danish, I have added an English <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/atv-road-en.pdf>, and a German <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/atv-road-de.pdf> translation.

²¹) The new version: https://www.qeqqata.gl/Emner/Om_kommunen/Kangerlussuaq_vej?sc_lang=da or as pdf-file: <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/atv-naturvej.pdf>, English: <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/atv-natureroad.pdf>, German: <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/atv-naturstrasse.pdf>.

The linguistically corresponding Greenlandic word is written “illu” and just means “house”, while the Greenlanders use another word for the snow-house, which was not typical in a way for the housing traditions of the Greenlanders in this area as some in Europe or North America believe. But obviously “Igloo-M.” stands for “Igloo-Mountain” (a mountain in Denali National Park in Alaska) and is used as the name of a company: “Igloo Mountain ApS [ApS = Ltd.] was founded in 2008 by Greenland Venture A/S and 4 entrepreneurs in Sisimiut with a primary mission to facilitate the development of tourism in and around Sisimiut, Greenland”. The following sketch shows its business intentions.



With the heading “Making of an sustainable adventure destination in Greenland” this sketch proposes: “Arctic Circle Region of Greenland - 200 km of pristine wilderness from the Davies Strait Ocean to the Greenland Ice Cap. A region with a historic depth of more than 4.000 years.” And: “Igloo Mountain pursue a sustainable plan of development with focus on three distinct market segments important for creating a balanced destination with year-around activities.” While segments 2 and 3 are directed to Iceland and Denmark, segment 1 is directed to the nominated UNESCO area in Greenland (see sketch) with “Pre- & post cruise stays’ for cruise ship operators” ... “In total 8.000-10.000 cruisers per season distributed over 40 port-of-calls.” And it sounds like a bad joke that this is based on “the 10 sustainable principles of One Planet Living”.²²

The next business potential eastwards is called “Midvejshotel”. It is located at the north-west-shore of the lake Tasersuaq, of course within the nominated UNESCO area, not far from the middle of the planned ATV or “nature” road. The hikers on Kangerlussuaq camping site hiking to Sisimiut were shocked, when I told them about the municipality’s plan to build a hotel in the immediate vicinity of the trail.

Then north-east of this hotel a muskox-farm is planned, just in the area of the world’s biggest muskox population. Also the responsible man for “living resources” in Qeqqata Municipality, Marius Olsen, reports about plans to start farms for musk oxen and reindeer there, which might be more profitable than the present hunting tradition²³. But to bring domesticated reindeer in a classic area of wild reindeer in Greenland is, from our point of view, a violation of fundamental rules of nature protection and would violate the principle of integrity of a protected cultural landscape.

The publication gives no explanation, why there are no other business projects outlined between the muskox farm and the inland-ice north of the UNESCO-area, but it can be concluded from the UNESCO-nomination: This area is protected by the Ramsar-Convention (to protect some species of birds), what does not allow to start there business projects; and the same holds true for the protected caribou-calving-area within the Ramsar-area (p. 146).

²²) <http://www.ski.gl/IglooMountainApS.aspx>

²³) “Vi kan oprette moskusokse- og rensdyrfarme, så vi kan få mere ud af landet.”
http://www.qeqqata.gl/Nyheder/2015/11/ATV_Spor.aspx?sc_lang=da

The planned UNESCO-area, the Ramsar-Convention-area, and the caribou-calving-area have their southern border immediately north of the road between Kangerlussuaq and the icecap, which was built by the US Airforce from Kangerlussuaq to the Sugar Loaf (mountain) and from there to the icecap by Volkswagen for testing cars between 1999 and 2005 on the ice.

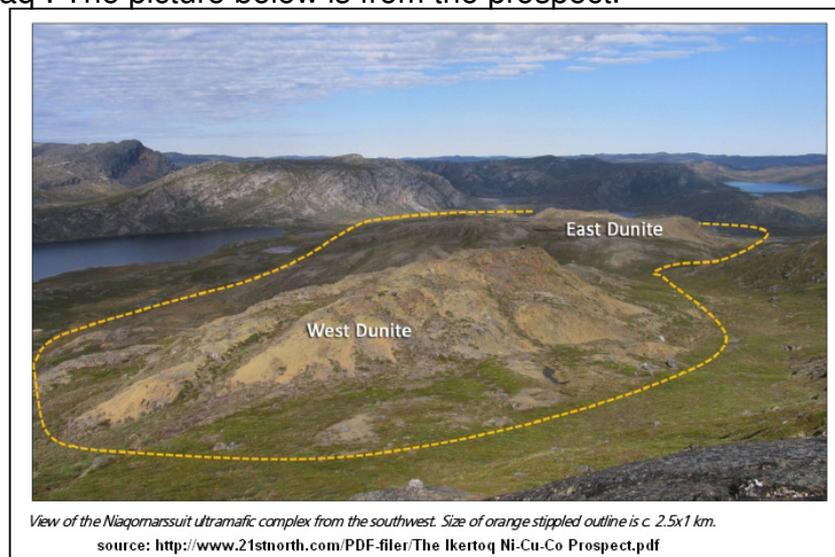
The first outlined business project on the map south of the UNESCO-area near to the ice are lodges. As I was told by locals, it currently should be illegal to build lodges there, but perhaps these stricter protections will be relaxed by including the area north of the road in the World Heritage List.

Then some car testing areas (“Biltest”) follow. According to a press information from June 2014 the Swedish enterprise Arjeplog Testing Management AB received a landuse permission (“arealtildeling”) from the municipality for some places south of the nominated UNESCO-area, but immediately bordering to it.

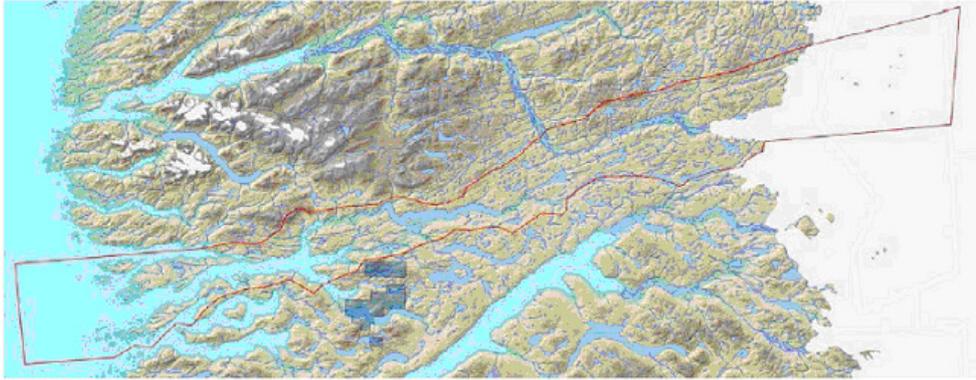
Since Volkswagen stopped its car testing activity the road between Kangerlussuaq and the icecap is mainly used by the tourism enterprise “World of Greenland/Arctic Circle (WOGAC)” – now “Albatros Arctic Circle” (www.aac.gl). WOGAC/AAC uses old busses and trucks, which are now too old for their original use. Now they transport tourists arriving at Kangerlussuaq Airport to the Russell-Glacier (distance: 25 km, price per person: 625 dkk or 84 €). And since 2017 also guided ATV-trips to Russell-Glacier and the icecap are offered by WOGAC/AAC and others. An ATV-tour (in a convoi of ca. 4 ATVs with a guide) to point 660 (40 km) is available for 2000 DKK (ca. 270 €) from one of these operators.

And the most southern business potential on the sketch is a mining project between the UNESCO-project and the “Long Fjord” (“Kangerlussuaq”). It looks very modest. The nomination-text says: “the Ministry of Mineral Resources – which issues raw material licences – has agreed not to issue prospecting licences within the nominated World Heritage Site.” (p. 18). But this is only a statement about the nominated area and the future. Not all business plans are shown on the map sketch above. I found some of them, even within the nominated area.

According to the PDF-file “The Ikertoq Ni-Cu-Co Prospect.pdf” exists a licenced site for nickel-, copper- and cobalt-mining within the nominated area. Its subtitle is: “high-grade nickel-copper targets in the Nagssugtoqidian orogen of west Greenland (contained within exclusive license 2010/17)”; and then follows: “The Ikertoq Ni-Cu project comprises exclusive mineral rights covering 151 km² in a widely unexplored segment of the Palaeoproterozoic Nagssugtoqidian Orogen in West Greenland.” The PDF-file-name points to the Ikertoq-fjord within the nominated area, and the site-name “Niaqornarsuit” seems to correspond with the name of a half-island at Ikertoq-fjord vis-à-vis Sarfanguit called “Niaqornarsuaq”. The picture below is from the prospect.



The following map sketch reveals mining sites, which have been licenced in 2016 in the



Map 34: Mineral prospecting licences in 2016 are shown in blue.

Source: Københavns Universitet, Statens Naturhistoriske Museum. Annex 2: management plan: nomination of Aasivissuit-Nipisat – Inuit hunting Ground between ice and sea – for inclusion on the World Heritage List, p. 71
http://static-curis.ku.dk/portal/files/174244269/Aasivissuit_Nipisat_management_plan.pdf

immediate vicinity of the nominated area. Though the document, where it was published, is an Annex to the UNESCO-nomination, it was not published together with the nomination itself.

Other licences for mineral prospecting south-east of the Kangerlussuaq (“Long Fjord”) are to be found in the “Management Plan for Kangerlussuaq” (footnote 8). I quote from this source chapter 6.5.1 – Mining Exploration:

“In the area around Kangerlussuaq, many exploration licenses have been granted. The yellow markings in Figure 6.4 indicate areas where authorization has been given for raw material exploration or where applications for authorization to search for raw materials have been opened.



Figur 6.4) Råstofeftersøkningsområder

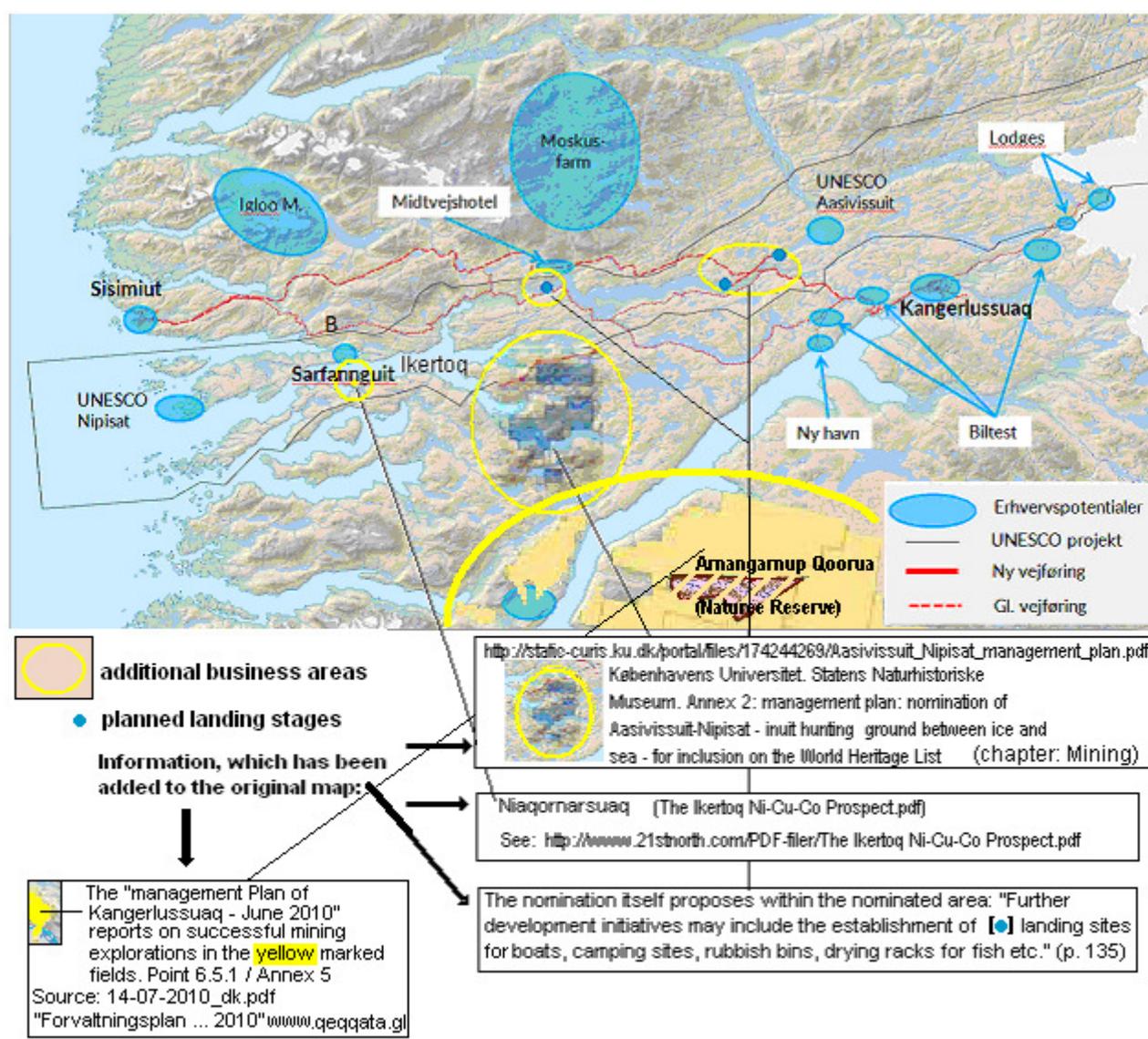
In spring 2007, Hudson Resources Inc. performed seismic surveys in their field of study in the Sarfartoq region. The studies have mapped a diamond-bearing mountain species called Kimberly over a 1200 m stretch.

A total of 1604 diamonds have been found in the Sarfartoq area. Of which 441 macro diamonds, ie. with a grain size of 0.5 mm in three dimensions. The largest of the diamonds is 2.4 karat, which is the largest diamond found in Greenland to date.

Hudson Resources Inc. is planning to apply for exploitation permission and one mine will start production in 2011. Early launch of mining in the area of the Paradise Valley will mean easier access to the southern part of the management area, including help expand the hunting possibilities. Conversely, there will also be a risk of greater pressure on the protected area in the Paradise Valley, as access to this will also be easier. In addition to exploration of diamonds, niobium research is also being carried out in the area." (Management Plan)

It is planned that the ATV road not only crosses the nominated area for 35 km. A short road from the crossing ATV road going to lake Aasivissuit is proposed. And where it reaches the lake, a landing stage is planned, of course for motor boats. The same is planned from the crossing road toward the lake Tasersuaq; but there two landing stages are planned, one at the eastern and one at the western end of Tasersuaq. And in addition to that accommodation facilities, camping sites, rubbish bins, etc., etc. are planned. ...

For a better visualization I have compiled all this information in one map sketch:



The original map sketch was published in the article "Kangerlussuaq vejprojekt"
https://www.qeqqata.gl/Emner/Om_kommunen/Kangerlussuaq_vej?sc_lang=da

It is possible that the bold red line, taken from the sketch of Igloo Mountain ApS, was sketched more sketchily and in reality should run on the planned ATV road. And Arngarnup Qoorua may be located 3 or 4 km more south.

If it really comes as shown on the sketch, and in addition the site was listed on UNESCO World Heritage List, then on the one hand a unique natural landscape would have become a business park with the image of an UNESCO site, and on the other hand, UNESCO had lost much of its authority. I hope that neither one nor the other will happen.

According to my impression, the worst thing here is that the cultural landscape is much more endangered by dubious economic air-castles – in their center the ATV road – than by fundamental economic interests (for example mining).

What one can see on the map above, is that the cultural landscape, what should be protected, is not only reduced to a narrow corridor though it, but even this corridor is cut by the ATV road into two pieces. After replacing the hiking trail in the Nerumaq valley, the road eastwards parallels the northern border of the nominated area and then crosses it for 35 km between the lakes Tasersuaq and Aasivissuit. But the road is not only crossing it, as is planned it should serve as a base for a touristic infrastructure between Ittineq and Aasivissuit, which violates the scope of reasonable measure. In a case like that – the cultural landscape of Elbtal near Dresden/Germany and the Waldschlösschenbrücke crossing it – the UNESCO once has decided to delete a property from the World Heritage List.

Sometimes pictures can say much more than words. The mentioned pdf-file “Samfundsøkonomiske Konsekvenser – Naturvej mellem Sisimiut og Kangerlussuaq” (“Socio-Economic Consequences – Nature Road between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq”) uses in one chapter on benefits for tourism enterprises the following photo to illustrate the new quality of tourism, what is intended by the ATV road. I present it here without any comment, but only with one question: Why was it not presented in the nomination book to UNESCO?



The question of whether the ATV road, apart from the impact on the cultural landscape, would be a reasonable economic project, is, although important for the decision of the municipality and government in Greenland, ultimately of secondary importance for the decision of UNESCO. Therefore and because the “road project” is a very complex theme, I have moved it into an Annex and will present here only some results of it.

10 Arguments on the ATV Road and a Boat Line

1. The dispute over the construction of a road between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq is a 55-years old debate that should finally be brought to an end now.
2. The debate's only rational result, which all sides now seem to accept, is that the construction of a regular road is priceless. Therefore to build it is out of discussion.
3. About five years ago, the argument emerged that one could now build a cheaper ATV road for 15,000,000 DKK, which could then later be upgraded to a regular gravel road.
4. That is an error. This argument only arouses false hopes that will lead to disappointment among the residents of Kangerlussuaq. The construction of a regular gravel road with a roadbed will not be cheaper, because it previously existed an ATV road without a roadbed. On the contrary, the construction becomes more expensive, namely the construction costs of the ATV road.
5. The main argument put forward for the construction of an ATV road, in addition to that of being upgraded to a regular road, is that it would represent an economic alternative to the air transport of passengers and cargo. Against it, however, the following arguments speak: (6) Do ATVs technically meet the requirements of such a means of transport? (7) Would ATVs be a suitable alternative to aviation for the purposes of transport? (8 ff.) Would the reopening of a boat connection be a solution instead?
6. The fuel consumption per passenger of an ATV is about five times higher than that of a commercial aircraft. Above all, however, ATV wear leads to high operating costs. Therefore, only the operating costs for an ATV transport of passengers between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq would be higher than the price of a plane ticket. Already, an ATV tour from Kangerlussuaq to the Russell Glacier costs considerably more than a flight to Sisimiut. For freight costs basically the same applies. An economical alternative to air traffic would obviously not be ATV traffic.
7. Qeqqata Kommunia has set up in two articles "Kangerlussuaq vejprojekt" and "Samfundsøkonomiske Konsekvenser" of the ATV road statements on its economy, the consistency of which is doubted. They are not founded on a solid database. A year ago, to the commune was presented the first census of hikers between Kangerlussuaq and Sisimiut, based on statistical methods. Its result was that every year about 1,290 hikers wander between Kangerlussuaq and Sisimiut, nearly all of them claimed to stop coming when an ATV road was built. According to their statements, they contribute to an annual increase of the Greenland GNP of 11 million DKK. That would go away if they did not come anymore. This alone exceeds the alleged economic revenues from the construction of the ATV road considerably.
8. Until about 15 years ago there existed a ship connection of the "Arctic Umiaq Line" (AUL) to Kangerlussuaq. But a stop in Kangerlussuaq on the line between Ilulissat and Qaqortoq is probably not economical. It is therefore proposed to open a local shipping line from Kangerlussuaq to Sisimiut and other locations. It could be used for regular passenger and freight traffic. The example of Disko Line A / S, founded in 2004, shows that this is possible and can be economically successful.
9. Such a shipping line should not only create a connection between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq, but between all eight Byer and Bygder of Qeqqata Kommunia. It should consist of a shoreline between Sisimiut and Atammik with a side link to Kangerlussuaq. In order to be able to operate in winter, the use of a hovercraft should be checked. Since an ATV road would also be usable only in summer, even an ordinary shipping line to Kangerlussuaq, which is not usable in winter, would not be a disadvantage.
10. But above all such a shipping line would create a first class touristic highlight. Its costs would be much below the costs of an ATV road between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq. And of course it would be useful for all citizens in Qeqqata Kommunia, not only for the 500 inhabitants of Kangerlussuaq. And it would really be a good practice of a sustainable municipality in the arctic, what Qeqqata claims to be.

For more than four millennia, the region between Kangerlussuaq and Sisimiut has been a migration area. The people who used to live here certainly had no scientific concept of sustainability. But they practiced it. Even today, the country looks as it did 4500 years before the first human set foot on it. If a cultural landscape can have a message to the mankind, that's one. Listen to it!

With kind regards



Dr. Frieder Weisse, chairman

attached:

Memorandum

Annex

Polar-Routen e.V.



Förderverein für Wandern und Naturschutz in Grönland

Annex: The Road Sisimiut – Kangerlussuaq and the Alternative to it

15. Feb. 2018

Greenland has with an area of 2,166,000 km² a larger surface than all other European countries except Russia, but it has less than 60.000 inhabitants. This means that completely different conditions exist for the solution of traffic problems than in almost all countries of the world. No two separate towns or villages are connected by a road in Greenland.

Qeqqata Kommunia carries in its coat of arms two big stars - which stand for the two "byer" or larger settlements Sisimiut and Maniitsoq - and six little stars, which stand for the six "bygder" or smaller settlements. These are on the coast from north to south like pearls on a string Sisimiut, Sarfannguit, Itilleq, Kangaamiut, Maniitsoq, Napasoq and Atammik and at the end of the fjord Kangerlussuaq, with 170 km the longest fjord of the west coast, the village of the same name. The place owes its existence to the construction of a military air base by the US Air Force in World War II in order to direct the military supplies for Europe.



In recent years, when the question of listing the region near Sisimiut between the inland ice and the coast in the UNESCO World Heritage List has become more topical, representatives of the municipality have also reiterated an earlier discussion about the construction of a road between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq. In 2015 an article "Kangerlussuaq vejprojekt" ("Kangerlussuaq road project") was published on the municipalities website. Two years later the article was published in a revised version with an additional chapter "Samfundsøkonomiske Konsekvenser". This ends with the following hint to a pdf-file to be downloaded: "Hent hele rapporte vedrører de samfundsøkonomiske konsekvenser af naturvejen". The PDF-files' title is "Samfundsøkonomiske konsekvenser – naturvej mellem Sisimiut

og Kangerlussuaq” (“Socio-Economic Consequences – nature road between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq”).¹

To make the article available for those, who don't speak Danish, I have made a working translation in English . Because of the size of the file and the transformation from WORD to PDF the quality of the pictures in the pdf-file is not the best. So if you want to see the pictures in a better quality, please, download the Danish article from the municipality's website. The same applies for the reference to the article. The page reference for the Danish original and my English translation is almost identical. To make the page reference easier I have put it in brackets in the text, not in footnotes, and to distinguish it from the references to the UNESCO-application² I have written the abbreviation “SEC” (= Socio Economic Consequences) in the brackets, followed by a komma, the “p.”, and the page number.

1. The Road Project – a never ending controversy

The paper on socio-economic consequences of the nature road does not say much about the discussion on the plans of a road from Sisimiut to Kangerlussuaq between 1964 and 2000. There is a rumor in Greenland about a proposal of the US Air Force to the municipality concerning the road, but the municipality has denied it:

“In 1964, Danish Arctic Contractors prepared a preliminary project for a road link between Søndre Strømfjord and Holsteinsborg³, which was handed to the Ministry of Greenland. It is not known if it was presented to the Americans. In the following years, the ministry wrote, inter alia, that it was ‘a political question of allowing such an actual US activity outside of the defense areas’ and ‘execution of the road to Holsteinsborg would create a disgusting development in this city that was not intended’. Holsteinsborg's Municipal Council recommended closer investigations, especially on the basis of tourism potential, but the Ministry completed the case.” (SEC, p. 5)

Among the Greenlanders in Kangerlussuaq and Sisimiut, the road project is something of a never-ending story that divides Greenlandic society. It can lead to heated debates among locals that are often difficult to understand by people from outside. In Greenland I have friends both in the one and in the other camp. A friend of mine who supports the road project once told me that the people in Nuuk or the central self-government were biased against them in Qeqqata. It is worth to be mentioned that he did not care about the ATV road itself, for him it is just the first step to a real road. A friend who does not support it (and who is not from this municipality and does not own an ATV nor like ATVs) explained the conflict to me that the politicians in Sisimiut are fact-resistant in this regard.

¹) Two of the municipality's publications about it can be seen / downloaded under https://www.qeqqata.gl/Emner/Om_kommunen/Kangerlussuaq_vej?sc_lang=da (Kangerlussuaq vejproject, 1st article) and <https://www.qeqqata.gl/-/media/Naturvej/Samfundskonomisknaturvejdk.ashx?la=da> (Samfunds-økonomiske Konsekvenser - Naturvej mellem Sisimiut og Kangerlussuaq, 2nd article). For those, who don't understand Danish, English working translations (1) <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/atv-naturerod.pdf> and (2) <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/socioeconomic.pdf> are available. The correctness of the translation is my responsibility. The author of the first, pointing to the second publication is also chairman of the Steering Committee for the UNESCO nomination so that in some way they can be seen as the nomination's interpretation.

²) The application is available as a book (Aasivissuit – Nipisat . Inuit Hunting Ground between Ice and Sea. For inclusion on the World Heritage List) with ISBN 978-87-8751-986-1 and as PDF-file “Aasivissuii-Nipisat_Final.pdf”, 89 MB, to be downloaded from https://www.qeqqata.gl/-/media/UNESCO/Aasivissuit-Nipisat_Final.ashx?la=da. This book is quoted in the text only with the page-number in brackets.

³) „Holsteinsborg“ is the former Danish name of Sisimiut and “Søndre Strømfjord” the former Danish name of Kangerlussuaq.

Over the years politicians in Sisimiut were ambitious to present (as they saw it) justifications for the road project, while politicians in Nuuk (the self-government) were pointing on juridical obstacles against it and on astronomical high costs. The quoted text shows that this conflict is older than the self-government in Greenland, because in the 1960s the self-government still did not exist. In the 1960s it was the Danish Ministry of Greenland in Copenhagen, which rejected the plan, now it is the self-government in Nuuk.

The paper of the municipality states this conflict explicitly:

“The central authorities - first in the form of the Greenland Ministry and then as the Greenland Home Rule Government - have, since the first thoughts of a road arose, rejected the plans and did not want to finance the road nor even to co-finance it.” (SEC, p. 4)

To settle this conflict “Sisimiut Municipality and Greenland's Home Rule Government set up a joint steering committee and working group, investigating road projects based on the impact assessment [of Rambøll]. The report was completed in 2005 and concluded, among others:

...

- The most important source of income of the project is the relocation of existing traffic from air to road / ship. ...” (SEC, p. 5)

For outsiders it is somewhat amazing hearing that someone from Kangerlussuaq is claiming for the necessity of an alternative to aircontact to Sisimiut, because the village Kangerlussuaq owes its existence completely to the airport.

It is interesting that only in the quoted Statement of the joint committee the ship besides a road is mentioned as alternative to air transport. I suppose it was Home Rule Government's side in the joint committee, what mentioned the possibility of a shipping line, while the municipality (Sisimiut and later on Qeqqata) in all documents is only speaking about the possibility of a road, avoiding the word “boat-line” instead of the “road” as the devil avoids the holy water.

The “Joint Report between Sisimiut Municipality and Greenland Home Rule” (2005) also mentions the different expectations on the estimated costs of a (regular) road: “Mittarfeqarfiit [= The Airport] and Rambøll [= company for constructing infrastructure⁴] have arrived at estimated construction costs of 490 and 250 million respectively. The difference is thus 240 million. Thus, quite a considerable amount.” It is self-evident that the government in Nuuk (or the Airport) expects the higher and the municipality expects the lower costs. The municipality's paper comments the different positions: “Based on this, Greenland's Home Rule members in the steering committee stated that ‘such essential uncertainties should be clarified at least before it is advisable to allocate additional funding for design’, while Sisimiut Municipality representatives stated the ‘feasability of a road between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq’.” (SEC, p. 6).

⁴) Wikipedia about Rambøll: “**Ramboll Group A/S** (also known as just “Ramboll”) is a consulting engineering group with worldwide operations. ... Ramboll was founded in October 1945 as “Rambøll & Hannemann” in Copenhagen. In 1991 the company merged with “B. Højlund Rasmussen A/S” into “Rambøll, Hannemann & Højlund A/S”.! In 2003 the company merged with Swedish Scandiaconsult making it the largest consulting engineering business in the Nordics. ... In the summer of 2007, Ramboll broadened its geographical presence by acquiring the UK based engineering firm Whitbybird. When Whitbybird was acquired the company employed 680 people and had offices throughout the UK and in Italy, India and the United Arab Emirates. In April 2008, Ramboll's presence in India was strengthened by acquiring the Indian telecom design company lmlsoft.”

According to information from locals in Kangerlussuaq, recently Rambøll built new big fuel tanks at the International Airport Kangerlussuaq. Greenland has no road net. No two towns or settlements, which are not immediately adjacent, are connected by a road in Greenland. So building the first road in Greenland might therefore be interesting and challenging for Rambøll.

2. The Road Project – Its History and Development

The discussed paper mentions some proposals and printed papers on the road project from 2003 on (SEC, p. 5 - 11). The papers quoted in the article “Socio Economic Consequences ...” were not available to me, and I could not get them in summer 2017, when I was in Kangerlussuaq. So I cannot present or discuss all the different proposals for a trace of the planned road of the last 55 years.

Still in discussion (and quoted in the articles of the municipality on the “Kangerlussuaq road project”) are the ARTEK⁵ study from 2009 (“Road between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq – alignment proposal”) (SEC, p. 8 f.) and investigations of Rambøll: “The EIA⁶ study is carried out by Rambøll Greenland, while the present report concerns the socio-economic consequences of the nature road.” (SEC, p. 4). But, as one might add, the quoted report does not brighten further “economic consequences” or expectations for Rambøll.

In an email, what I received in September 2017, the vice-director of the municipality says, stressing that the road project was older than the UNESCO-project: “The road-project has been part of this regions planning for 15 years, and the ATV-trail the last 5 years.” And as you can read in the discussed paper, it even started in the 1960s (SEC, p. 4). This means, for a timespan of 50 years it was not discussed as an ATV road, but as a regular road with a roadbed and a width of 6.5 m (SEC, p. 5), and an ATV road was only a topic in the last few years.

The paper reports: “In 2014, different options for the overall road project are being considered, and to start slowly at each end. That is, from Kangerlussuaq to the harbour and then up to Aasivissuit. Similarly from Sisimiut to the bottom of Kangerluarsuk Tulleq. The possibility of a connection between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq by road from Kangerlussuaq to the east end of Tasersuaq and then boat to Sisimiut is also considered.

Overall, the idea of a nature road (ATV track) occurs because:

- There can not be funding for a real road between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq.
- A new route north of Tasersuaq will be possibly without much major blasting work.
- Availability for concrete potentials is requested
 - near Kangerlussuaq to new port, to lakes, to biltest areas, and to Aasivissuit.
 - near Sisimiut to the ski area Solbakken and to the cottage area at the bottom of Kangerlusarsuk Tulleq.
- Motorized vehicles such as ATVs, UTVs and Unimogs⁷ appear very mobile and can drive without expensive roads.

Qeqqata’s Municipal Council decides on February 26, 2015 that further work will be carried out with an ATV trace between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq, and that the Self-Administration must be asked for the introduction of ATV tracker and safety device on ATVs.” (SEC, p. 10 f.)

Illegal use of ATVs and its bad impact on the environment is a great problem in Greenland. Reading the proposal “for the introduction of ATV tracker and safety device on ATVs” the first time I was sceptical, if this could bring a solution and if it was more than pushing the responsibility to the other side. Recently I could read that the topic also was discussed on the Qeqqata Municipal Council meeting on October 26, 2017. In a factual check attached to the council meeting's protokoll is said about this proposal: "There is no legal basis for

⁵) „ARTEK“ or „Center for Arktisk Teknologi“ is a local department in Sisimiut of the Danish Technical University (see p. 147).

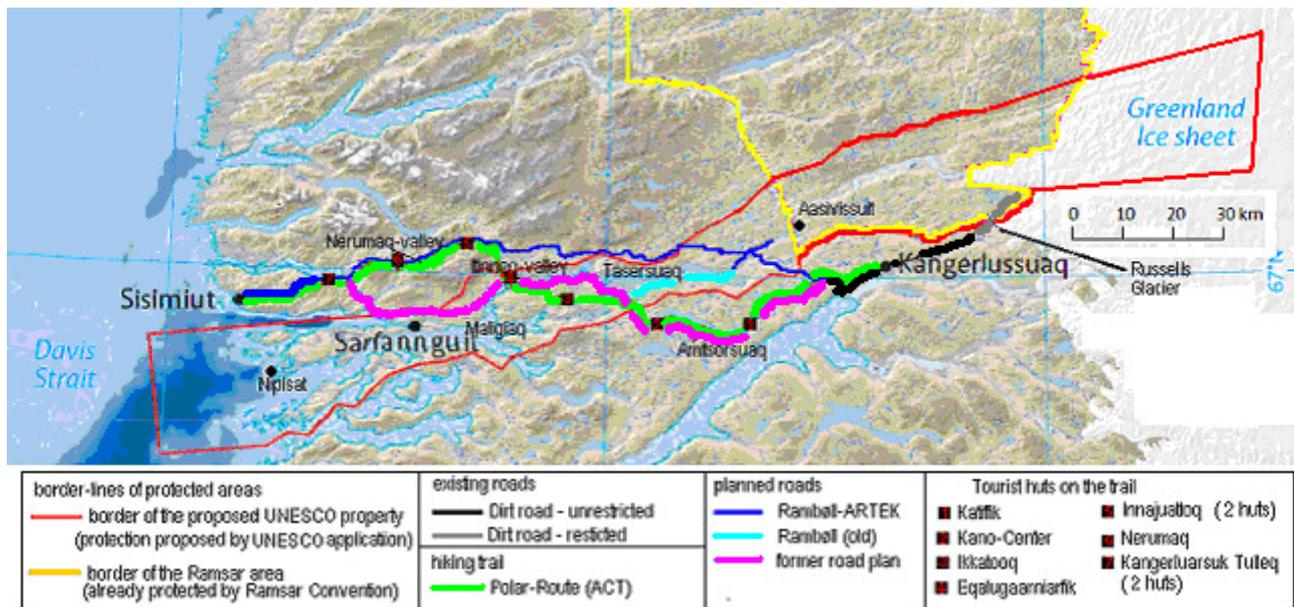
⁶ English: EIA = Environmental Impact Assessment - Danish: VVM = Vurdering af Virkninger på Miljøet.

⁷) The original text says „Umimoq“, but the picture presents an Unimog, what points rather to a construction road than a nature road.

legislation to introduce it as statutory requirement, and in connection with ATV driving the self-government has rejected Qeqqata Municipality's proposal to introduce GPS trackers as legal requirements."⁸

So the proposal has become a part of the ping-pong-play between the municipality and the self-government concerning the road project, but it will not help to prevent the bad impact by illegal ATV-use on the area including the pospected UNESCO property, when an ATV road will be built.

For the uninformed reader the different maps in the application are somewhat confusing; so I have compiled them to one sketch:



You see the border of the nominated UNESCO property represented by a solid red line (—). From fig. 5.3. on of the UNESCO-Nomination, p. 146, I have added the borderlines of the Ramsar area by a solid yellow line (—). The existing roads from the airport to the harbour (10 km) and further on to Kelly Ville (3 km) as well as from the airport to the barrier at "Aajuitsup Tasia" ("Long Lake") (25 km) are represented by a solid black line (—). After this barrier the road going to the ice (point 660, distance 14 km) is represented by a solid grey line (—). The hiking trail (Polar-Route/Arctic Circle Trail) is represented by a green line (—), the actually planned ATV road ("nature road") by a solid dark blue line (—), the old (2006) Rambøll trace south of lake Tasersuaq by a light-blue line (—) and the other old traces, not longer planned by the municipality, by a purple line (—). For means of orientation I have also represented the seven places with tourist huts on the trail by black squares with red numbers, starting in the east (■ ...).

When hikers after their arrival in Greenland asked me, if there is a danger to get lost on the hike to Sisimiut or back to Kangerlussuaq, I could tell them that this is relatively improbable, because the trail is following something like a natural trace. It is more difficult

⁸) The protokoll on council meeting on October, 26, 2017, reports:

"Faktiske forhold

Om sikkerhed/personsøgere til vandreturister, og anden færdsel som hundeslæder, snescootere og ATV'er i baglandet, og i særdeleshed på ruten mellem Sisimiut og Kangerlussuaq arbejder Erhvervsrådet - Arctic Circle Business (ACB) med løsningsforslag til udfordringen. ACB lancerede projektet med arbejdstitlen "Sikkerhed på Sporet" i november 2015. Emnet om sikkerhed på vandreruten og færd i det åbne land i øvrigt var desuden et emne på beredskabskommissionsmødet i december 2016. Der er umiddelbart ikke hjemmel i lovgivning til at indføre det som et lovkrav, og Selvstyret har ifm. ATV-kørsel afvist Qeqqata Kommuniens forslag om at indføre GPS-trackere som lovkrav."

(<http://www.qeqqata.gl/-/media/Politik/KB%20Referater/2017/06%20%2026102017%20%20dk%20abent%20dagsorden.ashx?la=da>)

to depart from the trail choosing alternative roots than to get lost on the trail. If you try to hike cross-country in Greenland, you usually have to stop very soon, because there is an obstacle, what the average hiker cannot overcome. But if you loose respect for the nature and ignore the obstacles, the hike can become dangerous. If you want to hike from the ice to the coast in this area, you have not many choices for your way. This also is the reason, why it is difficult to build a road appart from the trace of the Polar-Route/ACT (or its few parallel paths). It is nearly impossible to construct a road between Kangerlussuaq and Sisimiut without coming in conflict, at least in part, with the Polar-Route/ACT.

The first plan for a track of a road started (in the east) at the end of the existing road in Kelly Ville and followed strictly the track of the hiking trail to the lake Amitsorsuaq, passing it on the southern shore and then down the valley to Tasersuaq.⁹

At the shore of Tasersuaq the once planned road followed about 2 km the hiking trail turning to the left (west), but then departed from it, because the hiking trail starts here to go uphill and downhill for some km until the hut Ikkatoq (ca. 400 m high) and then in the same way further on down to the valley of Itinneq (Ole's Lakselv), which is only a few meters above the sea-level. For a hiker this is somewhat exhausting, but not too difficult; but for a road the mountains there are much to steep. From a technical point of view it might seem necessary to build here a tunnel. But this is too expansive. The former plan for the road was a track at the shore of Tasersuaq to the valley of Itinneq. But the shore there is also very steep, so steep that it is too dangerous for an average hiker. So it would be only possible to build a road there by blusting it into the rock.

The few km through the valley of Itinneq are rarely dangerous for hikers but still somewhat exhausting, especially after rain periods and after the thaw-period, when sometimes the Itinneq has a width of 200 m. Even in summer one can get wet feet.

It goes without saying that this is also a problem for building a road, not to speak about ecological problems in this swampy area with a rich wildlife.

The ascent of a road should not be above 15% for the average citizen. But without building a tunnel of some km length it is impossible to build there a road under this condition.

So one plan was to build a road above the coastline of the fjord Maligiaq via Sarfannuit, what is sometimes called the "southern route". The first part of this route – from the hut Eqalugaarniarfik to Sarfannuit – may be no easy hiking trail, but is not as extremely steep as the second part – from Sarfannuit to the north (at the shore of the fjord, Imertuninnguaq and Amerloq). One of the plans even was to end the road there and to use a boat from Sarfannuit to Sisimiut (SEC, p. 11; quoted in this report on p. 12). Anyway, the plan to use this "southern route" for the track of the road seemed to be no good idea. During more than 10 years I met only a few hikers, who had hiked this southern route. And all, who know the region well, recommended me strictly not to use this southern route. The German guide-book "Grönland: Arctic Circle Trail" says about it:

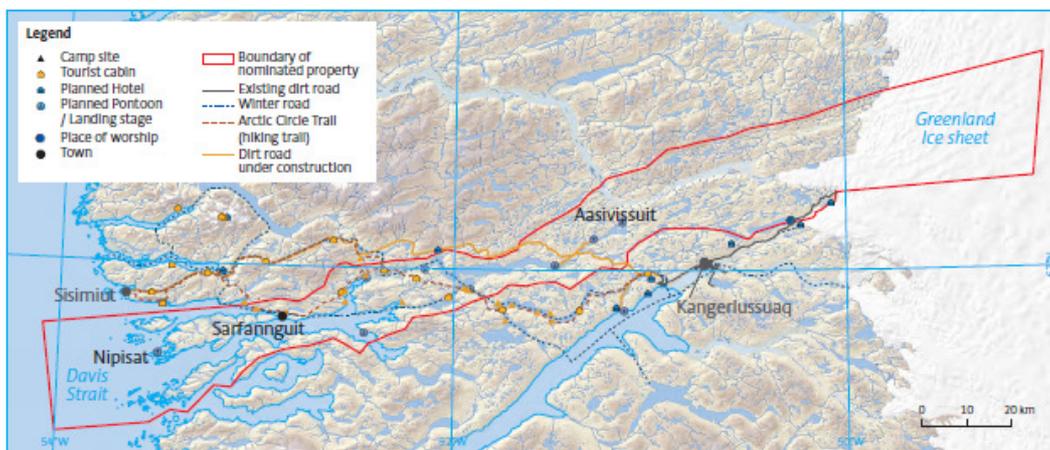
"On the one hand, hikers often (involuntarily) disturb locals in the exercise of their profession (hunting / fishing). On the other hand, the main path [through the valley Nerumaq] is undoubtedly the safer option, not only with regard to the trail marks and the existing trodden tracks that facilitate orientation, but also with regard to the terrain itself. In particular, some parts of the southern trail option, which run directly along the fjord (Imertuninnguaq / Amerloq), are not only exhausting, but at times extremely steep if not impassable. Conditions can easily become hopeless and even life threatening, even without bad weather or damp surfaces ... We thus request you to please respect the

⁹) In 2006 Rambøll presented a variation by a side trace south of Tasersuaq. But this is out of importance today and can be ignored here.

concerns of the local population and not bring yourself unnecessarily in danger. Therefore, choose the main path, which is marked and designated as Polar Route in the map.”¹⁰

It is therefore not astonishing that the municipality departed from planning this trace for the road (i.e. the southern route). But this made it necessary to depart from the route via Amitsorsuaq and the valley of Itinneq. In 2015-2016 another trace north of Tasersuaq was explored and combined with the trace through the valley of Nerumaq, which until now is used for the hiking trail.

The 2016 proposed track for the ATV road starts together with the hiking trail in Kelly Ville at the end of the existing road. But it is following the trace of the hiking trail only a few km, then it turns to the north between Hundesø and Limnæsø, from there to west–northwest between lake Aasivissuit and lake Tasersuaq through the nominated UNESCO property. The UNESCO-application states on it: “A new 3-4 m wide and 130 km long dirt track is planned to connect Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq. Around 35 km will be within the nominated area and will take traffic through the lowland area between the lake Tasersuaq and Aasivissuit Tasiat (Fig. 4.9 [see below]).



From an area to be decided, small paths/dirt tracks will connect the road to possible landing sites on the two lakes: Tasersuaq and Aasivissuit Tasiat.” (p. 133 f.). And because this is obviously more than only passing through the nominated UNESCO area, it is immediately added: “The route of the road will take appropriate account of the landscape and the archaeological sites.” (p. 134).

But sorry, this is not more than a non-binding promise, what cannot replace a missing statutory order, as it exists for instance for the Ilulissat World Heritage Site, forbidding construction of roads, houses etc. The Ilulissat World Heritage Site is protected by the Greenland Parliament Act No. 29 of 18 December 2003 on nature protection. Based on the authorization of this act the self-government has issued the statutory order No. 10 of 15 June 2007 on protection of Ilulissat Icefjord, controlling nearby constructions strictly, limiting the access to the area by the wilderness character of the landscape, prohibiting

¹⁰⁾ Grönland: Arctic Circle Trail, by Meike Woick, Oliver Schröder & David Kuhnert. Outdoor, 2004, 2nd. revised edition 2014.

ISBN 978-3-86686-137-4, page 79f. And here the original German text :

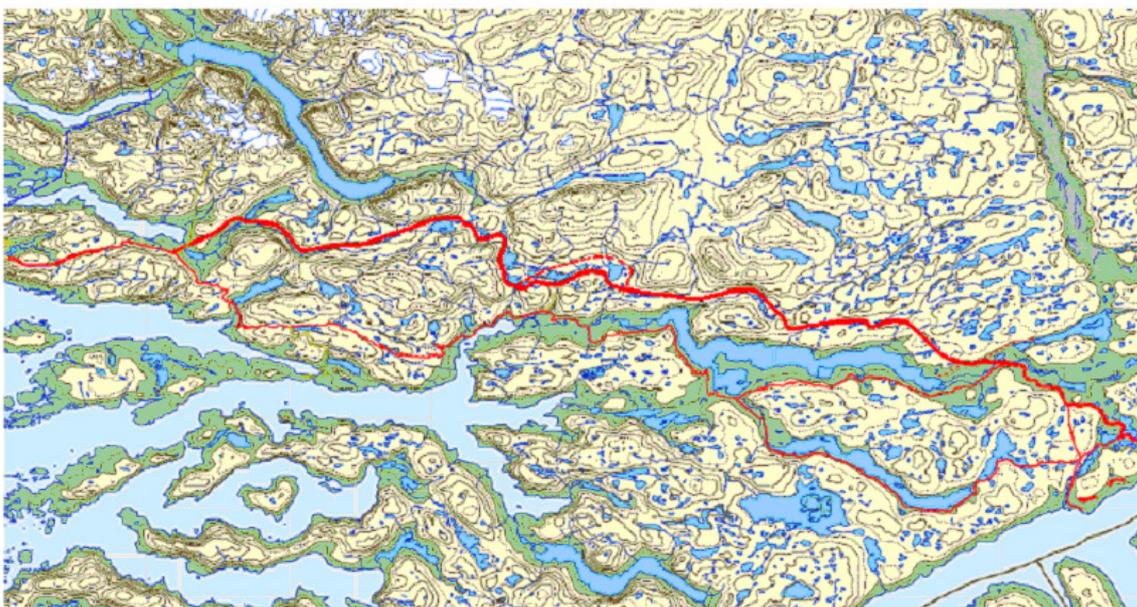
“Nicht selten stören Wanderer, zum Teil aus Unkenntnis, die Einheimischen bei der Ausübung ihres Berufs (Jagd/Fischerei). Zum anderen stellt der Hauptweg [durch das Tal Nerumaq] zweifellos die sicherere Wegvariante dar. Dies hängt nicht nur mit den Steinmännchen und den vorhandenen Trampelpfaden zusammen, die eine Orientierung erleichtern, sondern auch mit dem zu begehenden Gelände. Insbesondere einige Teilstücke der südlichen Variante des Weges, die direkt am Fjord (Imertuninnguaq/Amerloq) verlaufen, sind nicht nur strapaziös, sondern stellenweise extrem steil bis nicht passierbar. Nicht nur bei schlechtem Wetter und feuchtem Untergrund können Sie hier in ausweglose und lebensgefährliche Situationen geraten. ... Von unserer Seite sei somit an Sie die ganz eindeutige Bitte herangetragen: Bitte respektieren Sie die Anliegen der einheimischen Bevölkerung und bringen Sie sich selbst nicht unnötig in Gefahr. Wählen Sie daher den markierten und in der Karte als Polar-Route bezeichneten Hauptweg.“

roads or human-made structures etc. For the Aasivissuit-Nipisat-Site such limitations until now are not intended. I don't know, what kind of statutory orders can be issued based on the authorization of the Heritage Protection Act. The application says: "The executive order on cultural heritage protection of the prehistoric and historical area Aasivissuit – Nipisat is presently being written, after which a public hearing will take place before it can be issued." (p. 144). I did not hear, if it meanwhile has been issued. And if this was the case, the hearing perhaps has not been so public that I could hear about it.

Anyway what statutory order will be issued, it is already planned there that short roads should depart from the main road to the lake Tasersuaq in the west and to the lake Aasivissuit in the east. Mention, these two short roads should serve to transport motor boats to the two lakes in a dimension that even landing sites are necessary: "Further development initiatives may include the establishment of landing sites for boats, camping sites, rubbish bins, drying racks for fish etc. ..." (p. 135). Even within the nominated area activities are planned, as the second version of the mentioned article on Kangerlussuaq road project describes in its chapter "Socio Economic consequences" only outside the nominated area (see p. 6 ff. of this report). The planned ATV-track really divides the nominated area into two peaces. The application does not forget promises like: "Such initiatives will be carefully considered before permission is granted." (p. 135). But, sorry, I can't see more in these promises as lip service pointing to a bad conscience.

After leaving the nominated UNESCO property about 3 km north of the eastern part of Tasersuaq the road is about 50 km running parallel to the outlined border of the nominated UNESCO property until it arrives at the beginning of the valley of Nerumaq, where it should occupy the present hiking trail. Wether the trace of the road was adjusted to the border of the UNESCO area or the border of the UNESCO area was adjusted to the trace of the road, depends on the particular point of view.

The valley of Nerumaq, where the track for the road is planned to be continued further west to the fjord Kangerluarsuk Tulleq, is still in use for the Polar Route/ACT. In November 2015 I received an information from ACB (Arctic Circle Business) that "the new ATV-track Qeqqata Kommunia will start on next summer. The track will affect the trail, though mainly on the west side (from Eqalugaarniarfik to Sisimiut). At the same time, we are looking at alternatives in order to move the trail further south (...), so we can maintain the same unique experience hikers today have on the trail."



Fed markering er nyt tracé, mens tynd markering er tidligere undersøgt tracé
 English translation: Bold marking is a new trace, while thin marking is a previously investigated trace.

The above presented map (SEC, p. 10) was already published in the first article on the “Kangerlussuaq road project”, but without the information about the meaning of the bold and the thin marking. Therefore I interpreted in the “memorandum” the thin marking as the municipality’s proposal for “southern alternative” of the hiking trail. When I read the paper “Socio Economic Consequences ...” in summer 2017 the first time, I was somewhat astonished that this so-called southern route was not described there as an alternative to the hiking trail as the quoted email said. And then I realized that this was not an alternative route for the hiking trail, but a former plan for the road. The paper “Socio Economic Consequences ...” deals in no part with the consequences on the hiking trail. As its title says, it is only oriented towards some economic consequences or results. This is also a remarkable difference between the presentation of the road project in the UNESCO-application and in the paper on “Socio Economic Consequences” of the “nature road”. Fig. 4.9. (p. 134) interprets there a route corresponding to the “thin line” as “Arctic Circle Trail (hiking trail)”. But the paper on “Socio Economic Consequences” nowhere explains the shift from the former southern trace of the ATV road to the northern one as a consideration on the hiking trail. The shift is only explained by better conditions for constructing there a road.

At the end of this chapter I will come to an often repeated argument that building an ATV road should be the first step to a regular (dirt) road. The first version of the article on Kangerlussuaq road project starts (after a short abstract) with the two sentences:

“The former Sisimiut Municipality and the following Qeqqata Municipality wanted to realize the road between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq. A two-track dirt road is expected to cost 300 to 500 million DKK, which are not available for funding.

Instead, it will be possible for the municipality to initiate the road between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq as an ATV trail, which can eventually be upgraded to a regular road.”

Except using the word “nature road” instead of “ATV trail” the second version is literally the same. The municipality tries to get acceptance for the construction of an ATV road by proposing its upgrading to a regular road as alternative to air transport to overcome the relative isolation of Kangerlussuaq since the termination of the boat line to Sisimiut 15 years ago. But this is a logical pitfall. The upgrading of an ATV road without roadbed to a regular road with roadbed is hardly cheaper than building a new regular road without building an ATV road before. And even if the regular road was 15 million DKK cheaper than 300 to 500 million DKK, this still was not available for funding. So the plan of building an ATV road will not guide to a regular road, rather to a financial disaster.

3. ATV as a Means of Transportation

During my stay in Greenland last summer I had a talk with an ATV tour operator, whom I know. When I asked him about the planned ATV road and its significance for transporting passengers and goods, he laughed and replied: “No, Frieder, an ATV is no means for the business transport of passengers and goods, it’s just for fun.” Using ATVs he calculates operational costs of 10 DKK/km (ca. 1.35 €/km) for fuel, maintenance and amortization, because an ATV cannot be used for more than 20,000 km in the area of Kangerlussuaq. The fuel, what an ATV needs on 100 km, is between 5 l and 15 l with regard to the terrain - and the area between Kangerlussuaq and Sisimiut is difficult terrain. So you need nearly 30 l for a trip to Sisimiut - between five and ten times more than that, what an airplane needs in relation to one passenger.

For a trip from Kangerlussuaq to Sisimiut (180 km) the operational costs are about 1,800.00 DKK. But these are only the operational costs for the ATV. The price, what a tour operator might take for such a trip, would be perhaps 8,000.00 DKK. A green Air

Greenland ticket (economy, flexible, adult price) costs 1,299 DKK. So the ATV is not a cost effective alternative to a flight. The same holds true for cargo.

And with regard to the fuel, what an ATV needs, the airplane seems to be a green technology.

To bring it to the point: I can not believe the municipality's arguments that the ATV road is planned as a professional means for transportation of passengers and goods. I have only seen evidence that an ATV road can serve to support a non-sustainable and profiteering tourism business, not to speak about the 15 million DKK job for the road constructor. An ATV seems to me not useful as vehicle for professional transport of passengers or goods, but only for transport of economic interests. This is at least my subjective impression.

4. Socio Economic Costs and Benefits of an ATV Road Re-defined

The construction costs of an ATV road are estimated at 15 million DKK and the operating costs at ½ million DKK annually by the municipality. I do not want to start a debate here on uncertainties in the calculation, but it would not have been the first time that the costs had risen later.

The paper lists the following expected costs and benefits of the road project over seven years: "A socioeconomic analysis has been prepared which shows that the expected socioeconomic income from the nature road exceeds construction and operating costs. The present value of the socio-economic income can be estimated as 50.4 million dkk from tourism, 13.9 million dkk from living resources, and 2.2 million dkk from research.

Costs / Benefits	Constuction	Operative costs	Tourism	living resources	research
Mio. dkk.	-15.0	-6.8	50.4	13.9	2.2

The socio-economic analysis shows that the investment of 15 million.dkk is earned in 7 years, so with construction in 2017, the economy will go to zero (break-even) in 2024. It is the tourism sector that generates the positive result, since over 75% of the measurable gains are attributable to tourists. Tourists are divided into different segments at different seasons, so the positive outcome of the socio-economic analysis seems robust." (SEC, p. 3)

Though the text ends with the statement that "the socio-economic analysis seems robust", a critical review guided me rather to the statement that it seems to be something like a house of cards.

To start with the last position, benefit from "research" of 2.2 million DKK as a result of the construction of the ATV road. My first surprise was that the paper reduces the benefit of research in this region to the costs of the researchers for living and for housing (As I see it, this are costs of research, not benefits.). But eaven if you leave that aside, this information does not seem reasonable. None of those scientists will not come to Kangerlussuaq, if the ATV road does not exist. And probably most, if not all, scientists will use the airway and not the ATV transport. So this benefit, if it is a benefit and if it will come, is not a benefit of an ATV road.

And now the assumed benefit from living resources of 13.9 million DKK. I won't discuss the potentials "not possible to pursue with existing legislation" (SEC, p. 18). What the paper lists, is on one hand fish and shellfish, which should be transported from Sarfannguit or Sisimiut to a place at the fjord Maligiaq, from where it should be transported via ATV to Kangerlussuaq (on the ATV road). On the other hand it lists the transport of reindeer or musk oxen meat from Kangerlussuaq via ATV (on the ATV road) to a harbour at Maligiaq and from there to Lilleholm's Slaughterhouse in Maniitsoq.

First, the transport of frozen meat (reindeer, musk ox) and fresh fish and shellfish between Kangerlussuaq and Maligiaq via ATV seems somewhat adventurous, and on a commercial basis it is hardly cheaper and more profitable than for instance airtransport. Then, if it should be transported from Maligiaq to Sisimiut or to Maniitsoq, why not from and to Kangerlussuaq harbour, at least when the fjord there is not frozen. And when the fjord is frozen, the transport via hovercraft might be possible, but not the transport via ATV. Kangerlussuaq has a seaport. The distance between Kangerlussuaq and Maniitsoq is not much more than the distance between Maligiaq and Maniitsoq; why then transport from and to Maligiaq via ATV, when an immediate transport from Kangerlussuaq harbour is possible. Some of the small ships of Disko Line have a speed of 29 knot/hour, what is more than 50 km/h. No ATV will drive faster from Kangerlussuaq to Sisimiut than such a ship.

The table on costs and benefits does not speak about cargo-transport¹¹ except from “living resources”, but I have already mentioned it in the pre-going chapter.

Those politicians in Sisimiut, who speak out for ATV-transport as a cheaper alternative to air-transport, seem not to be well informed about, what an ATV-transport really might cost. In 2015 Marius Olsen (Chairman of Living Resources Commission in Municipality of Qeqqata) published a statement on “ATV Trail Between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq. A Way to Better Exploitation of Living Resources”. And there he said: “while we can easily get out to sea in boats, vessels and trawlers, it is difficult to enter the country throughout the year. In winter can we use dog sleds and snowmobiles, but in summer it is more difficult. But with the first ATV trail between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq and later a real road we can open up the country. ... But an ATV trail between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq also allows us cheaper transport between Sisimiut and Kangerlussuaq. For instance, I sold salmon to restaurants in Kangerlussuaq, but I had to pay 20 kr. per kg for salmon flown from Sisimiut to Kangerlussuaq.”¹² According to my informations the ATV-transport will be much more expensive than this price for air-cargo. An ATV can probably transport 100 kg cargo. This means, the operating costs for the vehicle will be as much as the fee for air-cargo. And the transporter will not do it gratis. But if it is so easy to sail by boat or vessel, as Marius Olsen states, why not re-open the boat-line?

In the table on costs and benefits the benefits gained from tourism form the greatest position: 50,4 million DKK in 7 years. I cannot say much about all the positions listed in the papers except that they seem highly speculative and grounded on a weak database. But I can point to the data, what I have gathered myself in 2016. The result of the census was not only that there are much more hikers on the Polar-Route/ACT than the paper “Socio-Economic Consequences” supposes (SEC, p. 17). I have counted 1,290 hikers per year; “it has also been found that the Arctic Circle Trail contributes to Greenland’s GNP by around 11 million dkk or 1.46 million € annually by its attractiveness for hikers around the world.” (Census¹³, p. 1). And in contradiction to the assumptions of the paper “Socio-Economic Consequences” that the construction of the ATV road will increase the number of tourists and so the benefits to the Greenlandic GNP (SEC, p. 15 ff.), the result of the census was an unanimous rejection of the plan to build an ATV road and the forecast that their contribution to the Greenlandic GNP of presently 11 million DKK per year (or 77 million DKK within 7 years) will tend to 0, when the ATV road will be built.

¹¹) In summer 2016 I once discussed this question with a guy from Germany living in Kangerlussuaq. He told me: “Please, you must understand that people sometimes for instance want to buy something like fresh and cheap tomatoes. So they could buy it in Sisimiut and bring it home by ATV.” But I responded to him: “No, when they have bought tomatoes in Sisimiut and they arrive in Kangerlussuaq with their ATV, they only will have Ketchup. And that’s, what they can buy easier and even cheaper here.”

¹²) http://www.geqqata.gl/Nyheder/2015/11/ATV_Spor.aspx?sc_lang=da - probably it is deleted; but you can download it, even with English translation: <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/StatementMariusOlsen.pdf>

¹³) <http://dl.polarrouten.net/files/census-2016-e-d.pdf>

I cannot speak about the expected behaviour of cruise ship tourists etc., but I am quite sure, all in all the construction of the ATV road will not increase but lower the benefits from tourism.

5. Re-Opening of a Boat Line

It is worth to remember that there has been a regular boat connection of Arctic Umiaq Line (AUL) to Kangerlussuaq until shortly after the year 2000. Many people in Kangerlussuaq do not know about it. But I heard it from an Austrian tour guide, who went in 2002 the last time by boat from Kangerlussuaq to Sisimiut. And a public servant in the kommunal service centre told me that until this time AUL had a stop in Kangerlussuaq.

AUL is connecting the main ports on Greenland's west coast. For this purpose AUL is using the vessel "Sarfaq Ittuk". According to the time table it starts in Nuuk on its way north, stops in Maniitsoq, Kangaamiut, Sisimiut, Asiaat, and Ilulissat, then back on the same route and further on to the south to Qaqortoq and Narsarsuaq and back to Nuuk again. For this route up and down the West Coast of Greenland between Ilulissat and South Greenland Sarfaq Ittuk needs a whole week. It might not be probable that the AUL-management can be persuaded to make a roundabout of 340 km with Sarfaq Ittuk for stopping at Kangerlussuaq again, and I do not know why AUL terminated the stop in Kangerlussuaq 15 years ago.

But a regional boat line could be started in Qeqqata Municipality, and this not only to connect Kangerlussuaq and Sisimiut as the ATV-road-project promises it. All the eight "byer" and "bygder"¹⁴ could be connected by a boat line. One problem will be that the fjord to Kangerlussuaq is frozen for some time in winter. But also an ATV road can only be used in summer time. So it's not a disadvantage compared to an ATV road. And perhaps the problem could be solved with a hovercraft that can travel over frozen waters winter too.

By founding Disko Line A/S the Disko region has solved the problem successfully in this way: "Disko Line was established in 2004 and has since evolved from a small shipping company, possessing only one ship, into Greenland's largest passenger carrier with 7 ships with capacities from 10-60 passengers. ... The Company's equity capital amounts to DKK 11,8 mill."¹⁵ Why is this not possible in Qeqqata municipality? The capital, which is necessary for a startup, is much less than the 15 million DKK in the municipality's budget for the ATV road.

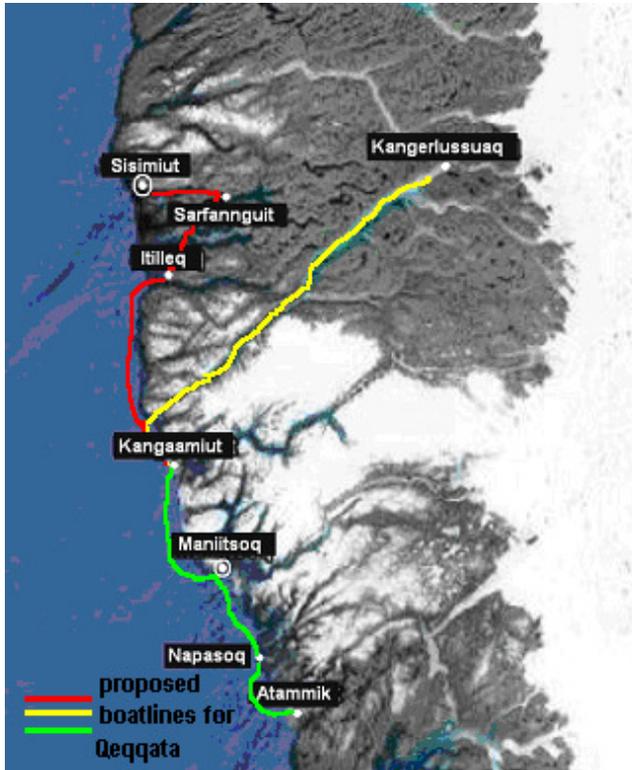
A local boat connection might also start with one boat on the line between Kangerlussuaq and Sisimiut. But if there was a local boat line using three small boats, they could start in the morning from Kangerlussuaq, Sisimiut and Atammik. And they all would arrive at Kangaamiut at about one o'clock in the afternoon and sail back after a break to Kangerlussuaq, Sisimiut and Atammik. So it might be possible to sail every day from any by or bygd in Qeqqata to any other one.

¹⁴) The two Danish words "by" and "bygd", plural: "byer" and "bygder", have a specific meaning in Greenland and the Færøer. They are used to distinguish between higher and lower populated settlements as we in other parts of Europe distinguish between "town" and "village". But with regard to the much lower rate of population in Greenland it would be misleading to translate "by" with "town" and "bygd" with "village". And by and bygd have also a different status in communal policy in Greenland etc. So it seems to be the best to use the words by and bygd instead of translating them.

The municipality of Qeqqata for instance has a flag with two big and six small stars. The two big stars symbolize the two byer Sisimiut and Maniitsoq and the small stars the six bygder Kangerlussuaq, Kangaamiut, Atammik, Sarfannguit, Itilleq, and Napasoq. Different political attitudes towards byer and bygder, for instance, are an important issue in Greenlandic politics. For some time policy in Greenland was dominated by the aim to bring people from the bygder into the byer and to concentrate them there. Today the policy is some more differentiated in this regard.

¹⁵) Source: www.diskoline.gl

And even a boat, which you can see in the picture to the right, big enough for 10 passengers, is waiting to finally be put to good use. It stands there for years on dry land. Some of the boats of the Disko Line are not much bigger than this. And Disko Line A/S started with only one boat like that.



A boat line through the “Long Fjord” (Greenlandic: Kangerlussuaq) might be a first class touristic highlight. Often I was asked on the camping place in Kangerlussuaq by guests, if there is or why there is not a boat line between Kangerlussuaq and Sisimiut.

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