

MINE AND MINERAL EXPLORATION PROJECTS WITHIN THE NATURA 2000 AREAS: CASE STUDIES FROM ARCTIC FINLAND

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Introduction

During the last decades, only three significant mineral deposits have been found in Finland: Rompas-Rajapalot (Au-Co) in Ylitornio-Rovaniemi and Sakatti (Ni-Cu-PGE-Co), and Ikkari (Au) in Sodankylä, Lapland (Fig. 1). Here we focus on the Sakatti and Rompas-Rajapalot projects, which are partially located within Natura 2000 areas (Table 1). Those are among sensitive contexts in which mining and mineral disputes emerge in Finland (Eerola 2022a, b).

Table 1. The Rompas-Rajapalot and Sakatti projects, and their holders, low impact mineral exploration technologies (LIMET), issues/context, and contentious actors. The data is from Eerola (2021, 2022a,b). FANC = Finnish Association for Natural Conservation.

Project and its holder	LIMET	Issues/context	Contentious actors
Rompas-Rajapalot Mawson Gold Oy	Drones Snow, soil, and plant sampling Portable drill rig	Natura 2000 area Uranium	FANC
Sakatti AA Sakatti Mining Oy	Closed circuit drilling Full Tensor Gradiometry	Natura 2000 area Recreation Reindeer herding	FANC Save Viiankiaapa movement Reindeer herders

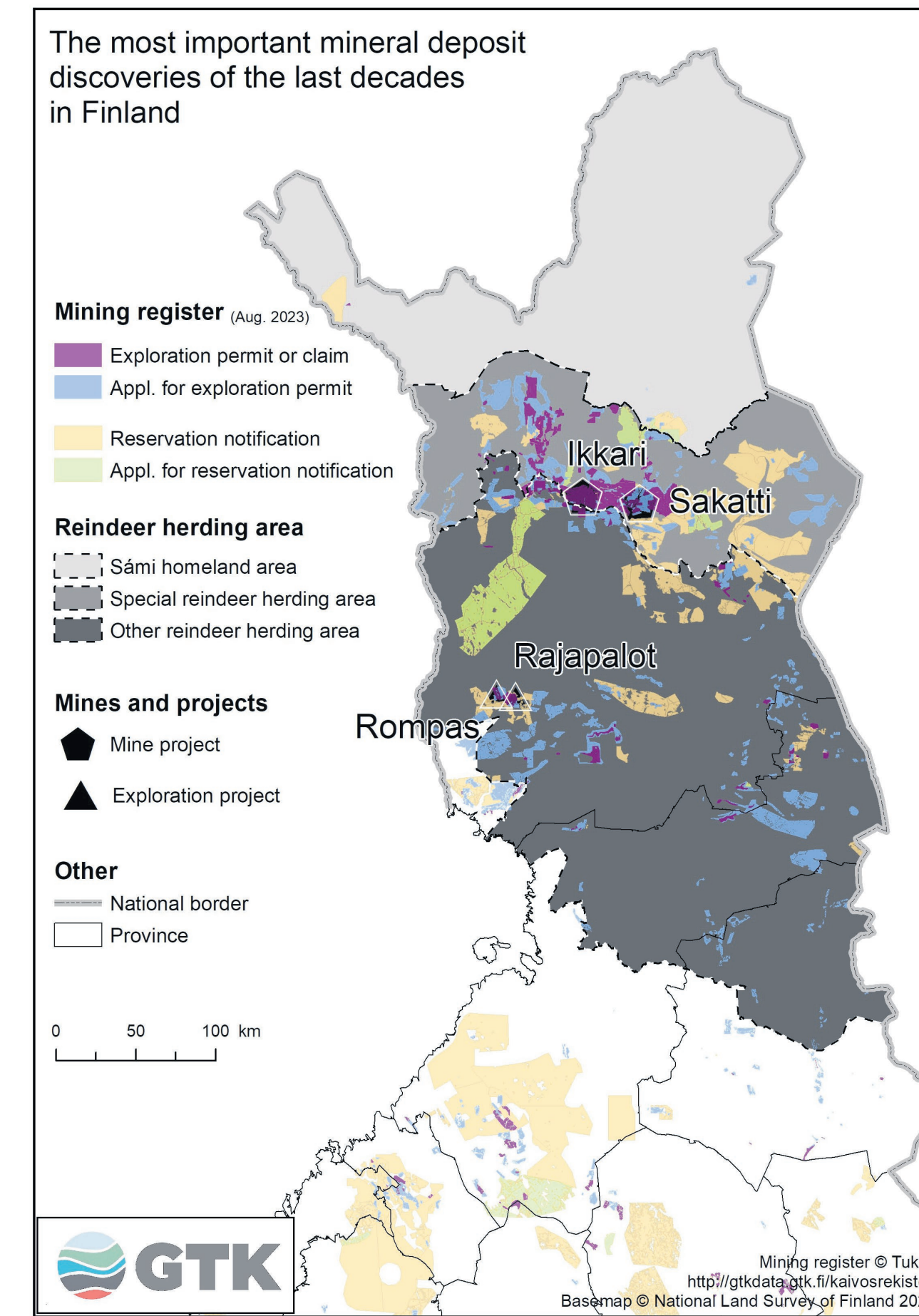


Fig. 1. Location of the Rompas-Rajapalot, Ikkari and Sakatti.



Rompas-Rajapalot

The Rompas uranium deposit was discovered by the French Areva nuclear company in 2008. The property was sold to Canadian company Mawson Oy in 2010, which also found gold and cobalt. Mawson found another deposit in Rajapalot which is not associated with uranium (Fig. 2). The company is preparing an environmental impact assessment (EIA) and plans an underground mine with tunnel departing from outside of the Natura 2000. However, the Ministry of the Environment plans to expand the Natura in the area.

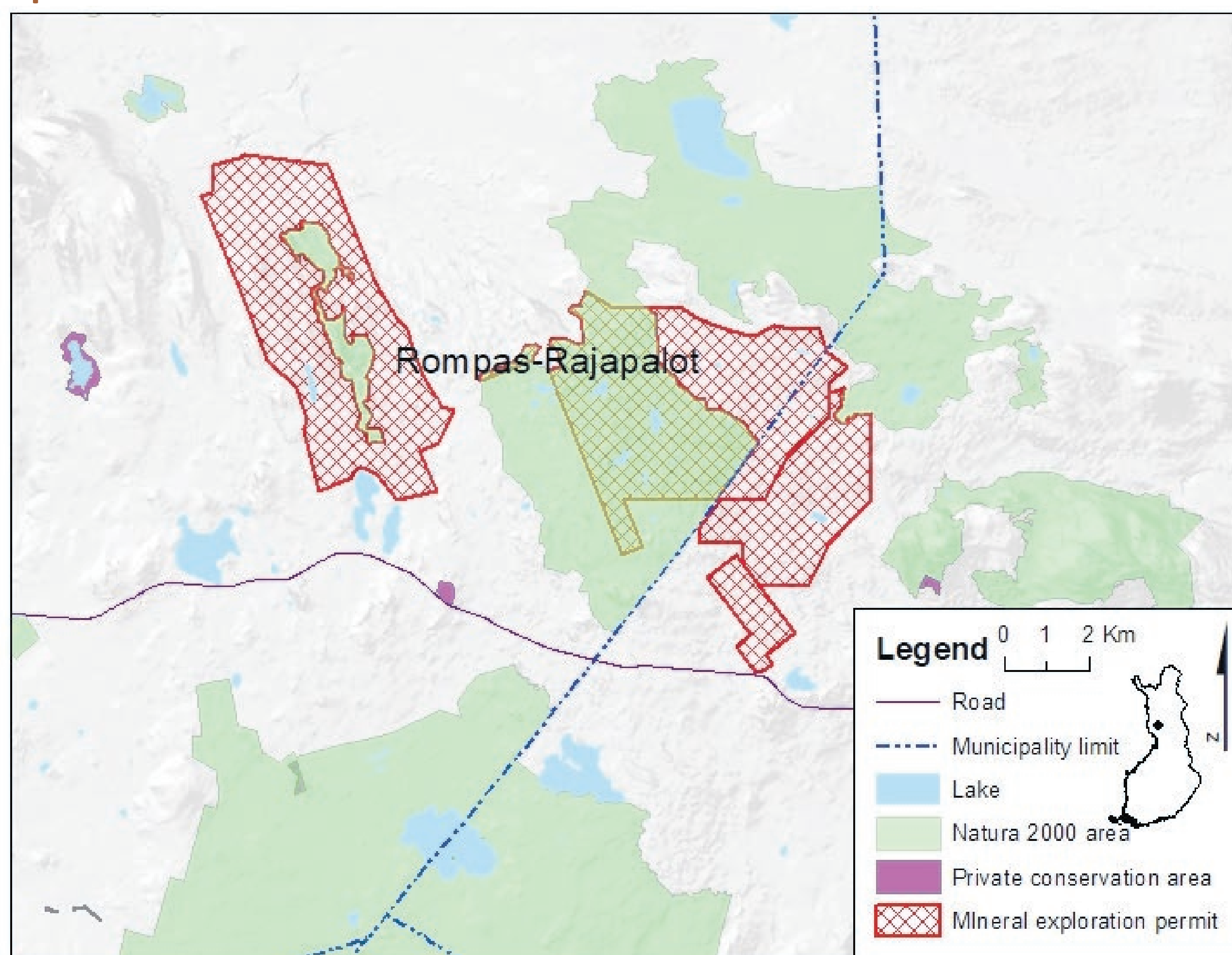


Fig. 2. The Rompas-Rajapalot prospect in Ylitornio, northern Finland (after Eerola 2022b).

Sakatti

The world-class Sakatti deposit was discovered in 2011 by the AA Sakatti Mining Oy, a subsidiary of the British company Anglo American plc (Fig. 3). The company plans an underground mine to avoid impact on Natura 2000. Even then, the company will do ecological compensation. However, its EIA was recently rejected by the environmental authority and a legislation change is needed to establish a mine.

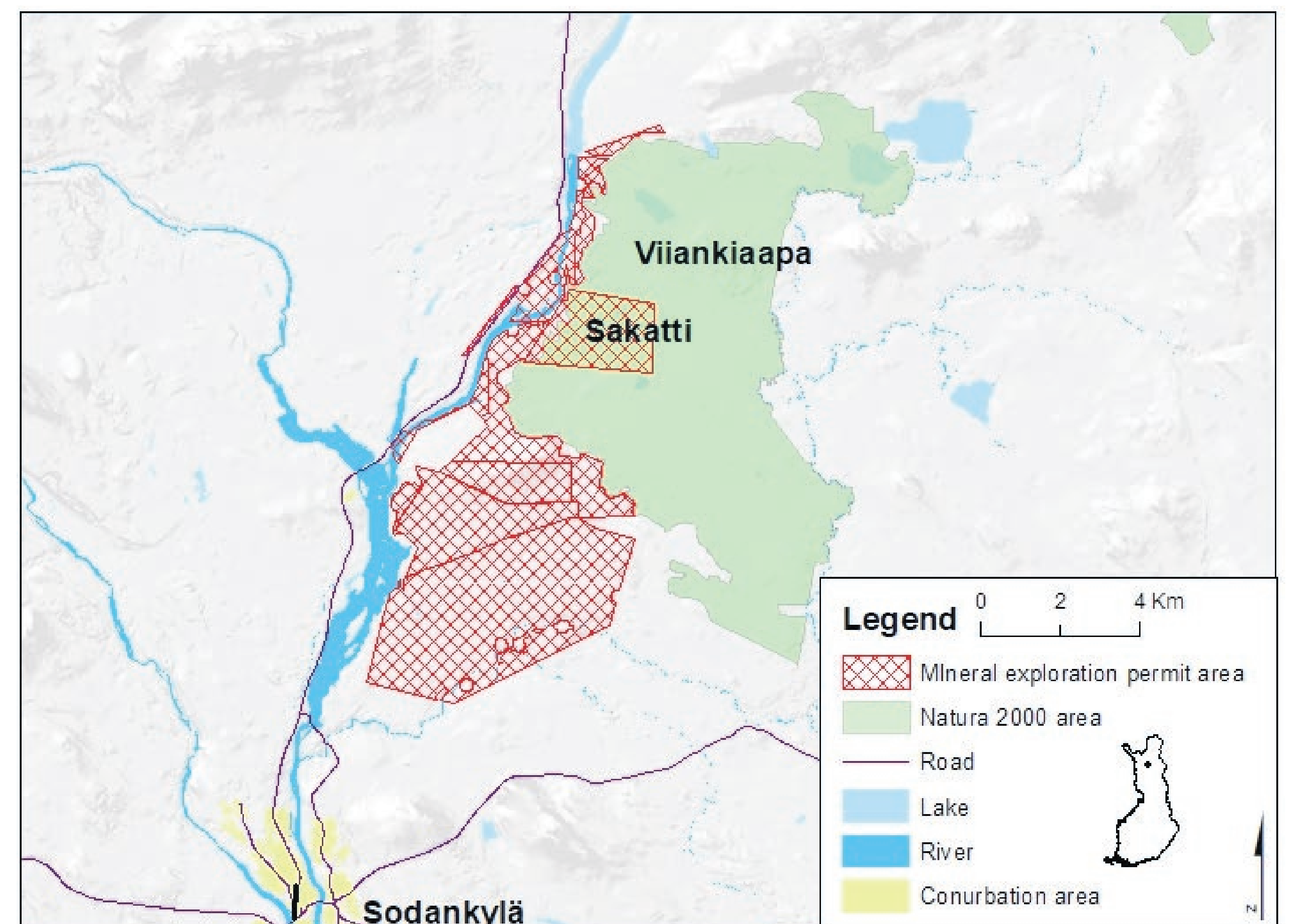


Fig. 3. The Sakatti project in Sodankylä, Lapland, northern Finland (after Eerola 2022b).

Good practices and constraints

Because of Natura, both companies apply low impact mineral exploration technologies (Table 1) and plan underground mines. They also practice active stakeholder engagement and communication, and projects seem to be mostly favoured by local populations. Both projects are related to critical raw materials (CRM) important for the green energy transition. Because of its economic importance, the Sakatti may be a candidate for a strategic project within the auspices of the CRM Act of the European Commission. However, because of their association with Natura (and uranium in the case of Rompas), projects are opposed by the Finnish Nature Conservation Association as well as by reindeer herders in the case of Sakatti and Save Viiankiaapa Movement in the case of Rompas-Rajapalot (Table 1).

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