



Geopolitical Whiteout (ВИМА)

2011

Action 15 min, 1 April 2011

Aerosol paint on abandoned Russian trawler in Kirkenes harbour, Norway

The work was made for the third and last workshop in
The Lessons on Sustainability series:

GEOPOLITICAL TENSION AND THE MICRO LEVEL

March 28 – April 02, 2011 in Kirkenes and Nikel
Lessons in Sustainability was a five-year project started by Umeå Academy of Fine Arts in 2008 and running through 2012, in collaboration with the Academy of Contemporary Arts in Tromsø, Norway, as well as the Royal Academy in Stockholm, Sweden. Two of the three main parts was accomplished through workshops in Kiruna, SE, and Tromsø, NO. From March 28 through April 2, 2011, the third workshop took place in the border-area of Sør-Varanger Municipality (Kirkenes, NO) and Pechenga Rajon (Nickel, Zapolyarny, RU) and was titled: Geopolitical tension and the micro level.

Within one week, 29 students and 8 workshop conductors (professors or external artist/experts) visited sites, learned from local experts, and worked under the central question: How do geopolitical changes and tensions appear in the North, and how do they influence both global and local situations?

Climate changes are first apparent in the Arctic. The ice melting reveals new possibilities for trade routes and exploitation of nature resources. The High North is in a process of regionalization through transnational cooperation on various fields. The Barents Region was established in 1993 as a geopolitical construction including the northernmost counties of Sweden, Finland, Norway and Northwest Russia. The border town Kirkenes is in a process of re-defining itself: New networks are being created across the borders on cultural, political and economical levels. To discuss sustainability in this situation means to investigate the local conditions and bring them into a larger picture.

Concept: Due to its geographical position and unexploited resources on land and in the sea, the northern region; the area of Kirkenes/Finnmark/Kola Peninsula/High North/the Barents Sea is attracting attention and becoming a fertile ground for visions, scenarios and speculation. With the expeditionary romanticism of the Arctic/Polar history projecting present imaginary futures, the task is to draft a vision for life and living in this region based on various artistic methods and thought, presented the last workshop day in Kirkenes. Back in their academies the students will develop their individual projects.

The workshop consists of a joint program and survey in four different thematic groups; Economies in the border area - informal and speculative economies, Nature resources and meaning of place, Archives, Stories and Landscape, and The Barents Sea and surveillance.

The workshop is organized in collaboration with the Barents Institute and Hilde Methi, independent curator, in Kirkenes. Irina Neganova, Nickel, is a collaborating coordinator for the survey in Russia.

Text © Hilde Methi

ABOUT THE SHIP VIMA

...Is Vima (BIMMA), a trawler built in 1977, first registered in Bergen, and later sold to Russian owners. When Vima was sent to the breaker's yard in Trondheim in 2011, she had been seized and had incurred such large fines that it was no longer profitable to operate her. The story of Vima shows how an economic logic makes the trawler unseaworthy, while the ship itself should have been refitted for further use. The account doesn't quite balance.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc countries, the balance of power that long held the world economy in check no longer functions. Today, after the financial crisis of 2008, we see the results of an unregulated, crude global capitalism that has been allowed to run amok in many places. However, Norway is in a quite special situation where the state is not only debt-free, but is also sitting on large savings that can in turn be invested in a global market. This means that the border between Norway and Russia in particular constitutes an area that throws the differences in the Europe of today into stark relief. No border in the world marks greater economic differences than the 196 km long frontier that separates the two countries...

Text © Unknown

1977

- The trawler *Meløyvær* is completed at the Smedvik Engineering Works in Tjørnvåg, Norway. The ship is 55.03 meters long, 12 metres athwart and weighs 1479 tonnes. Today a similar new-built trawler costs about Nkr 250,000,000.

- The Norwegian owners register its home port as Bergen. With its pistachio-green hull *Meløyvær* stands out from other trawlers. People in the trade think it looks a bit odd. *Meløyvær* fishes the Norwegian sea and the Arctic Ocean.

1980 – 1995

- *Meløyvær* has its name changed, first to *Thevik*, then to *Osvaldsson*, then to *Tromsbas* and finally to *Vima*. The pistachio-green hull is painted black.

1995

- *Vima* is bought by the shipowners *Brødrene Birkeland Fiskebåtrederi*. They already have two trawlers and fish for herring, capelin and hake in the Norwegian Sea and the Arctic Ocean. *Vima* gets a new home port at *Storebø* in *Møre og Romsdal*. The city name *Bergen*, embossed in relief on the hull and painted white, is painted over in black.

2000

- *Brødrene Birkeland Fiskebåtrederi* sells *Vima* along with 36% of the shipping company as a result of a generational change in the organization. The turnover of the company for this year is stated as Nkr 54,000,000.

14/5/2001

- *Vima* is removed from the register of shipping in Norway. In the register it says that it has been transferred to the British Virgin Islands as a result of its sale to foreign owners. It is transferred without encumbrances. The new owners, *Magnetic Co Ltd.*, are Russian. The name of the ship remains the same, but is painted in Cyrillic characters – *B3MA* – in white over the Norwegian name, which is still embossed in relief on the hull.

2001 – 2004

- Data slightly uncertain. *Vima* fishes for a period in the Pacific.
- Activities in the Pacific are not profitable. *Vima* is transferred to a new home port in *Murmansk* to fish in the Arctic Ocean again.
- Between 2002 and 2004 the ship is in Norwegian waters and Norwegian harbours several times.

2004

- *Vima* calls at *Kirkenes Harbour* on 31/12. The agent during its stay is *Arctic Total*. Inadequate maintenance over the past few years has left the ship in poor condition, and the aim of the stay is at first repairs, later laying-up. The crew leave the ship and travel back to *Murmansk*.

2005

- *Kangamiut Seafood AS* places an arrest on *Vima* for US\$ 74,900 as well as court costs of Nkr 7737. *Kangamiut Seafood AS* claim to have sent a series of reminders without results. The East Finnmark District Court finds for the plaintiff that “the execution of the claim will be forfeited or made substantially difficult if the arrest is not permitted.” The court issues its ruling without preceding verbal negotiations. *Vima* is arrested on 12th February.

- *Vima* is transferred to its new owners, *Marine Technologies Ltd.*, also Russians.

2007

- The ship is emptied of movables and valuables. Repeated requests from the Port Authority for the removal of the ship go unheeded. The port fees of Nkr 1000 a day are not paid, nor are the costs of necessary environmental and safety measures.

- *Vima* is removed from the Russian Maritime Register.

2011

- The claim from *South Varanger Municipality* on the owners of *Vima* now amounts to Nkr 6,035,805. The ship has also become an environmental threat to the harbour area in *Kirkenes*. On 14th September the Harbour Authority notify the owners that *Vima* will be sold or removed in accordance with the rules on direct removal in the Pollution Act and the Harbour and Waters Act. The owners are given a week to make good the debt and remove the ship itself.

- The day before the deadline for settlement expires, the harbourmaster in *South Varanger* receives a letter stating that *Vima* has been sold to the firm *Kolskiy Proekt* for c. Nkr 600,000 (Rub 3,259,000). The letter refers to the sales contract of 1st September, where it appears that the sale has been made free of encumbrances. One day later yet another Russian firm, *North Invest*, claims ownership of the ship.

- After the expiry of the deadline the harbour authority initiates a sales process with *Fosen Gjenvinning AS*, which will buy *Vima* for scrap. The price agreed is Nkr 800,000, and the ship is prepared for tugging south.

- *Kolskiy Proekt* demands that the removal of *Vima* is stopped. They want to tug the ship to breakers in *Murmansk*. The East Finnmark District Court rejects the application.

- October: *Vima* is tugged south to be broken up in *Fosen* in *Trøndelag*. There it is sold as scrap for c. Nkr 3.50 per kilo. The breakers believe that *Vima* could technically have been rehabilitated and used again, but that it would not be profitable because of the encumbrances on the ship.

Text © Marianne Heier

SOURCES:

Norsk Ordinært Skipsregister. www.nis-nor.no (visited 14th March 2012).

“Fiskevernsonen ved Svalbard”, www.wikipedia.org (visited 14th March 2012).

“3.3 Fiskevernsonen ved Svalbard”, Storting Report no. 30 (2004 – 2005) “Muligheter og utfordringer i nord”.

Egil Pettersen, “Russiske trålere dumpes i Norge”, www.tv2.no (visited 14th March 2012).

Sten Inge Jørgensen, “- Overdreven dramatik i nord”, *Morgenbladet* (21st October 2005).

STP – Transport. www.stp-norway.com (visited 14th March 2012).

Fiskerimagasin 2004 (Storebø, 2004).

Jørgen Holten Jørgensen, *Svalbard og Fiskevernsonen – Russiske persepsjoner etter den kalde krigen* (Lysaker, 2003).

“Tråler til 250 millioner”, www.vol.no/nyheter/article333761.ece (visited 14th March 2012).

Case no. 05-020069TVA-OSFI, *Kangamiut Seafood AS v. Magnetic Co Ltd.*, East Finnmark District Court.

Case no. 11-150720TVI-OSFI, *Artem N. Bondareenko/Kolskiy Proekt v. Kirkenes Harbour, South Varanger Municipality, East Finnmark District Court.*