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An Ethnographic Exploration of the Local Support for the Kaunisvaara mine

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Cover: Drawing of a café in Pajala (© 2023 Karin Holmer)

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the reasons behind local support for the opening of an iron ore mine in the village Kaunisvaara, Pajala municipality, Sweden. The thesis makes a contribution to knowledge by deepening our understanding of mining conflicts in Sweden's rural north in the twenty-first century. It seeks to answer the following question: What hopes, dreams and expectations do Pajala's mining proponents wish that the opening of the Kaunisvaara mine will realize?

In contemporary research, mining conflicts are grasped as the result of conflicting values between mining proponents and mining opponents. Previous research links opposition to mining with valuation of a clean environment, local culture and livelihoods. Meanwhile, local support for mining is linked to a valuation of local economic and demographic growth. However, the notion of value employed in much research is insensitive to the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental values. This has left the values or ends of mining proponents, who see money and development as means to something else, unexplored.

Although value is acknowledged as being central to mining conflicts, previous research on mining conflicts rarely unpacks the notion of value in detail. By taking a more precisely defined notion of value as its starting point, this thesis offers a deeper understanding of the hopes, dreams and expectations underlying the explicitly stated economic rationales advanced in support for a mine. Empirically, the dissertation adds to the literature on mining conflicts through an ethnographic account of support, rather than resistance, to local mining operations. Theoretically, it offers a starting point for rethinking mining conflicts, and other natural resource conflicts, not primarily as the product of actual, clashing values between different local groups, but as struggles over the very definition of value. In that struggle, the main line of conflict runs not between members of the local community, but between local communities and actors driven by profit maximization.

Keywords: value, value conflict, anthropological theory of value, mining, mining conflict, alienation, form of life, contradiction, rural development, Pajala, Tornedalen

Från värdekonflikt till kontradiktion. En etnografi av stödet för järnmalmsgruvan i Kaunisvaara

Sammanfattning

Föreliggande avhandling är en etnografisk studie av det lokala stödet för järnmalmsgruvan i Kaunisvaara, belägen i Pajala kommun i Norrbotten. Avhandlingens syfte är att belysa de bakomliggande anledningarna till att människor vill ha gruvdrift där de bor. Syftet är också att bidra till en djupare förståelse av gruvkonflikter i Sverige. Frågan avhandlingen utforskar är följande: Vilka förhoppningar, drömmar och förväntningar hoppas Pajalas invånare att öppnandet av en gruva i Kaunisvaara ska realisera?

I forskning om gruvor i Sverige framställs gruvkonflikter som resultatet av att gruvmotståndare och gruvförespråkare har olika värderingar i frågor som rör miljö, kultur och ekonomisk tillväxt. Gruvmotståndare anses värdera miljö, kultur och lokala näringar, medan gruvförespråkare sägs värdera ekonomisk och demografisk tillväxt. Det värdebegrepp som används i denna forskning gör således inte skillnad mellan intrinsikala och instrumentella värden. Gruvmotstånd uppfattas bottna i att man ser ett egenvärde i en ren miljö och levande kultur, medan gruvförespråkare sägs värdera sådant som vid närmare anblick endast är ett medel för att uppnå ett mål som i forskningen förblir outforskat. Genom att utgå från en mer precis definition av vad värde är blir det möjligt att utforska de förväntningar, drömmar och förhoppningar som inte blir synliga om vi låter de ekonomiska argument människor använder för att stödja gruvan bli en representation för vad de verkligen värderar. Empiriskt bidrar avhandlingen till forskning om gruvkonflikter genom att utforska och beskriva det lokala stödet för gruvkonflikter, snarare än motståndet mot lokal gruvverksamhet. Teoretiskt bidrar avhandlingen till en förståelse av gruvkonflikter inte som ett utslag av gruvmotståndares och gruvförespråkares motstridiga värderingar, utan som en kamp som rör själva definitionen av vad som är värdefullt. En kamp som utkämpas mellan lokala samhällen å ena sidan och aktörer som drivs av ett ekonomiskt vinstkrav å den andra.

Nyckelord: värde, värdekonflikt, gruvdrift, gruvkonflikt, alienation, landsbygdsutveckling, Pajala, Tornedalen, Norrbotten.

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Dedication

To Gilda, who has waited more patiently than anyone for me to finish this boring book and come out and play. I love you more than anything.

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Prologue

It had started to snow, tiny flakes in their millions, but not enough of them to cover the ground. The plan was to go somewhere, to pack Frida's station wagon and just drive. For now, however, Frida, Julia and I sat in Frida's kitchen, drank coffee, and finished the apple pie from the dinner the night before.

"Imagine a public bath in post-war Balkan, it looks something like that, the swimming hall in Pajala. We had swimming lessons there. The exact same shower curtains and hair dryers from thirty years ago remain. The same plastic toys. What would it cost to replace that? Same thing with the health center, where we keep the elderly, where they can just lie in bed in an ugly room that has not been renovated since the 1970s," Frida said.

Julia had crawled up on the wooden couch in Frida's kitchen with a cup of coffee. Frida filled the coffee pot with water and coffee and put it back on the stove.

"I drove by the school in Tärendö the other day," she continued. "It's built for 200 children, but now there were only twenty kids in this big schoolyard. They stood there in a corner of that big yard. I know that they used to have a computer lab, but now the teacher [who showed me around] says, 'and now we placed a ping pong table in that room,' but it's not even a real ping pong table, it's just two regular tables that they've put together. Everything just smells of close-down and it fills me with such anguish to just enter that building."

A radio documentary I had heard a few days earlier came to mind. The listener meets a woman from Kaunisvaara who used to work as a teacher in the school in Pajala, a job she described as demanding because of the constant demands to "save money":

> All of a sudden the municipality decides to build a roundabout, for I don't know how many thousands of crowns, but we really have to think twice before we order new books that the children need. […] We have no computers. The class that I teach has 40 pupils, and we need to write, we need to keep up with technological development. I had one computer in the classroom that was working OK, but it broke down, so now I don't even have one computer. That's very frustrating. (Isaksson 2013)

By the time the documentary was broadcasted in early 2013, the woman had started a cleaning company and cleaned the barracks where the miners employed by Northland Resources used to live.

I had seen the closed schools, like the one in Kaunisvaara for example, a ramshackle two story building. "Just tear it down!" Frida had said when we drove by it one day. "I don't want to see it, don't let it stand there and disintegrate! Just tear it." I had seen closed down grocery stores, dusty goods and riff raff still on the shelves. I had seen abandoned homesteads with curtains still hanging but only traces of the red paint on the façade. Yet, I do not think it was until I listened to Frida that Saturday in early October 2019, with that radio documentary fresh in mind, that I began to grasp the extent of the austerity that had found its way in to every conversation, in a language riddled by the use of cuts, closedowns and "structural adjustments."

I thought about the school building in Kainulasjärvi, a very small village not far from Tärendö. A surprisingly large brick building with a big paved schoolyard. I remember thinking that the building looked misplaced, like a memorial over long-gone optimism, like a remnant from an era long ago when someone decided that this village somewhere between Pajala and Gällivare, a gathering of small farms and forest properties, was going to be included in efficiently state-run and standardized modernization. I imagined 200 kids in that schoolyard. The thumping sound of a tennis ball hit by a baseball bat in a game of *brännboll*, followed by clumsy boots running on wet gravel, cheering and yelling. The sound of skipping ropes on asphalt. Changing bookmarks, playing marbles. The smell of cod, boiled potatoes and grated carrots from the school canteen. The sharp noise of a school bell cutting through the laughter, screaming and crying, and now, silent and empty. Lights out. The few kids still living in Kaunilasjärvi have to take the bus to other schools, in Tärendö, Korpilombolo, Kangos or Pajala.

"And then we're all wondering why young people choose to leave. We're making clear to them that they are not particularly important, that they are not even worth a real ping-pong table. And then we blame them for moving. Whine and complain. But we don't invest anything in them. So [when I hear people whining about that], I'm thinking, well, then we should have taken better care of them while they were still here," Frida said.

Julia was quiet, drank her coffee. A little out of character, I thought, since she was usually very outspoken when we discussed Tornedalen's future.

"What can a municipality do to prevent young people from just disappearing?" Frida said and looked at me. The silence that followed brought out the resignation and sorrow that impelled the questions. It was not the first time Frida had asked me, probably thinking that a social science researcher specializing in rural development should know what measures should be taken to stop depopulation and closedowns, to prevent a whole community from disintegrating. The discouraging answer I could give was that there really is not all that much local politicians can do to stop this development since it is the outcome of forces and struggles played out on a global scale.

Driving through what used to be

There are strikingly odd physical manifestations of state power appearing in the midst of this landscape of austerity, irregular displays of political will. The most striking example is perhaps the part of road 99 running south of the iron ore mine in Kaunisvaara, connecting it with road 395, where Kaunis Iron's enormous trucks take a right to continue to Svappavaara. The road was renovated before the mine was opened the first time back in 2012. Dangerous curves were straightened, the whole road received new asphalt, road line markers had been freshly painted, and the visibility improved. The renovation was part of a project called "Ore transportation Kaunisvaara-Svappavaara," shortened MaKS, initiated by the Swedish Transport Agency to adapt the 160 kilometers of road between Kaunisvaara and Svappavaara to 90-ton trucks running every ten minutes day and night. So far, the bill of the project amounts to just over 1 billion SEK, to be footed by Swedish taxpayers (Keskitalo 2019), but the estimated total cost is 2.1 billion SEK (Trafikverket 2019; Trafikverket 2023) — an enormous sum, of course, especially compared to what it would cost to renovate the swimming hall, keep the school in Kainulasjärvi, or just make sure the kids in Pajala have access to computers and books. North of the mine, the road instantly grows

narrower and curvier. We passed a sign announcing the speed-limit was 90 kilometers per hour — a speed I keep well under when I drive that road, but that many locals, Frida included, feel comfortable to exceed a little bit.

"You see how bad this road is, narrow without road marks, filled with pot-holes, but the Transport Administration refuses to do anything about it, they just say there are less than a certain number of cars passing here everyday day so they will never fix it, never put new asphalt on it. At best they fill the pot-holes," she said. "Look at the snow sticks," she continued, referring to the orange sticks with reflective paint on them that mark the side of the road at wintertime. "They are not even the regular kind, the orange kind that you see everywhere, they are made of wood." I looked out the window and noticed the sticks, and just like Frida said, they were not the usual, plastic kind, but wooden sticks with a stroke of reflective paint.

"On the Finnish side it's different, they even have streetlights. Here it's just complete darkness." She slowed down and took a left turn onto a dirt road which more resembled a trail or path than anything intended for vehicles. Behind the high-rising pines, just a few meters from the road, was an overgrown soccer field. Two old soccer goals without nets were still standing, a simple red barrack with two doors, one marked "home", the other "away", at the southern side of the field. I asked Frida to stop the car.

"Can you imagine that there has been a time when there were enough people in Parkajoki to have a soccer team," Frida said. We crossed the field and took a seat on the doorstep outside the changing booth. If you close your eyes you can hear the sound of a ball hitting the crossbar, the sigh of relief that it was a miss. You smell of hotdogs and coffee. The cheering from the audience when the blast from the referee's whistle announces the home team have won by 3-2. Must have been long ago, I thought; I could not see any houses or buildings, no parking lot, no road except the tiny dirt road. It must have been decades ago that someone last scored a goal on this field. Decades since a team of tired players changed in that booth, cursed over a wrongful penalty or celebrated a victory. It was as if this soccer field was the only remaining evidence a village called Parkajoki had ever existed.

We reached Kitkiöjärvi. As we drove through the village — a handful of old farmsteads spread out around two small lakes — Frida told us about an acquaintance from the village whose dad had had stroke.

"When they called the ambulance the dispatcher asked them if they would manage to get him into the car and start driving to the hospital in Gällivare

because it would take between two and three hours before the ambulance could be there. It's about 200 kilometers to Gällivare. He was very sick but what could they do other than to get him into the car and drive?" Frida said.

Several of the farmsteads looked abandoned, some of them barely still standing, but when the evening sun broke through the clouds it was beautiful — the lake, the autumn colors, the silence and the tranquility. Yet, this place filled me with melancholy. It was a facet of Sweden I had never seen before, a village that had been left to die — that was at least how Frida put it, "At some point someone decided that it should be impossible to live here" — and now I was visiting the fragments of a whole world that *used to be*. There *used to be* a school in Kitkiöjärvi. There *used to be* people living in those abandoned houses. There *used to be* people plowing fields, feeding animals, milking cows. There *used to be* people painting houses, throwing parties, and mowing lawns. I had had the same feeling a month earlier when Frida gave us a guided tour through Tärendö, the village of her mother's family. "This is where my mother used to keep her reindeers," Frida had said as we passed by a small glade. "This house used to be a school, it's where my mother went to school," she continued and pointed out an abandoned building. "Tärendö used to be a big village with two schools. Today there's one, but only up to fifth grade." Just like in Kitkiöjärvi there are abandoned houses and homesteads in Tärendö; some because the owners had moved south or maybe to Kiruna but kept the house to visit for a few weeks during the summer. Other houses had been passed on to children or grandchildren who had not set foot in Tärendö for years, who felt there was no point in selling because the price was too low or because it is too much of a hassle to put it up for sale.

"If Tärendö could get just one or two families with children, what a huge difference it would make!" Frida said. "Now they couldn't even buy a house if they wanted to because people refuse to sell. Now, as we stood and looked at a small homestead just off the lakeside in Kitkiöjärvi I could detect the same sadness in Frida's voice when she said, "Just think about how beautiful this place could be! Now it's just abandoned, standing there like an eerie haunted house, with Christmas decorations in the windows. It's rotting away, and if someday someone would like to move in, it would probably be too late to renovate it."

In the midst of houses long since abandoned there are dramatic illustrations of the sordid fact that depopulation is a trend that, once set in motion,

mercilessly grinds a once blooming community to dust. In testimony to the incessant forces tearing up life in the rural north, there are also perfectly kept homes reeking of a scary, almost apocalyptic emptiness. What deadly plague had left these eerie homes behind, their homeliness fading?

"It is as if people just left. As if they literally just stood up and walked out the door, leaving everything. Maybe someone died, they came home for the funeral but then they can't bear themselves to go through all the stuff and clean the house so they go back south and leave the house as it is," Julia said when we passed another village with seemingly abandoned houses. Before the combined effect of these abject reminders of the transience of all life, hope attaches itself to the smallest things.

"Look, they're renovating!" Julia said, pointing to a two-story house covered in scaffolding.

"I'm not so sure," Frida said, "it's been standing like that forever, not sure anyone lives there." I looked at the house. Half of it was freshly painted in the classical red color, Falu rödfärg, on the other half you could barely notice the fading color. At some point someone had decorated the unpainted double doors with Christmas wreaths that had turned brown long ago. Even eerier: Julia's reaction when we saw smoke rising from the chimney of a weathered house in Kitkiöjärvi, "Look! Someone lives there!" As if we had found life in a pest-ridden parish.

1. An Ethnography of Local Support for Mining Operations

A conflict-ridden specter — to paraphrase Marx (Marx and Engels 1988 [1848]: 218) — seems to be haunting mining ventures in the rural global north. Numerous studies detail conflicts over the establishment of mines, while few focus on the sites where mining enjoys local support. It appears almost as if studies about mining in Sweden is synonymous with a focus on resistance and conflict. This focus is well-motivated, considering that Sweden is hardly lacking examples where existing and planned mines have generated tangible conflicts, both between local communities and mining companies, and between different groups within the local community affected by planned mining operations. Three notable examples are the planned mines in Kallak/ Gállok in Jokkmokk municipality (Persson, Harnesk, Islar, 2017; Vetenskapsradion Klotet 2022), Rönnbäcken in Storuman municipality (Persson and Öhman 2014; Stiernström 2023; Stiernström and Arora-Jonsson 2022; Svt Nyheter Västerbotten n.d.) and in the Ojnare forest on Gotland (Anshelm Haikola and Wallsten 2018; P4 Gotland 2013). Conflicts have also erupted over the expansion of two mines owned and operated by LKAB, the state-owned mining company, which has prompted the relocation of two cities: Kiruna (López 2021; Nilsson 2009; Johansson 2019; Haupt 2023) and Malmberget (Wallbrant 2022; Haas Forsling 2023; Hillblom 2019). Local resistance has been sparked by planned mines in Oviken, Berg Municipality (Svt Nyheter Jämtland 2022; Selander 2022a; Selander 2022b), Norra Kärr, Ödeshög Municipality (Björck 2022; Jönköpings-Posten n.d.) and in Österlen, eastern Scania (Nordh 2021; VetoNu n.d.).

The global demand for metals and minerals increases, driven partly by the transition to fossil-free energy (Tillväxtanalys 2018). The growing

interest in Swedish minerals and metals is not yet detectable in statistics of applications for exploration permits or concession permits (Bergstaten 2023 a; Bergstaten 2023 b). However, private investment in prospecting in Sweden amounted to 1500 billion SEK in 2022, which is an increase of 100 percent from the previous all-time-high in 2012 (SGU 2023: 58). The production of ore has increased from around 50 million tons in 2010 to just under 90 million tons in 2020 (SGU 2023: 28). The number of mining conflicts can be expected to grow as a result of this development. The need for knowledge about the reasons for, and possible solutions to, mining conflicts will also increase. While researchers have described the motivations and values that drive mining opponents in some detail, the motivations on the part of mining proponents are often reduced to economic rationality. I believe that close investigation of the deeper reasons behind local support for mining operations can expand our understanding of mining conflicts, and this dissertation explores the reasons behind what appears to be a significant support for the opening of an iron ore mine in Kaunisvaara, a small village located in Pajala municipality, in rural northern Sweden.

Pajala has struggled with depopulation and economic decline since the 1960s, and it is therefore understandable that research has been able to document that people often express their support for the mine with references to its expected positive effects on local economic development. However, what ends up concealed when we reduce people's support for local mining operations to narrow economic arguments, is the full scope of what they hope that economic growth will achieve for themselves and their communities.

1.1 Aim and Research Question

The aim of this dissertation is to explore and bring into view the reasons why people desire mines where they live. Through such an exploration I seek to deepen our understanding of mining conflicts in Sweden's rural north in the 21st century. More precisely, I set out to answer the following question: What hopes, dreams and expectations do Pajala's mining proponents wish that the opening of the Kaunisvaara mine will realize?

I have formulated the research question for this doctoral dissertation as an empirical question in order to contribute to the growing body of literature on mining conflicts in the rural north through an (ethnographic) exploration of the hopes, dreams and expectations that make local mining operations a

desirable option for the residents of a municipality like Pajala. As I began this exploration, I struggled to understand why that question has not been posed in the literature on mining research in Sweden. The answer, I argue, lies in the fact that much of the research on mining in Sweden puts forward the argument that mining conflicts are *value* conflicts, without further theorizing the concept "value." Put simply, previous research on mining conflicts in Sweden argues that while mining proponents tend to value industrial development, money and job opportunities, mining opponents tend to value nature, culture and traditional livelihoods. I do not question the idea that mining operations have the potential to make different values clash. Neither do I contest that it is on some level empirically accurate to describe mining conflicts in these terms. What concerns me with this description is rather that it seems somewhat lopsided; while culture, nature and traditional livelihoods are examples of things in which people see an intrinsic value, money, industrial development and job opportunities are not. In fact, money, development and jobs seem better described as means, rather than values, which are ends. Therefore, I contend that the notion of value is under-formulated in studies that argue that mining conflicts are conflicts over values. While it tells us something about how the things mining opponents value are harmed or devalued by mining operations, it does not seem to be formulated in such a way that it opens the door for an investigation of what mining proponents really value *beyond* money, industrial development and job opportunities. It is, after all, only when we have an equally clear view of the values held by both mining proponents and mining opponents that we may conclude whether, and on what level, these values are irreconcilable. In Pierre Bourdieu's words, ethnographic description can serve as a "space of points of view" into which we can,

> bring out everything that results when different or antagonistic visions of the world confront each other — that is, in certain cases, the tragic consequences of making incompatible points of view confront each other, where no concession or compromise is possible because each one of them is equally founded in social reason. (Bourdieu et el. 1993: 3)

It is my hope that the exploration of my research question will contribute to a deeper understanding, along these lines, of what mining conflicts within communities actually are conflicts about.

1.2 The Opening of the Kaunisvaara Mine

When Canadian mining company Northland Resources announced its plans to transform a mire in Kaunisvaara into an open pit iron ore mine in 2006, it was welcomed as a "Messiah" who was going to save a desperate community from disintegration, at least according to some of my interviewees. The Messiah parable stood out to me as unusually powerful in one of the world's most secular countries. Northland Resources' mine opened in 2012, but the mining venture in Pajala ended in the largest bankruptcy in Swedish history only two years later (Nyberg 2021). Production was resumed in 2018 by the Swedish mining company Kaunis Iron. Despite the bankruptcy and its negative economic effects on the municipality (Haikola and Anshelm 2019), both mining companies have received strong local support. According to a report from 2021 where 500 people in Pajala had been interviewed by the polling organization Kantar-Sifo on behalf of Kaunis Iron, 92 percent of the respondents were in favor of the local mining operations in Kaunisvaara (Kaunis Iron 2021). Among residents aged between 18 and 34, as many as 98 percent had responded positively. Results from a Kantar-Sifo poll from 2022 show that 88 percent of the respondents are positive to Kaunis Iron's plans to expand production and open a new mine in neighboring village Sahavaara, and that 93 percent of the respondents are positive to the existing mine in Pajala municipality (Kaunis Iron 2022a). Out of the 6 percent who responded that they have a negative opinion about the mine in Kaunisvaara, 46 percent could still see themselves working for the local mining company (Kaunis Iron 2022b).

If, at any level of analysis perceivable as a form of dispossession (Harvey 2006) where a private company exploits a resource that is literally a physically integral part of the land local residents live upon, nobody seems to even remotely think of it this way. The support for the mine in Pajala is perhaps no conundrum when viewed in light of the challenges described in the prologue to this dissertation. A mine means employment opportunities with the potential to generate in-migration and improved tax revenues. Research concludes that the "economic factors weighed most heavily in generating support for the mine [in Kaunisvaara] (Poelzer and Ejdemo 2918; see also Ejdemo and Söderholm, 2008; Ejdemo and Söderholm, 2010; Ejdemo 2017; Haikola and Anshelm 2017; Moritz et al 2017; Poelzer and Ejdemo 2018; Jakobsson and Johansson 2020; Poelzer and Yu 2020). Yet, as previously mentioned, this conclusion could be perceived as *satisfactory*

only if we omit the question of what hopes, dreams and expectations Pajala's residents see reflected in the mining project in Kaunisvaara. While the tendency to overlook the question can be grasped with reference to the under-formulated notion of value in previous research, it can also be understood as historically produced.

1.3 Towards an Ethnography of a Form of Life

Perhaps the question does not seem particularly relevant because we are under the impression that no matter what people dream of, it must under present conditions be facilitated by the influx of money, jobs and people. Aware of Pajala's economic and demographic distress, we for some reason assume that whatever can be disclosed through an exploration of hopes, dreams and expectations projected onto local mining operations, the findings would not add much theoretical, empirical or practical interest. In this sense, what is reflected in the relative lack of ethnographic attention to the hopes, dreams and expectations materialized in local support for mining is an internalization of the condition of capitalism, within the research perspective. For most of us, wage labor (money) is the key to realizing any dreams we might harbor, even though it is sometimes ill-fitted to the task. Starting a family, acquiring a decent home for ourselves and our children, traveling the world, writing books, developing our hobbies — for the majority of us, the prerequisite for realizing any of these things is wage work. In financially weak municipalities like Pajala, this structural condition has manifested itself in very tangible ways over the past half-century. Derelict houses, empty schools and closed stores are testament to all those who have left to find work in southern Sweden as a result of the shrinking regional labor market. Confronted with this reality, it is perhaps easy to derive the support for the mine to the desperate need for jobs, without even noticing that we thereby reduce dreams and desires to their economic preconditions.

What I am getting at here is something akin to Hartmut Rosa's (2021) observation that contemporary sociology has managed to reduce the question of what constitutes a good life to the question of what resources (income, career, house, car, social network, education etc.) people who see themselves as happy (or living a good life) have at their disposal. There is no such thing as a canonical sociology of the good life, Rosa notes, no sociology of happiness (as "subjective perception" or as "objectively defined way of life")

that is considered a serious part of the discipline of sociology (2021: 17). In fact, in modern "Western-style society" (Rosa's term) defined by ethical pluralism and individualism, the notion of the good life has become an entirely private matter, and thus the sociological study of the good life inconceivable — "all but taboo", as Rosa puts it (2021: 4). Within the "ethical horizon of modernity," (ibid.:24) the epitome of happiness becomes individual self-realization; the pursuit of happiness equals the individual's realization of a (largely imagined) authentic self. We reify this notion daily through the affirmation that "everyone must know for themselves what they want to make of themselves and their lives" (2021: 18). In such circumstances, sociological research on happiness is relegated to focusing on what resources are available for people trying to realize their true selves. "Consequently, such surveys consistently show that the rich are happier than the poor (or the upper classes more satisfied than the lower classes), that men are happier than women, and that Americans are more satisfied than Russians" Rosa notes, and adds two crucial questions, "By what other criteria could individuals respond to such surveys? And yet: is this really the way to measure quality of life?" (Rosa 2021: 24).

Rosa's aim is to bring back the question of the good life to the discipline of sociology, mainly by developing a theory of the good life that transcends the modern understanding of happiness as individual self-realization. The aim of this dissertation is somewhat different−to bring into view the hopes, dreams and expectations to which people in Pajala hope that the capital influx of the mine is going to be a means, but which ends up concealed when reduced to a local desire for regional economic development. But the investigation is informed by Rosa's observation that, only in a society like ours, which "has made itself deaf and blind to the question of the good life," can we get the impression that "limitless increase of private accumulation of resources itself represents the epitome of well-being" (Rosa 2021: 7). This is how I would adapt Rosa's insights to my own empirical context: Only in a society which has made itself deaf and blind to the question of the good life can we get the impression that capital influx *in itself* would unquestionably increase the well-being of the residents in an economically weak municipality like Pajala.

If Rosa is right in his diagnosis that conflating the quantity of resources available with the quality of life is a profoundly modern phenomenon, this would explain why the question of what kind of life people in Pajala hope

for has not received much attention. When we conflate happiness with resources, and money with what people want to do with it, the question of what local people want from a mine becomes rather obsolete. If considered a question to be explored at all, it might even be understood as a question about what specific individual projects of happiness that local residents may wish to embark upon to realize their respective authentic selves once they get to enjoy their share of the profits from the mine. There is, after all, no widely accepted theoretical lens through which hopes, dreams and expectations attached to local mining operations may be explored as a collective aspiration to something that has to do with the realization of some kind of collectively co-created and recognized definition of what makes life meaningful.

Concepts that could serve this purpose, for example culture or community, have been rightly criticized for overlooking the ideological dimension ingrained in anything we are tempted to call socially shared. To borrow an apt formulation from Scholte (1984: 540) who criticizes Geertz's notion of culture as "webs of significance" (Geertz 1973: 5): "[One] cannot merely define men and women in terms of the webs of significance they themselves spin, since […] few do the actual spinning while the […] majority is simply caught." Yet, the danger of abstaining from a theoretical lens that allows us to see collective hopes and aspirations in a place like Pajala seems to be a reversion to economics and the idea that it does not really matter what people want since money, growth or wage labor provide the means to fulfill those wants. What happens in that maneuver is that all kinds of human dreams and hopes are reduced to money, which is effectively the only means people have to fulfill them. This means that when we refrain from seeing collective aspirations and hopes in Pajala, we also refrain from making that which they hope for an object of political struggle. What is more, the ethnography of the local support for the Kaunisvaara mine becomes significantly more interesting when viewed through a lens that renders it intelligible as something more than a compilation of diverse, subjectively defined pursuits of happiness. More precisely, I have chosen to approach the support for the mine in Kaunisvaara as founded on, or derived from, a socially shared idea about what constitutes a good life. I rely on three key concepts for this purpose: form of life, value and imagined totality.

1.4 Life in Pajala as a Form of Life

What I found in my search for the hopes, dreams and expectations that inform the local support for the mine in Kaunisvaara was an appreciation of a specific *form of life* which my informants perceived to be on the brink of disintegration, but which could potentially be secured through the establishment of the mine. I borrow the concept "form of life" from the German philosopher Rahel Jaeggi (2018) who defines it as,

> nexuses of practices, orientations, and orders of social behavior. They include attitudes and habitualized modes of conduct with a normative character that concern the collective conduct of life, although at the same time they are not strictly codified or institutionally binding. (Jaeggi 2018: 50)

Furthermore, the practices, orientations and social behaviors we associate with a specific form of life are not contingent, but "stand in an internal or qualitative relationship to each other" (Jaeggi 2018: 65). Jaeggi's examples of what social formations could be studied as forms of life are very different in scope. It is possible to conceive of both capitalism[1] and the nuclear family as forms of life.[2] Jaeggi also mentions the urban and provincial form of life (2018: 35), the form of life in big cities, the Aztec (ibid.: 51), Medieval (ibid.: 35), and modern forms of life (ibid.: 89). For a nexus of practices, orientations, social behaviors, attitudes and habitualized modes of conduct to be a form of life it must concern the "cultural and social reproduction of human life" (Jaeggi 2018: 3). Hence, "[…] the bourgeois family, the South Texan way of life, and the Aztec way of life are all forms of life, but raves and in-line skating are not" (Jaeggi 2018: 51). Though forms of life are geared to permanence and have an element of pre-givenness, they are in a constant process of renegotiation.

I came to Pajala to explore the reasons behind the support for the mine, not to try to describe life in Pajala as a *form of life* in the sense outlined above. But the term is useful for the purpose of giving the hopes, dreams and

[1] "Capitalism is a form of life in so far as it shapes small-scale forms of life" (Jaeggi 2018: 51).

[2] "The nuclear family as form of life is part of the whole construction by the comprehensive form of life of bourgeois society or modernity, which also includes other parts. But−terminologically speaking, there is nothing to be said against calling both — the more and the less comprehensive formation — a form of life" (Jaeggi 2018: 52).

expectations Pajala's inhabitants attach to the mining project sharper contours. When viewed as a form of life — as a nexus of practices, orientations, social behaviors, attitudes and an habitualized mode of conduct concerned with social and cultural reproduction of human life — the ethnography becomes possible to understand as a struggle for the continuation of this form of life. When we understand life in Pajala as a *form of life*, it also becomes *distinguishable* from other forms of life — from the urban form of life or from the capitalist form of life. This despite the fact that forms of life interact with and condition each other, [3] which means that drawing sharp boundaries between life in Pajala as a form of life and other forms of life is neither possible, nor necessary for my purposes. The detailed examination of the "overlaps, relations of influence, connections, associations, and relationship" (Jaeggi 2018: 53) between Pajala as a form of life, and, for example, capitalism as a form or life, or an urban, big city form of life, exceeds the scope of this dissertation. Form of life as a concept in this dissertation serves the purpose of rendering the ethnographic material intelligible — as a concept, a suggestion as to what my informants are talking about when they discuss how the mine might possibly *save Pajala.*

1.5 From Form of Life to Value

As mentioned, I discuss value in Chapter 2 and 3, but I want to say something already at this point about what I take value to mean in this dissertation and how it relates to Jaeggi's concept *form of life*. Value represents, in this dissertation, ultimately an idea about what human life should be like. This idea must, to some extent, be collectively recognized and maintained. I use the term *imagined totality* to refer to such collectively shared ideas about what human life should be like. This approach to value, as well as the concept *imagined totality*, is put forward by the anthropologist David Graeber (2001; 2013a). We can think of it this way: The source of value is human creative action. *Human creative action* rather than *labor* since the latter term is burdened both by its special meaning in Marx's labor theory of value, and its intimate connection to the realization of value in capitalist economies.

[3] "The family is not the direct product of bourgeois society either, and yet it is part of this society. The family coheres with bourgeois society and fulfills functions within it, even if it is not its causal product. Thus, here we must examine overlaps and relations of influence, connections, associations, and relationships, although these must not be conceived as bottom-up causal relationships" (Jaeggi 2018: 53).

However, we need a symbolic and material system through which our creative actions can be recognized as valuable by ourselves and others. In a capitalist economy, the market provides both the symbolic and material medium for that process of value realization. Creative actions that can take the form of a commodity are recognized as valuable. This has implications for how we can live our lives. It is, as Jaeggi notes, "no easy matter" to exclude the ethical implications of any social formation; the question of how one should live one's life is always answered in any social formation,

> […] it is no easy matter to exclude the ethical question of how to live one's life from processes of individual or collective decision-making. It has always already been answered, implicitly or explicitly, in every social formation. (Jaeggi 2018: x)

If we allow Jaeggi's and Graeber's vocabularies to merge at this point, we could say that the questions "What is value?" and "How should we live our lives?" are answered in very much the same way: in a form of life where only human creative actions that are also commodities on a market are recognized as producing value, human creative energy must be directed to those value creating activities, and this prompts all of us to lead a certain kind of life. In short, our lives must be organized around the access to wage labor. But this does not mean that wage labor represents the ultimate kind of value. Though the market is arguably an almost universally recognized measurement of value, there exists an almost infinite number of alternative ideas (imagined totalities) about what human actions produce value. Few, if any, of them are as widely recognized as money and the market. This is crucial; value is relational, which means that it does not really exist if it is not socially recognized. However, it is quite possible to imagine that people may, as a collective, idealize a form of life where human creative actions that are not commodities on a market do produce value, and thus also prefer to direct energy to value-creating activities which are not wage-labor. While this assumption seems to be present on an intuitive level in contemporary research on local resistance and opposition to mining, I want to bring the assumption to bear also on our understanding of local support for mining operations. It is for this purpose that we need an explicit theoretical definition of what value is. It is, I find, when we let our understanding of mining conflicts be guided by an intuitive understanding of value that we invite the capitalist bias to shape our understanding of what mining proponents really

want. This is especially so when their hopes, dreams and desires are not immediately detectable in their opinions on local mining *per se*, but must be sought, rather, in their views on what kind of life they want to lead.

1.6 Disposition of the Dissertation

The chapter following this introduction provides a review of research dealing with mining conflicts in Sweden. The review focuses on how the notion of value is used in accounts of mining conflicts, and suggests that the notion appears under-formulated as a tool to grasp what mining conflicts are conflicts about.

In Chapter 3, I outline a theory of value that allows us to explore the hopes, dreams and expectations people see reflected in the Kaunisvaara mining project.

In Chapter 4, I operationalize the research question and describe what kind of data I have collected to answer it.

Chapter 5 provides a short historical introduction to Pajala and Tornedalen. The chapter also introduces the Kaunisvaara mining project and provides a timeline over the mining operations in Pajala.

Chapters 6 through 11 are ethnographic chapters. In Chapter 5, I describe the practices and actions that my interviewees describe as constitutive of life in Tornedalen. The chapter circles around the question of what my informants appreciate about living in Pajala.

Chapter 7 shows how the practices and actions described in Chapter 5 are linked to a certain social structure which is historically constructed. This means that the things that my informants appreciate about life in Pajala cannot easily be enjoyed elsewhere — especially not the possibility for a specific kind of social self-realization depends on one's position within said social structure.

Chapter 8 is devoted to exploring a feeling of alienation that a number of my informants describe as the result of leaving Pajala to live somewhere else.

Chapter 9 describes how long-distance commuting, one of the strategies my informants use to avoid the feeling of alienation caused by leaving Pajala permanently, splits their lives in the middle.

Chapter 10 explores the lack of publicly voiced criticism towards mining operations in Kaunisvaara. The chapter explores the content of this criticism, as well as the reasons people refrain from articulating it openly.

The dissertation's final ethnographic chapter, 11, explores ambiguous emotions towards mining operations on part of both mining proponents and mining opponents in Pajala.

Chapter 12 summarizes the results of my ethnographic exploration of hopes, dreams and expectations in Pajala and their bearing on the theoretical context in which the research question was raised.

2. The Under-Formulation of Value in Research About Mining Conflicts in Sweden

Before I turn to the literature on mining conflicts in Sweden in order to show how mining conflicts are conceptualized as value conflicts, I want to provide the reader a short introduction to the link between mining and ideas about both development and to northern parts of Sweden. The narrative about the dormant potential of ore converges with the narrative about the dormant potential of *Norrland,* already in the 16th century.

Sweden's history as a mining nation dates back to the 11th century. In total, over 3000 mines have been in operation, most of them iron ore mines located in Bergslagen (SGU n.d.). From the 16th century, mining became a national interest (Envall 2018: 21). It is also at this time that mining as a means to national wealth came to be associated with the geographical area where my ethnography plays out — *Norrland*. Norrland literally translates to "the northern land" and is a term with faint contours. Geographically, it designates Sweden north of Dalälven. Figuratively, Norrland is sometimes taken to represent the antithesis of the urban, standardized, modern, paved, lit, noise polluted, disenchanted life in the capital city. In the 16th century, Norrland was unexplored dreamland, discursively constructed as the land of the future, Sweden's untouched treasury, abundant with natural resources, timber and ore, that could make the nation rich (Sörlin 2023 [1988]). "I Norrland hafva vi ett Västindien" [Norrland is our West Indies] is allegedly how one of the Swedish king's counselors put it (Envall 2018: 21).

The phantasmagorical narrative about Norrland's dormant riches gained renewed currency in the decades leading up to Sweden's industrialization (1870-1920). If unlocked, its slumbering riches would transform Sweden from poor and backwards to rich and modern. Norrland experienced an era

of internal colonization. However, the story about how Norrland's resources made Sweden rich cannot be decoupled from the story about Norrland's modernization. Resource extraction requires infrastructure and workers. The state invested not only in roads and railroads used to transport the timber and ore south from the sawmills and mines in Norrland, but also in schools, housing and public services. Cities and communities grew and flourished as a result of extractive industries in Norrland. The prevalence of overcrowding, poverty and child mortality declined also in this part of the country, as it had done in southern Sweden a couple of decades earlier. The golden era was not long-lived. In the 1970s, the population began to decline in several of Norrland's municipalities as a result of structural adjustments and mechanization within both mining and forestry. Norrland went from dreamland, from *the land of the future* (Sörlin 2023 [1988]) to the land of depopulation.

A century after Sweden's transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy was largely completed, the country stood before a new transition — from fossil-based to fossil-free energy. Again, Norrland's ore (among other resources) is part of the political vision about how this traformation is to be achieved (Sveriges mineralstrategi 2013; Tillväxtanalys 2010; Tillväxtanalys 2018; Müller 2023; Müller 2019). When Sweden's prime minister, Magdalena Andersson, visited the White House in Washington DC in May 2022 (Svensson 2022), she gifted her American counterpart a candle holder, made from "the world's first fossil-free steel" (Vattenfall, n.d., my translation from Swedish). The inscription on the gift reads, "A piece of the future", which serves as a good example of how iron ore is a symbol not only of national wealth, but also of cutting-edge technological development. Yet, there is also hope that the investments in Norrland will revitalize slumbering and shrinking communities, which have suffered through decades of depopulation and economic decline. This is also one of the reasons why Norrland as a geographic area is heavily featured in research on rural development in Sweden (Ekman 1991; Hansen 1998; Arora-Jonsson 2005; Sandström 2008). The idea that green industrial investments in northern Sweden will simultaneously propel Sweden's green transition and an economic and demographic revitalization of a region that has been in economic and demographic decline for forty years has become a favored policy narrative, co-created by politicians, state agencies, journalists and the mining industry (Regeringskansliet 2022; Müller 2023; Dagens Nyheter 2023; Busch, Pehrson and Carlson 2023).

This is the larger context, which we can see reflected in the focus of the research on mining operations in Sweden. I see three closely interrelated foci for this research: (1) Mining operations and the possibilities for economically, socially and ecologically sustainable regional development (Ejdemo 2013; Ejdemo and Söderholm 2011; López 2021; Moritz et al. 2017; Tennberg et al. 2014; Nilsson 2009; Tepecik Diş and Karimnia 2021; Beland Lindahl et al. 2018), (2) mining and Sámi indigenous rights (Allard 2018; Haddway et el 2019; Kløcker Larsen et al. 2022; Lawrence and Kløcker Larsen 2017; Lopez 2021; Österlin and Raitio 2020; Raitio et al. 2020; Pölönen, Allard and Raitio 2020) and (3) the theme around which this dissertation revolves: mining operations as objects of conflict. Although the other two themes deserve mentioning as separate themes, conflict is often present as a topic in both.

Not all mining conflicts take the form of overt altercations of the magnitude seen in Jokkmokk or the Ojnare forest, where police intervened when protesters physically blocked the mining sites (Isberg 2013; Persson Öste and Widegren 2012). Yet, the risk of meeting strong local resistance hovers over every mining project. The establishment of a mine inevitably demands that the interests of the mining company and the mine's potentially positive effects on local economic development be weighed against other interests (environmental, social, cultural and economic). A mine dramatically alters the physical environment, potentially hindering alternative livelihoods and land uses, such as reindeer husbandry, hunting and tourism. The establishment of a mine may transform an area with sensitive ecological status into a pit or a pile of gangue (SGU 2016: 22–24). Additionally, a mine's expansion may require that a whole city be moved. Finally, a mining project allocates public funds. When municipalities and governments allocate resources to facilitate a mine establishment−housing, public services and infrastructure−that naturally means other necessary investments have to be put on hold (Haikola and Anshelm 2019).

In Section 2.1, I engage in a critical discussion with the literature on mining conflict in Sweden to show how the idea about mining conflicts as value conflicts is constructed. This review of the literature will also show how the term value is under-formulated, despite its frequent use. In the following section, 2.2, I discuss the implications of the understanding of mining conflicts as value conflicts for our understanding of the support for the mine in Pajala. It seems to follow from the argument that mining conflicts

are value conflicts that, since the mine in Pajala enjoys strong local support, most people in Pajala must value money and work over nature, culture and community. Otherwise, they would likely protest and express their concerns for the values they see compromised by the mining operation.

2.1 The Notion of Value in Research About Mining Conflicts in Sweden

The conflict in Kallak/Gállok, Jokkmokk Municipality, is probably Sweden's most widely known and controversial mining conflict. The proposed mine, for which the Swedish government finally approved a concession permit after nine years of legal processing (Liikamaa 2022), would have devastating consequences for the reindeer herding Sámi in the area (Hellmark and Abel 2022). However, there is hope that a mine in Jokkmokk could contribute with new employment opportunities. The drawn-out legal process has caused social tension and hefty protests. Investigating this conflict and the mining company's failure to obtain a "social license to operate," MacPhail, Beland Lindahl and Bowles (2022) argue that what divides "the mining company, the local mine proponents, and the Sámi [Reindeer Herding Association (Sámi RHA)] are fundamental value-based conflicts about human-nature relations, sustainable development, Sámi rights, and visions for the future" (MacPhail et al. 2022: 9). "While the mine proponents," write MacPhail, Beland Lindahl and Bowles, "focus on large-scale investment and prioritise economic and population growth […], the opponents share an alternative development vision prioritizing quality of life and a healthy environment" (MacPhail et al. 2022:8). This, they conclude, makes for "irreconcilable differences between project proponents and opponents over what matters, what is to be valued, and what the future should look like" (MacPhail et al 2022:13).

In an article from 2018, which MacPhail et al. refer to several times, (Beland Lindahl, Johansson, Zachrisson and Viklund 2018), Beland Lindahl et al. seek to "[explore] the origin of [natural resource] conflicts by analysing them in terms of competing "pathways to sustainability" (Beland Lindahl et al. 2018: 402). The article draws on data from three municipalities in northern Sweden where planned mining projects have sparked local resistance and conflict. It is assumed that all actors in the studied communities are equally concerned with the viability and development of their

communities (with "sustainable development," in Beland Lindahl's vocabulary), but differ in their options about what constitutes good and desirable development of their community. Beland Lindahl et al. argue that Sámi reindeer herding communities and other mine opponents,

> see the mine establishments as *existential threats* and barriers to preferred lifestyles, businesses, and place development. In other words, the possible mine establishments are perceived as highly unsustainable projects and obstacles to [sustainable development]. (Beland Lindahl et al. 2018: 409)

Mine proponents are also concerned with sustainable development, but "prioritise the economic dimension":

> Mine establishment is seen not only as an activity in line with the tenets of [sustainable development], but as a prerequisite, given that the overarching sustainability challenge in the area is understood to be depopulation and economic decline[.] […] To these actors, a new mine is associated with almost exclusively positive effects: jobs, more business, infrastructure development, improved services, greater income, population growth, etc. (Beland Lindahl et al. 2018: 409)

Hence, MacPhail et al. (2022) and Beland Lindahl et al. (2018) suggest that mining conflicts have their origin in value conflicts. Actors who oppose the mine do so because a mining establishment would pose an existential threat to their "preferred lifestyle," (Beland Lindahl et al 2018: 409), which encompasses reindeer husbandry, "traditional livelihood" and valuing the landscape as a "carrier of culture and language" (MacPhail et al. 2022). This preferred way of life is linked to a set of values "that positions humans as part of nature and stress the importance of respecting nature's limits" (MacPhail et al. 2022), and that prioritize quality of life rather than economic growth. Mine proponents, in MacPhail's and Beland Lindahl's description, value — or prioritize — population growth, economic growth and jobs.

Persson et al. (2017) repeat the same notion. Discussing the conflict in Jokkmokk/ Gállok, they write that business owners and municipal representatives who are generally positive to mining in Jokkmokk, embody a "neo-liberal and profit-focused worldview" (Persson et al. 2017: 27), which "misrecognizes" the insistence on other values (i.e. historical roots, Sámi

culture and language, reindeer husbandry and environmental conservation). Persson et al. refer to this latter perspective as an "anti-neoliberal worldview" (Persson et al. 2017: 20). One of Persson's Sámi interviewees puts it this way:

> Reindeer are not considered to be worth anything. It is not recognized as a national interest. It is seen as a hobby activity against these big bets being made, because people look coldly on money only. There are no natural or cultural values that weigh against money and it is a short-term mindset. And then it's hard to fight against it when the talk should just be of money (Personal communication with Sámi reindeer herder). (Persson 2017: 24)

Persson's description of the mining opponents in Jokkmokk, as driven by an anti-neoliberal worldview that promotes other values than exchange value, thus fits nicely with MacPhail's and Lindahl's description of mining opponents as a group of people who cherish other values than money. (See also Ojala and Nordin 2015; Persson and Öhman 2014.) Likewise, Persson et al. have interviewed a local "business group" (2017: 24) that argues that the municipality needs investments since "investments, according to this discourse, equals development and desirable growth" (Persson et al. 2017: 24). An argument of this kind, says Persson et al., "consequently fails to recognize non-monetary discourses and therefore serves to reinforce institutions that misrecognize and subordinates Sámi people and their values" (Persson et al. 2017: 24). Just like MacPhail and Beland Lindahl, Persson et al. reproduce the notion that mining proponents value money and work, while mining opponents value nature, Sámi culture, language and historical roots. Beland Lindahl et al. (2016), Fjellborg et al. (2022) and Harnesk, Islar and Stafström (2018) put forward similar arguments in relation to the Jokkmokk case.

Using survey data focusing on the "perspective and values" of people living near potential mining operations in Jokkmokk, Kiruna and Storuman municipalities, (Västerbotten and Norrbotten), Poelzer and Yu (2021) investigate the link between trust in government and the acceptability of mining. The article echoes the very same value dichotomy between mining proponents and opponents. While some value "nature and cultural conservation," others value "increased business and growth". Poelzer and Yu argue that where one stands in this value-conflict affects one's attitude towards the establishment of mining. Those valuing nature and cultural

conservation tend to be against mines, and those who value increased business and growth tend to be positive towards mine development.

The value dichotomy outlined in this section seems to make up the conceptual stability in mining research that does not appeal to it explicitly. Haikola and Anshelm (2016) provide one example. Their article sets out to identify "the *main lines of conflict* in current mining discourse in Sweden" (2016: 509, author's emphasis).

> [Sweden's] mining policy has been designed with the objective of attracting an increasing share of the global venture capital flow into the volatile but lucrative minerals market. This, however, has been met with opposition from certain national and international resistance groups […]. This resistance has focused on the Mineral Strategy launched by the government in 2013, a manifestation of the market liberal ideas that critics claim jeopardise social, cultural, economic and environmental values. (Haikola and Anshelm 2016: 50)

The critics who oppose the Mineral Strategy and its manifestations of market liberal ideas are, in Haikola's and Anshelm's account, "certain national environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local resistance groups, representatives from Sámi organizations, the Sámi Parliament and Sámi [RHAs], the tourism industry, various academics, social scientists and regional politicians". Even though it is not spelled out explicitly, the logical implication seems to be that those who do not contest mining projects comply with "market liberal ideas", or value the increased flow of "global venture capital" into rural Swedish communities over social, cultural and environmental parameters.

Suopajärvi et al. (2016) discuss the social impact of mining in Kaunisvaara and Svappavaara (both in Norrbotten County) and six other municipalities above the polar circle. Their study relies on semi-structured interviews with local residents and interest groups, including politicians, public authorities, nature conservationists, reindeer herders, entrepreneurs, housewives and students (Suopajärvi 2016: 63). Having described how the "traditional economy" based on place-specific livelihoods, such as reindeer herding, fishing and nature-based tourism as well as "hunting, gathering, and fishing for household's own consumption" and a decentralized way of living, constitutes local culture and identity, Suopajärvi et al. conclude that,

> Mining is, in many ways, the antithesis mode of production as it is part of the international resource economy, a global boom-bust business offering industrial employment for hundreds or even thousands of people in mechanized mining sites with huge dumpers, excavators, and so on. This modern way of large-scale production with industrial employment is culturally and historically quite a new phenomenon in many parts of the Northern Europe. (Suopajärvi et al. 2016: 34-35)

Suopajärvi et al. do not discuss values or value conflicts explicitly, yet the article evokes the dichotomy between natural conservation, traditional economy and local culture on the one hand, and "modern large-scale production" on the other, by conceptualizing mining operations as a threat to the local way of life.

2.2 The Theoretical Implications of an Under-Formulated Notion of Value

An implication of this reasoning is that since no open conflict materialized in the wake of Northland's decision to open a mine in Kaunisvaara, Pajala's inhabitants must be more concerned with economic development than with nature conservation and culture. Mining research that mentions the Pajala case supports this conclusion. Poelzer and Yu (2021) mention in passing that the strong support for the mine in Pajala can be attributed to the "economic context", meaning Pajala's challenging economic situation with out-migration, an aging population and few employment opportunities within the municipality. In an article that Poelzer authored with Tomas Ejdemo (Poelzer and Ejdemo 2018), the conclusion seems to be the same: "the economic factors weighed most heavily in generating support for the mine [in Pajala] (Poelzer and Ejdemo 2018: 3).

Thorough ethnographic work on the support for the Kaunisvaara mine is largely wanting. However, Haikola's and Anshelm's article *The Making of Mining Expectations* (2017) deserves mentioning as it constitutes a serious attempt to theorize the formation of the excitement around the mining venture in Pajala. Haikola and Anshelm suggest that the support for a mine in Pajala can be understood as the fusion of diverse agendas of different actors (i.e. company representatives, local politicians and residents, the Swedish government and financial analysts) into a "coherent horizon of expectations". The coherent horizon of expectations represents the level of

abstraction at which diverse hopes, dreams, visions and expectations linked to the mine establishment can be integrated in a coherent narrative. I appreciate Haikola and Anshelm's description of how the mine establishment played into a collective "dormant vision" of Pajala as a wealthy mining town — a vision ingrained in the local historical memory of depopulation, economic decline and the unexplored ledge under the bog in Kaunisvaara that symbolize a promise of buried riches (Haikola and Anshelm 2017: 16). In this imaginary, the mine represented the historical moment in which Pajala's future would finally be realized in accordance with its hidden potential. (See also Solbär 2021 for a similar argument.) Yet, the hopes and dreams, or *agenda*, as Haikola and Anshelm call it, of Pajala's residents and decision makers is not explored in depth. After interviewing mining proponents in Pajala, Haikola and Anshelm list economic growth and employment opportunities as the reason behind the "close to unanimous" (Haikola and Anshelm 2017: 13) local support for the establishment of the mine. The value conflict seen in much other mining research appears to have been resolved in Haikola and Anshelm's analysis of the support for the mine in Pajala. In their analysis, "heavy industry-led regional development" does not stand in conflict with culture, language and social development. Rather, some formulations even seem to suggest that economic growth and local hope for a viable community are roughly interchangeable terms−or at least that the local hope for the latter can be rewritten as the former.

Like Haikola and Anshelm, Suopajärvi et al. (2016) have also recorded that beyond the threat a mine poses to nature, local cultures, identities and place-specific livelihoods, a mine might actually also constitute a possible way to preserve the "continued viability of the local way of life" (Suopajärvi et al. 2016: 36). This, Suopajärvi writes, is "one of the most positive social impacts of the mine, according to the responses from the studied communities" (Suopajärvi et al. 2016: 36). Another study by Suopajärvi et al. (2015) claims to represent "the expectations, needs and hopes" of "northern people" living near mining operations. The study encompasses eight mining sites, out of which Kaunisvaara and Svappavaara in Norrbotten are two. Through semi-structured interviews with 80 informants, they seek to let "northern people […] tell their own story — their own expectations, needs and hopes based on their own experience of mining" (Suopajärvi et al. 2016: 67). I sympathize with the call for close, interview-based and qualitative investigation of the hopes and fears local residents attach to mining operations. The story about the

expectations, needs and hopes of the "northern people" living close to mining operations is summarized as the valuation of a healthy and livable northern environment, clear information about the mine's environmental impact, influence over the decision-making process and local benefits from the mining project (Suopajärvi et al. 2016: 67–68). Interestingly enough, Suopajärvi's article suggests that mining proponents and mining opponents value similar things, though a closer ethnographic description is perhaps ruled out by the article's limited word count.

To summarize, research that seeks to understand mining conflicts tends to attribute the conflict to clashing values with respect to nature, culture, development and economic growth. The conflict is understood as dividing groups of people, or different stakeholders. A negative attitude to mining operations is linked to the valuation of a healthy environment, traditional livelihoods, historical roots and good quality of life. A positive attitude towards mining operations is linked to the valuation of economic growth, employment opportunities, population growth, infrastructure and development. I have summarized the values associated with mining proponents and mining opponents in the chart below. Research on local support for the mine in Pajala attributes the absence of conflict to the residents' hope for economic and demographic development. The potentially negative environmental consequences of mining are not denied, but the tension between economic and non-economic values receives limited attention. The implication of this for our understanding of the support for the mine in Pajala seems to be that Pajala is a place largely made up by people who value growth, jobs and development over a good quality of life, a healthy environment and their historical roots.

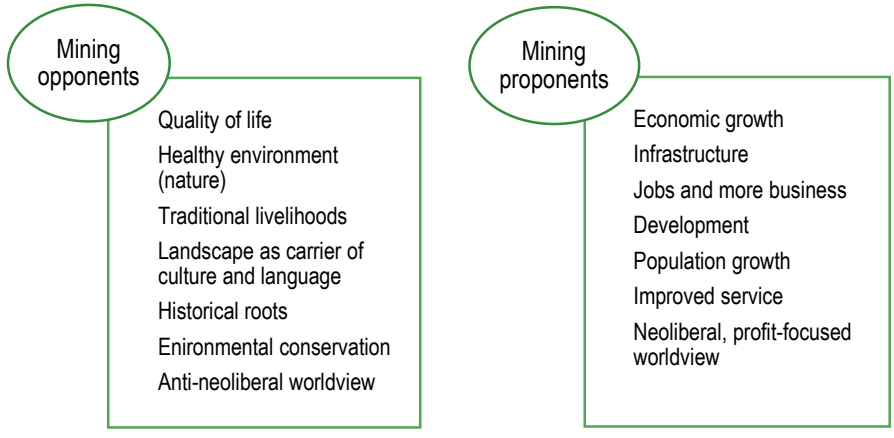

Figure 1. Description of the values associated with mining proponents and mining opponents in current research on mining conflicts in the rural north.

Yet, despite the numerous references to value, values and value conflicts that we find in the contemporary research about mining, any attempt to define what these terms actually mean is remarkably absent. However, if we assume that people's values have something to do with their idea of what makes life meaningful and important, the conclusion seems hurried. Can it really be that the concentration of profit-focused neoliberals who think that the meaning of life is more closely connected to economic growth than with anything listed in the left column above is *that* high in Pajala, while the planned mining operation in Jokkmokk strikes up hefty local resistance because people feel that a mine would impinge on some of the things that are truly valuable? Such a conclusion does not strike me as particularly helpful, either for our endeavor to understand the support for the mining operation in Pajala, or for understanding mining conflicts.

I have to make one thing clear at this point: I am not saying that any of the authors I quote in this chapter describe people in Pajala in these terms. I am talking about what seems to be the implications of theorizing mining conflicts as a clash between mining proponents' and mining opponents' conflicting values. A possible way around this implication is to say that mining proponents support mining because they hope that local mining operations, including the employment opportunities, the influx of new residents and capital, could be a *means to something else.* For example,

Beland Lindahl et al. (2018) work from the assumption that mining proponents see local mining operations as a means to an end, rather than as an intrinsic good. Consider this formulation about mining advocates in Jokkmokk and Rönnbäcken:

> Actors advocating group-4 frames [i.e. actors who are positive to mine establishment] are equally concerned about [sustainable development]. However, they prioritise the economic dimension. Mine establishment is seen not only as an activity in line with the tenets of [sustainable development], but as a prerequisite, given that the overarching sustainability challenge in the area is understood to be depopulation and economic decline[.] (Beland Lindahl et al. 2018: 409)

The assumption that mining proponents see economic growth and capital influx as a means to an end seems plausible. This notion is also present in Suopajärvi's observation that local mining operations are a means to preserve the "continued viability of the *local way of life*" (Suopajärvi et al. 2016: 36). Even the most diehard economist clinging to the theory of the Economic Man, would most likely admit that once someone has acquired the maximum amount of money possible for him or her, he or she would use that money to do something else, rather than simply acquiring more money. However, if this is the case, the understanding of mining conflicts as value conflicts runs into a new problem: that the end to which mining proponents wish capital influx to be a means remains obscured, treated as equal to, or at least reducible to, a desire for money. This is where it seems the research on mining conflicts have been caught in the modern malady that Rosa addresses; the sociological investigation of happiness is reduced to an investigation of the means people have at their disposal for realizing their personal, private, individually defined, versions of happiness. Had there been a flourishing debate on the sociology of happiness — a recognition of the notion that some forms of life provide more fertile soil for the realization of human happiness and well-being than others — we might have intuitively noticed how only the values associated with mining opponents seem to have anything to do with things that could make a human life meaningful and valuable. Claiming that mining conflicts are conflicts over value without a notion of value that allows us to imagine what it is that mining proponents actually value, leads us to a theoretical impasse where all we can really say is that mining conflicts are conflicts over *something.* It is this vagueness that I sought to capture with

a reference to Marx's specter at the very beginning of this dissertation. The subject of mining seems haunted by conflicts, but the theoretical contours of the conflicts are faint and indistinct.

2.3 The Problems with an Under-Formulated Notion of Value

It is against this background that I would like to suggest that the social tension identified in research on mining operations, however tangible, is not meaningfully grasped as a value conflict dividing mining opponents and mining proponents. Precisely because only the values of mining opponents are enunciated, while the "values" ascribed to mining proponents are not values, but means to an end that remains unarticulated. In short, if we admit that mining proponents value the potentially positive economic benefits of mining operations only as a means to an end, it becomes difficult to maintain the position that mining conflicts originate from clashing values between mining proponents and mining opponents, since we do not really know what mining proponents value.

Yet, even if I do not agree with the authors cited in this chapter that mining conflicts are meaningfully grasped as the result of clashing values of mining opponents and proponents, I do believe that contemporary research on mining conflicts captures something of great importance: the experience of mining opponents that mining operations devalue things of existential importance in order to give priority to something of a lesser kind. Perhaps this experience of devaluation extends even to some of the scholars researching mining conflicts. A short passage from Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* seems to capture the sentiment that runs through much of the work on mining and conflicts. "With the increasing value of the world of things proceeds in direct proportion the devaluation of the world of [humans]" (Marx 1988 [1932]: 71). If this sentiment is real, then mining establishments really have something to do with the definition, production and realization of value, and mining conflicts are indeed conflicts about things that people value. Yet, only equipped with a notion of value that does not distinguish between means and ends − or intrinsic and instrumental values — can we come to the conclusion that mining conflicts are the product of different stakeholders' actual, clashing values.

If we use a notion of value that is insensitive to the difference between intrinsic and instrumental values to grasp what mining conflicts are actually about, it would seem to foreclose the possibility for an ethnographic exploration of what form of life people hope that mining will bolster. This question does not seem to present itself so long as we reduce whatever it is that mining proponents value to a desire for economic growth. An under-formulation of the notion of value also seems to compromise the possibility to approach ambiguous emotions on the part of mining proponents. How are we to imagine the values of Suopajärvi's informants in Pajala, who support the mine with economic justifications, but who nonetheless explain how berry picking, a clean environment, hunting, fishing and the silence of the north is part of what makes life worth living, if we have already concluded that what mining proponents value is economic growth? There is a possible answer to this question. We could imagine that mining proponents do indeed value the same things as mining opponents, and yet, for some reason, do not see these values compromised by the mine (at least not to the point where the compromise becomes intolerable). The idea does not seem very far-fetched. Suopajärvi notes that "northern people" living close to mining operations (Kaunisvaara is one of the studied sites) value a healthy and livable northern environment (Suopajärvi et al. 2016: 67–68). But if mining proponents and mining opponents value very similar things, it becomes even more difficult to maintain the idea that mining conflicts are about conflicting values on the part of these two groups, unless we come to terms with what we actually mean when we talk about their values.

The notion of value in contemporary research on mining conflicts seems clear enough to capture the experience on part of mining opponents that valuable things run the risk of being devalued through mining operations. However, the notion of value does not seem articulate enough to grasp the true values to which mining proponents want mining to be an end. Hence, neither is the notion of value in contemporary research articulate enough to grasp what mining conflicts are actually about. It seems therefore as if a more clearly defined notion of value would open the door not only to a deeper understanding of what it is that mining proponents value about mining, but also to a deeper understanding of what mining conflicts are about. What we need is a notion of value that brings it to bear on the life people envision as the result either of the presence or the absence of local mining operations.

3. A Notion of Value for the Exploration of the Local Support for Mining

I would argue that figure 1 shows a division between things that produce economic value under capitalism and things that do not, rather than a division between the clashing values of mining proponents and opponents as argued in previous research. This contrast is perceivable from the perspective of Marx's theory of value as well as from neoclassical economics.[4] I will describe this line of division from the viewpoint of Marx's labor theory of value, since the notion of value that I will use to explore the support for mining in Kaunisvaara draws on Marx's understanding of value. This notion of value stresses, in a manner quite different from Marx's original notion, the role of material and symbolic means for defining what actions are to count as producing value. The end goal of my presentation of Marx's theory of value is to arrive at a notion of value understood as the way in which "actions become meaningful to the actor by being incorporated in some larger, social totality" (Graeber 2001: xii).

3.1 Marx's Labor Theory of Value

Marx's theory (Marx 1991 [1867]) is widely understood as a labor theory of value that recognizes human labor as the source of all value. An object's value is equal to the amount of what is called abstract labor, or socially necessary labor time, required to produce the object. Abstract labor is different from concrete human labor. We can think of it this way: in a society where labor itself is a commodity and where everyone is dependent on selling his or her labor on the market, it is possible to calculate the amount of labor

[4] According to which a commodity's value is equal to its market price, determined in neoclassical economic theory by a specific relation between supply and demand (Wolff and Resnick 2012: 56–57).

congealed in a certain object as a proportion of the "total amount of labor in the system as a whole" (Graeber 2001:55). The proportion of abstract labor congealed in an object is its value. If there is something like an objective measure of value under capitalism, it is this, for as Graeber puts it "one might say that the value a given product, or, for that matter, institution, has is the proportion of a society's creative energy it sinks into producing and maintaining it" (2001: 55). Understood in this way, value is a relational and structural concept. The value of a given commodity is a reflection not of the quality of the concrete labor invested in it, but of the "relational aspect of a structure of interdependent productive activities" (Turner 2008: 46). A calculation of this kind requires that labor power is commodified; without a market in labor power, there is no such thing as abstract labor (Graeber 2001: 55; Turner 2008: 46).

What is described in these technical terms is the process through which certain human creative capacities come to be defined as productive under capitalism. As we see above, only human creative actions that can take the form of a commodity (labor) are defined as productive under capitalism. I want to mention two other aspects of this process: the role of the end goal of the productive process for defining what actions are to count as valuable, and the role of the symbolic and material means through which this value can be socially recognized.

First, the reason that only actions and things that can take the form of a commodity count as productive (as producing value) is because the endpoint of the capitalist production process in the production of and accumulation of capital itself. This is a structural condition inherent to the capitalist mode of production that arises "directly from the structure of capitalist relations of production and the organization of the capitalist system of production as a whole as a competitive struggle among independent capitals" (Turner 2008: 45). Marxist anthropologist Terence Turner puts it this way, "The definition of what counts as 'production' in any society is ethnographically inseparable from how [the society] defines the need (or needs) that serve as the focus (or foci) of its productive activities" (Turner 2008: 45). That it is the *production of capital* rather than the *reproduction and fashioning of human beings* that is the focus of our creative capacities in capitalist societies must be considered as a unique historical exception.

Second, in addition to considering the process of value production, we must also consider the "role of representation and semiotic media in defining

what activities count as productive (and thus producing value)" (Turner 2008: 48). That is, we have to consider the material and symbolic forms through which we represent the importance of our own actions to ourselves and others. When we do so, it will be clear that we represent the value of some actions in the form of money, an extremely durable, stable and (almost) universally accepted material representation of value. The market functions as the symbolic order through which certain creative human actions − those that can assume the form of a commodity − become socially recognizable as creating value.

Expressed differently, in capitalism, the value of human creative action can only be represented in the form of a wage (see e.g. Elson 2015) − and this regardless of the fact that, for most of us, the things we truly value have little to do with how value is produced under capitalism. Most people would probably recognize that things like throwing a party for a friend, reading bedtime stories to you children, picking berries and hunt for moose in the same forest as your grandfather did, taking care of family and relatives, teaching your children Meänkieli or mastering the art of knitting to perfection just for fun are valuable in the sense that they are meaningful and make life worth living. Yet, none of these things produce value under capitalism. First of all because they do not contribute to the production of capital, but "only" to the fashioning and reproduction of human beings. Second, because they cannot take the form of a commodity that can be bought or sold on the market − and if they did we would probably feel that some of the joy and beauty originally associated with these activities would be lost. In fact, the market which is likely the single greatest and most monolithic system of measurement ever created, subordinates everything — "every object, every piece of land, every human capacity or relationship — on the planet to a single standard of value" (Graeber 2001: xi). This means that if bedtime story reading, berry picking and birthday parties are to be socially recognized as producing value, these activities must be stripped of the unique meaning and value it has to us, and be reduced to its market value.

At this point, we can begin to grasp how money becomes the object of our desire — how and why money becomes meaningful to us. Money becomes meaningful because it is the symbolic and material means available for representing the value and meaning of human creativity and action not only to the people around us, but also to ourselves:

> What money measures and mediates, according to Marx, is ultimately the importance of certain forms of human action. In money, workers see the meaning or importance of their own creative energies, their own capacity to act, and by acting to transform the world, reflected back at them. Money represents the ultimate social significance of their actions, the means by which it is integrated in a total (market) system. (Graeber 2001: 66f)

We must recognize the contradiction ingrained in our appreciation for money. The creative energies we direct towards the things that we feel make a life valuable and meaningful can only be recognized, within this expansive capitalist value system, as valuable and meaningful when they are redirected primarily to the production of capital. Hence, we recognize the value and importance of our creative energies in money because we have limited possibilities for having them recognized in any other way. Perhaps the existential dimension of this contradiction becomes somewhat more vivid when we ponder the fact that under capitalism, a mire brimming with ripe cloudberries does not have value. Neither does the sight of northern lights over the frozen river, the absolute silence in an inaccessible clearing in the forest or the joy of seeing the wild salmon return to Torne River from the Baltic Sea for lekking in the spring. However, extracted iron ore, large-scale infra-structure projects launched to facilitate the ore extraction, the transformation of a village into a mining site, which includes tearing down buildings and clearing and fencing off said mire with cloudberries, creates value.

In addition to the fact that we have few other options than money to symbolize the value and importance of our creative actions and capacities, we also have to consider the fact that in a capitalist economy, most of us depend on money to live not only an enjoyable life, but to live at all. In light of this, it seems likely that people in Pajala municipality attach the same kind of existential meaning to wage work or a mine which offers employment opportunities as can be seen in money.

From this perspective, it seems clear that the things listed in the right column of the chart actually contain quite a bit of meaning, but that economic terms are used for shorthand to talk about them. Hence, if we want to know what values inform the support for the local mining operations in Kaunisvaara, we should focus our ethnographic attention on the meaning that mining proponents see reflected in the influx of mining capital and new employment opportunities, but which remains concealed as long as we talk

about it in economic terms. After all, no matter how accurate, economic variables are ill-equipped to capture the existentially meaningful dimension of human life. David Graeber's theory of value provides some guidance for an ethnographic unfolding of this undisclosed meaning. Before I turn to Graeber's theory of value in more detail, it is worth noting that everything on the right side of the chart is instrumental to something very specific. What new employment opportunities, economic growth and local development all have in common is that they allow for a life to be lived in Pajala.

3.2 Graeber's Theory of Value: A Thousand Totalities

Graber's theory of value (Graeber 2001; Graber 2013; Graeber 2014; Graeber 2018) is modeled on Marx's theory of value, but dislodges it from something applicable only to labor in capitalism. Following Terence Turner's work, (e.g. Turner 2008; Turner 1985; Turner 2006 [1984]: Turner and Fajnas 1988), Graeber treats the categories of Marx's value theory (e.g. value, objectification, circulation and exchange) as ethnographic variables that "change their form and content in different types of societies and productive regimes" (Turner 2008: 45). However, in both Graeber's and Turner's work, the general principle of Marx's value theory — the relation between a given productive regime's definition of value and the relation of that definition to the structures of social production — remains intact. Graeber himself refers to this as an anthropological theory of value. However, I like to think of it as an ethnographic approach to value, to stress the methodological rather than the theoretical implications of Graber's and Turner's adaptation of Marx's value theory for anthropological purposes.

Adapting Marx's theory of value for anthropological purposes means viewing value as a relation that exists also in domains outside of the capitalist market/system, and that this relation can be grasped through the categories Marx used to analyze value in capitalism. That Graeber (and Turner) treat Marx's categories as ethnographic variables means that Marx's categories are used as a guidance for empirical exploration of value in non-capitalist economies. An ethnographic exploration of that kind must identify the focal point for the productive regime in question — i.e. it must be able to describe the goal of the production process, since this defines what actions and human creative energies count as productive, meaningful and valuable by virtue of contributing towards the fulfillment of this goal. Furthermore, since in a non-

capitalist society the market and money ipso facto cannot function as the symbolic and material media through which actors represent the importance of their own actions to themselves and others, an ethnographic exploration of value in such a society must discover the symbolic and material media that do. This is because value realization always requires some kind of audience who understands what a particular action means and how it creates value. Ultimately, if there is no market, there must be some other collectively shared idea about what is valuable and why that sets human creative energy in motion, and which is ultimately the background against which our own actions become meaningful and valuable to ourselves and to the people around us. With some hesitance, Graeber refers to this larger social whole − a society's idea about what actions are valuable and productive, and to what end − as an imagined totality (Graeber 2001: 86–9). I return to this concept shortly, but before I do I wish to underscore the political and normative content of this concept, as it concerns the definition of what a human life ought to be like. The end goal of a productive regime allocates human creativity and productivity, and the meaning of a human life becomes very different depending on whether that goal is the production of capital for someone else's profit, or, for example, the reproduction and fashioning of new human beings. What is ultimately at stake in politics is not the accumulation or redistribution of value, but the right to establish what value is,

> The ultimate stakes of politics […] is not even the struggle to appropriate value; it is the struggle to establish what value is […]. Similarly, the ultimate freedom is not the freedom to create or accumulate value, but the freedom to decide (collectively or individually) what it is that makes life worth living. In the end, then, politics is about the meaning of life. (Graeber 2001: 87)

Now, Turner's aim is to render Marx's categories useful to the anthropologist interested in comparative studies of value across different productive regimes (Turner 2008: 43), and much of his empirical work concerns societies with productive regimes that at the time remained *relatively* unaffected by market influences. However, in his further development of Turner's approach to value, Graeber argues that *parallel to the market* there is an almost infinite number of socially shared and co-created imaginary totalities representing alternative understandings of what actions create value and how that value is socially realized.

> The most important ends are ones that can only be realized in the eyes of some collective audience. In fact, one might go so far as to say that […] from the perspective of the actors […] "society" simply consists of that potential audience, of everyone whose opinion of you matters in some way, as opposed to those (say, a Chinese merchant, to a nineteenth century German peasant farmer, or vice versa, or most anthropologists to the janitors who clean their buildings, or vice versa) whose opinion of you, you would never think about at all. […] Rather, what is being recognized is something that was, in a sense, already there. (Graeber 2001: 76–77)

Such imaginary totalities are likely to be "fragmentary, ephemeral, or […] just exist as dreamy projects or half-realized ones defiantly proclaimed by cultists or revolutionaries" (Graeber 2001: 87). What they represent is ultimately the hope and the permanent possibility that human existence could be organized around something other than the production of commodities to be sold on a market. In this sense, the notion of imagined totality is akin to Derrida's (1994) usage of the specter as a *promise* that is always yet to be delivered. That it, in Derrida's reading of Marx's *specter of communism* (Marx and Engels 1988 [1848]: 218) as a looming threat of conflict for some, but a *dream and possibility* for others.

That other definitions of what value is exist parallel to the market is by no means a new idea. Feminists have criticized both Marxian political economy and mainstream economics for overlooking the value of care work and domestic labor (Gibson-Graham 2006 [1996]; Della Costa and James 1972; James 1975; see also Federici 2017; Weeks 2011). A similar critique is put forward by political ecologists with reference not primarily to care work, but nature's services (Moore 2017; Kallis and Swyngedouw 2018; Yaşın 2017; see also Bellamy Foster and Burkett 2018; Huber 2017). What is more, I believe that most people agree that, even if care work does produce value under capitalism, it is nonetheless very valuable and important in some other, cultural, social, ethical or esthetical sense. However, Graeber's ethnographic approach to value becomes useful for my purposes because it allows us to explore not the "other senses" in which, for example, care work is important or valuable under capitalism, but rather the circumstances under which human actions directed at childcare, painting, gardening, hunting, baking, cooking, cleaning or something else actually produce value because there are

collectively recognized means through which these actions can be incorporated to an imaginary totality other than the market.

If we take Graeber's understanding of value as the point of departure for our ethnographic exploration of the support for mining in Kaunisvaara, we would be encouraged to look for something that makes living in Pajala of exclusive importance to its residents. It could be that there is some form of imaginary totality at play that renders some actions valuable not because they contribute to the production of capital, but to some other collectively shared idea about what makes life meaningful and valuable. Perhaps Pajala provides them the audience and the symbolic and material means to have certain actions socially realized as valuable. There should, in other words, be certain acts that are meaningful in Pajala because of something which exists there as opposed to somewhere else. This perspective on value and imagined totality allows me to refine the research question somewhat: in exploring what makes local economic development attractive to mining proponents in Pajala, I choose to focus not on how much money will or will not flow into the municipality as a result of the mining operations, but rather on what form of life the informants imagine that this money will allow them to reproduce. I discuss my operationalization of the research question in the following chapter but before I do, I want to add a comment on the extent to which we can — or rather cannot — expect to find some kind of totality. As mentioned, Turner adapted Marx's theory of value mainly for the purposes of ethnographic study of stateless and marketless societies relatively unaffected by capitalism. Pajala is by no means such a place; it is extensively incorporated into both the Swedish state bureaucracy and the world market. People doubtlessly use both money and the market as means to symbolize the meaning and importance of their actions to themselves and to their peers. In this light, what we can expect to find must be fragmentary remnants of an imagined totality which renders other actions valuable. Most likely, the totality we are looking for constitutes a whole only in people's imagination.

4. Method

The question to be explored in this dissertation is: What hopes, dreams and expectations do Pajala's mining proponents wish that the opening of the Kaunisvaara mine will realize? The question could have been formulated with Jaeggi's vocabulary as an exploration of a form of life that people in Pajala wish to see realized through the influx of mining capital. In Graeber's vocabulary, it could have been formulated as an exploration of an imagined totality which seems to guide people in their definition of what actions are to count as producing value. Neither of the words I have used to describe the focus of my ethnography — hopes, dreams and expectations, value, imagined totality or form of life — can lay claim to absolute precision. Nor is the end point of my exploration a sharp, irrefutable articulation of any of these concepts from the view-point of my informants. Rather, I want to emphasize the explorational character of this work. My aim has been to delve into the world of human hopes and expectations that does not lend itself to economistic descriptions. What lies ahead is an exploration of 'something' whose handling and answers take on different guises depending on perspective and method. Tracing this 'something', rather than capturing it with precision, is my biggest achievement, something that presupposes a basic openness and striving to perceive contexts rather than entities. I have used ethnographic techniques − fieldwork, semi-structured interviews and observations − to collect the data for this dissertation. Ethnography is not only a research strategy that encompasses a range of qualitative research techniques for data collection; it is also a mode of data presentation. Ethnographically collected data do not become ethnography until they are presented as such, in the form of a narrative that at least to some extent invites the reader into the world of the ethnographic subjects. Yet, what does it mean

to explore people's hopes, dreams and expectations and can it be done ethnographically?

4.1 From Suspicion to Understanding

There is indeed an element of suspicion in the articulation of the aim of the ethnographic exploration ahead. I assume that even though people motivate their support for the mine through economic rationales, their narratives do not disclose the complexities of all that they strive for. I do not assume, however, that my informants are unaware of what form of life they want, which would have been the case had I let suspicion guide the ethnographic exploration itself. I do not seek to unveil a hidden meaning, structure or truth behind the verbal articulation of their support for the mine of which my informants are not aware. To the contrary, I believe, and the ethnography supports this belief, that my informants know what they hope for, but insofar as they express that hope in an economic vocabulary, it is because there is no other, easily available, widely accepted vocabulary for articulating that hope. It is possible to express in Habermas's (2006 [1981]) terms as the system's colonization of the lifeworld:

> The thesis of internal colonization states that the subsystems of the economy and state become more and more complex as a consequence of capitalist growth, and penetrate ever deeper into the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld. (Habermas 2006 [1981]: 367)

Habermas speaks here of how the "subsystem of the economy" penetrates the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld. A consequence of this colonization of the symbolically structured lifeworld is that the language and logic apt to think and talk about "the economic system" − including all its ramifications of bureaucracy and state power — breach into the language we use to think and talk about our everyday life, including, for example, relations to our family and friends. In Habermas' vocabulary, this dissertation aims to explore the lifeworld, and the point of departure for that exploration is the assumption that if people talk about that lifeworld in economic (systemic) terms, it is because "the imperatives of autonomous subsystems make their way into the lifeworld from the outside — like

colonial masters coming into a tribal society — and force a process of assimilation upon it" (Habermas 2006 [1981]: 355).

After this venture into Habermas, the methodological starting point for the exploration of hopes, dreams and expectations on the part of Pajala's mining proponents can be summed up in the following epistemological assumption: it is possible to move beyond the economic/ systemic vocabulary people use to articulate their support for the mine by focusing the interview situation on what it is that they appreciate about life in Pajala. There is, as I see it, little of value to be gained from digging deep into the systemic vocabulary through questions that encourage informants to elaborate on how and why and in what way the mining operation in Kaunisvaara could contribute to reviving the local community; such questions would trap the conversation in the economic/ systemic vocabulary and most likely result in little else than a rudimentary account of the conditions of life within an economic system where people are highly reliant on access to wage labor. It also emerged, as soon as my research question met the reality of my informants, that what they hoped the mine would bring was an opportunity for people to continue to live in Pajala. Thus their hopes, dreams and expectations would quite simply have to be explored in terms of what they valued about living in Pajala.

4.2 Operationalization of the Research Question

The ethnography in this thesis is based on conversation about what life in Pajala is like and why that form of life cannot be experienced somewhere else. These two interview topics represent the operationalization of the research question. The questions open up for reflections about everyday life — about the form of life that has been eroded by the region's economic and demographic decline, and which people hope can be restored or perhaps revitalized in a new form through the influx of mining capital. It is through these conversations that it becomes possible for an outsider like myself to glimpse the imagined totality which guides their understanding of what actions are meaningful and valuable. This means that the collection of data rests firmly on a phenomenological approach, guided by an ambition to understand.

However, my understanding and description of life in Pajala has emerged not only through conversations about what it is like to live in Pajala, but also

through my informants' descriptions of what life is like elsewhere. This represents the second step of the operationalization of the research question. My informants have described their experiences of living in Luleå, Kiruna, Stockholm and other places in southern Sweden. I have engaged in conversations about what makes life in an apartment in Kiruna unbearable, life in Luleå meaningless and why a life in Stockholm is unthinkable.

This methodological approach is a form of negative labor − the idea that the absent has a determinate content which defines the present. The term negative labor, or labor of the negative, to be correct, originates from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Slavoj Žižek has captured this Hegelian dialectic in a punchy pop-cultural reference, which he frequently recounts (2020: 102; 2017: 140; 2014a: 24; 2015: 293; 2013: 765). In a scene from the film *Ninotchka* (by Ernst Lubitsch), the film's protagonist orders a cup of coffee without cream at a cafeteria. "The waiter replies: 'Sorry, but we've run out of cream. Can I bring you coffee without milk?'" (Žižek 2013: 765). In both cases, the protagonist will get a plain cup of coffee, but this cup of black coffee will in each case be "accompanied by a different negation, first coffee-with-no-cream, then coffee-with-no-milk. […] The lack itself functions as a positive feature" (Žižek 765–6). In a similar fashion, and on the topic of determinate negation, Žižek claims that "Eastern Europeans in 1990 wanted not only democracy-without-communism, but also democracy-without-capitalism," (Žižek 2015: 766, footnote 38). In significantly drier, Hegelian terms, the same idea can be expressed as follows,

> A determinate negation is not merely oppositional or adversarial. To negate, Hegel shows, is always to negate something, something with a determinate content and limit. Negation is thus determinate because it is defined and limited by what it negates. Hegel's point here, like that of Spinoza, is that all negation is in fact a form of determination or affirmation […] that every form of consciousness is the product of a critique or "negation" of some previous form of consciousness. (B. Smith 1987: 110)

In the work at hand, this abstract and philosophical Hegelian thought receives a more concrete form in Graeber's definition of structural analysis as method. Graeber writes,

> The basic principle of structural analysis, I was explaining, is that the terms of a symbolic system do not stand in isolation — they are not to be thought of in terms of what they "stand for," but are defined by their relations to each other. One has to first define the field, and then look for elements in that field that are systematic inversions of each other. (Graeber 2015: 77)

In terms of concrete data collection technique, this has meant collecting descriptions about what life in and away from Pajala is like. Why do the informants want to live in Pajala? What draws people to Pajala? What are the benefits of living there? What is considered high status? How do people display their high status? My informants' responses to these questions are the focal points for this ethnography. However, I have, in Graeber's words, not only tried to understand what Pajala or *Tornedalen*[5] "stands for", but also Pajala's relation to other elements in the symbolic system — in this case, to other places where my informants have lived. Understanding life in Luleå, in Stockholm or Kiruna as a determinate negation of life in Pajala, aids the understanding of what it is my informants appreciate with life in Pajala.

4.3 Exploring Silence and the Lack of open Criticism

There is yet another way in which I have deployed the labor of the negative to better understand the support for the Kaunisvaara mine. Instead of accounting only for the narrative in which a mine is the warrant against a complete disintegration of Pajala as a community, I have actively searched for informants who do not want the mine. The choice to actively search for mining critics was informed by the same idea about the determinate content of the negation as was my choice to interview people not only about life in Pajala but also away from Pajala. My particular interest in the unvoiced criticism of the mine in Kaunisvaara was fueled also by a theoretical perspective on the role of silence in public discourse put forward by anthropologist Robin E. Sheriff (2000).

Sheriff turns James Scott (1992) on his head and argues that silence, rather than resistance, is a common response to the loudness of dominant, hegemonic discourses (2000: 115), and that absence of critique or public

[5] *Tornedalen* is the name of a culturally, linguistically and geographically integrated area, reaching from ca 100 kilometers east of the Swedish-Finnish border, to some 100 kilometers south of Torne Rover. I discuss Pajala's relation to this area in Chapter 4.

articulation of counter-hegemonic narratives do "not preclude the existence of non-hegemonic consciousness" (ibid.: 114). This is commonplace; just because very few people seem to openly criticize the mine in Pajala — "have you really found someone up there who doesn't want the mine?" a researcher at Luleå University of Technology asked me when I told her about my research — this does not necessarily mean that divergent narratives about the mine and its importance for Pajala do not exist. However, what Sheriff invites us to theorize is silence that does not rely on "obvious and explicit forms of coercion or enforcement" (Sheriff 2000: 114). Hence, she is not talking about silence that derives from political censorship or oppression of minorities or women, but rather silence as *cultural censorship* — a socially produced and collectively guarded lacuna in the public discourse. Sheriff writes:

> Although there may be meaningful, even profound, psychological motivations underlying this silence, it is socially codified. Unlike the activity of speech, which does not require more than a single actor, silence demands collaboration and the tacit communal understandings that such collaboration presupposes. (Sheriff 2000: 114)

Though Sheriff's empirical context is different from mine (she uses cultural silence to explore the lack of open discussion about racism in Brazil), her theoretical approach to silence as the product of social collaboration and a tacit communal understanding of such collaboration has been helpful for exploring the lack of open criticism towards the mine in Pajala. For instance, informants have explained the lack of open criticism towards the mine as the result of "political correctness." Others have said that you are obliged to be pro-mining, or that there is a "culture of silence" regulating what is acceptable to say about the mine.

However, exploring silence is fraught with methodological challenges. First of all, it was a challenge to find people who wanted to talk about something on which they know others expect them to remain silent. Second, much by necessity, an ethnographic exploration of silence has to rely on metadiscursive data, i.e. the topic of the interview becomes the silence itself since informants are unlikely to bring up the subject on which they prefer to keep quiet.

Since I had no clue as to who might be critical to local mining operation, I had to ask other informants. In most cases, they could refer me to someone specific, or point me in a certain direction. For the most part, I did not record these interviews since the topic was sensitive. I made this decision after I had been asked to turn off the recorder on two different occasions. Instead, I typed up my notes as soon as possible after the interview. The interviews with mining critics explore both their criticism and their reason for not voicing it in public. My impression is that in Pajala it is rather well known who is critical of the mine. Pajala is, it must be stressed, a very small community. Thus, it was not *primarily* the fear of outing oneself as a mining critic that made the question sensitive to people, but rather that others should find out that one had made those views *public,* for example on social media or in the local news.

In addition to interviewing mining critics, I asked informants with a positive attitude to the mine if it was socially acceptable to criticize it. Such questions opened up discussions about whether supporting the mine constituted a form of "political correctness" and whether a "culture of silence" was suppressing critical opinion.

4.4 Fieldwork, Informants and Ethical Considerations

Between August 2017 and July 2020, I conducted seven field trips to Pajala. The longest lasted six weeks, from early February to late March, 2019. The duration of the other six trips was between five and eleven days. In addition, I have conducted eight phone interviews. I have conducted longer (one hour or longer) semi-structured interviews with 40 different people. Many of these 40 people I have interviewed more than once, some of them twice, others up to five. The majority of the interviews were conducted either at the informant's workplace, in their home or over lunch or coffee at one of Pajala's restaurants. Unstructured interviews have been conducted during walks, hikes or while riding a car together.

Equally important as the formal interviews are all the situations, conversations and interactions I have found myself in during my time in Pajala which do not easily lend themselves to classification mentioned in the previous section. The time I spent in the local café typing up field notes or transcribing interviews, overhearing conversations, chatting briefly with acquaintances, meeting new informants, trying every dish on the lunch menu.

Attending the premier of the Meänkieli film *Turpa kiinni minun haters* (Meänkieli for "shut up all my haters") in Pajala's Town Hall movie theater, with local celebrities, speeches by the actors, refreshments delivered from the above-mentioned local café. Driving on a narrow dirt road in the forest when the eighty-year-old hunter in the passenger seat tells me to turn around; he has seen a moose and since we are on his hunting grounds and the hunting season has just started he wants to get his hunting rifle. Driving the storied road 395 on a rainy day in October to see for myself what it is like to meet the 90-ton iron trucks at 100 kilometers per hour. Attending the local nightclub (open four times per year) until closing-time to observe interactions and gossip in the parking lot outside. Working out at the local gym, which, however functional, appears to be located in a former school ill-adapted for its new purpose. Conducting participant observation during *Römppävikko*, a yearly culture- and dance-festival, reluctantly participating in partner dance to *schlager* and *dansband* music (where a man introduced to me as Pajala's best dance teacher politely advised me to take up dance lessons). Fragments of episodes like these have filtered into this ethnography, but if I mention them at all, I do so only in passing. Yet, these encounters have given me a sense of stepping into the lifeworld of Pajala, if only as a momentary visitor.

4.4.1 Interviews and Informants

Informants have been recruited through respondent-driven sampling (Bernard 2011: 147–151). When I first arrived in Pajala in August 2017, I focused on interviewing people who had been formally involved in the opening of the mine in Pajala. I interviewed politicians, managerial staff from the mining company and municipal employees. While at the municipal office for an interview, I was sometimes introduced to someone else that the person I had just interviewed recommended I talk to. I have asked several of my informants who they think I should talk to. In the beginning, that question was very open on my part, but as I grew more experienced I asked for more specific recommendations; I would ask my interviewees if they knew anyone in a specific village, or with a specific job, or with a specific opinion on the mine. I have met informants by coincidence. For example, in February 2019 I had lunch at Pajala's Thai restaurant. I dropped some cutlery on the floor, and the man at the table next to mine picked it up and asked what had brought me to Pajala. After I explained the reason for my visit, he introduced me to

two others, and I ended up interviewing all three of them. I have recorded some of my interviews, but not all.[6] I never asked for permission to record in casual interview settings such as during a walk or a car ride. Neither did I record interviews with mining critics, since I had learned that the topic could be sensitive. I have never been denied permission to record, but it has happened that I have been asked to turn off the recorder. During formal interviews that were not recorded I took thorough notes that I typed up as soon as possible after the interview. There are interviews during which I have not been able to take notes, in which case I have typed up my recollection of the oral exchange as soon as possible.

I have listened to recorded interviews and either summarized or transcribed them (seldom the *entire* interview). The main themes that emerged through the process of transcription and summarizing were: life in Pajala; life away from Pajala; the story about the Kaunisvaara mine, including the excitement when it started; Northland Resourcess bankruptcy; the lack of open criticism; reluctance to criticize the mine; the municipality's facilitation of Northland Resources' mine and the heavy mining traffic on the road between Kaunisvaara and Svappavaara, as well as the ambiguous emotions towards the mine.

The story about the support for the mine in Kaunisvaara is told through all these themes, but the focal point for the story is defined by the theoretical perspective outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. A different theoretical perspective would have generated a different focal point and possibly a different story altogether, and that is a fundamental epistemological condition for any ethnographic work (Burawoy 2009). My interpretation and narrative presentation of the field data has been guided by the assumption that my informants' narratives, albeit on an abstract level, describe the same thing, or stem from similar experiences. This is not the same as assuming that everyone I have interviewed think or feel in the same way about the mine or life in Pajala, but rather that there is an element of intertextuality between the different interview narratives and between different themes that reoccur in the interviews. Since I have visited Pajala several times, the writing has been a creative process that has moved back and forth between data collection, theoretical reflection and writing. Not always, it must be noted, in that neat order.

[6] Whether or not I chose to ask if I could record depended on the situation.

4.4.2 Ethical Considerations

Pajala is a small place. People know each other and people know of each other. For this reason, I have applied caution in sharing details about my informants which could make them easy to identify, even in those cases where the informants have not requested anonymity. None of my informants appear under their real name. Some of them appear under more than one alias. Pajala always refers to Pajala village or Pajala municipality, but in many other cases I have erased or changed the names of villages, places, mires, lakes and creeks. I do not disclose more about my informants' lives than necessary. This is why I do not always describe where they work, what their level of education is, how old they are, where they are from or where they live. However, I wish to note that I have spoken to both men and women, ranging in age from early twenties to early eighties. I have spoken to mine workers, municipal public servants, local politicians, reindeer herders, teachers, journalists, actors, musicians, shop keepers, janitors and social workers, taxi drivers, truck drivers and pensioners. I have talked to people who have lived in Pajala for generations, people who have moved in from neighboring villages and people who have moved in from southern Sweden or from abroad. I have spoken to mining proponents and mining opponents. Many of my informants have held, or hold, several of these jobs or positions at the same time — rendering it almost impossible to define which role has the most bearing on their opinion of the mine.

5. The Promise of Iron Ore

Pajala, 4 October 2019

"I'm sorry I can't offer you coffee, the power is out," Fredrik said when I sat down across from him at the kitchen table in a house in central Pajala. The neighborhood with similar-looking wooden houses, all with tile-clad gable roofs, reminded me of the house I grew up in more than 1000 kilometers south of Pajala. The kind of neighborhood that four decades ago seemed to have been distributed all over Sweden, prepacked with a school in yellow or red brick, a public district health care center and a post office. The houses must have been built around the same time, early eighties, when the building of single-family homes peaked in Sweden.

Fredrik is 30 years old and works as an electrician in Kaunisvaara. Were it not for the mine, he would have to go back to working for LKAB in Kiruna as he did before.

"When did you first learn about the plans for a mine in Pajala?"

"I have always known," he said. "I have known since I was a kid. [The place where the mine is] was just marshlands and forest back then. I passed it several times per week throughout my childhood because I have my grandparents in Aareavaara," Fredrik said. "My dad has always said that there is ore hidden under that bog."

A country road through deep forest and shrinking villages, late 1990s, the aftermath of the 1991–1994 recession, Pajala's depopulation and unemployment figures are accelerating, and there, buried under Tapulivuoma — one out of a thousand inconspicuous mires that you pass almost every day — runs the very same lode that has kept Kiruna municipality running for 100 years.

This chapter includes a historical introduction to Pajala and Tornedalen, the larger geographical area of which Pajala is a part. The chapter also includes an overview of the most resent mining venture in Kaunisvaara.

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5.1 Sixty years of Economic Decline

The iron ore mine at the center of this story is located just north of the village Kaunisvaara in Pajala municipality. The municipality is located north of the polar circle, on the western side of Muonio-Torne River which constitutes the national border between Sweden and Finland since 1809. (See figure 3.) The border is the outcome of a war fought between Sweden and Russia in 1808–1809 — a war that Sweden lost. As a result, Finland, which at that time was part of Sweden, fell under Russian rule until 1917. The new national border along Muonio and Torne rivers created a rift through a region that was geographically, culturally, linguistically and socially integrated. This region, including municipalities on both the Swedish and Finnish sides of Muonio River, and municipalities on Swedish territory between Muonio River and Torne River is known as *Tornedalen* — literally translating to the Valley of Torne River. Villages in Tornedalen were literally split in the middle by the new border, and identical place names on the eastern and the western side of the rivers bear testimony to this split. Before 1809, the area was predominantly Finnish speaking. Although the Swedish state implemented a forced language transition during the 20th century, many of the region's inhabitants still share a cultural identity based on their affiliation to the Finnish language and culture. Though rapidly vanishing among the younger generations, Finnish — or Meänkieli, as the Finnish dialect on the Swedish side of the border is called — is still spoken, with fluctuating proficiency, by thousands of people in Tornedalen. (Persson 2019; Elenius 2001; Hederyd 1992). The rivers Muonio and Torne, as well as Pajala's cultural and geographical proximity to Finland is important for the story to come.

Pajala municipality has been a municipality in decline for at least half a century. This has been the story of several municipalities in the north of Sweden (Bylund 1966; Syssner 2018; Syssner 2020). Since the 1960s, the municipality's population has been reduced by half, and today, 5883 people

live in Pajala municipality (SCB n.d.A). This gives a population density of 0.74 people per square kilometer. The population is among the oldest in Sweden (SCB n.d.). One of the propelling factors behind this development was the rapid automatization within the forest management sector in the 1970s, which completely dominated the wage work sector in the region between 1880 and 1970 (Alalehto 2019). Yet, most inhabitants of Tornedalen did not come to rely on wage labor until after 1950. Up until that point, Tornedalen was an agrarian society dominated by independent and largely self-sustaining farmers (Alalehto 2019: 105). Wage work in the forest industry was for the most part periodical and complementary, and the real push into wage work came only after farm properties had been divided, through inheritance splits or plot sectioning, into units too small to sustain a family. When forest jobs disappeared and farming became unprofitable, people in Tornedalen had to make ends meet without access to the two forms of livelihood that had dominated in the region for the past century. The state-financed infrastructure investments that had created employment opportunities between 1930 and 1970 came to an end at the same time (Alalehto 2019; Johansson and Alalehto 2017). The unemployment office was referred to as "the travel agency" because the only way to find work was to leave Pajala. The Swedish state's regional policy at the time was to pay the cost of moving for those who decided to seek employment in the south (Tillväxanalys 2012). During the 1980s and 90s, the private sector continued to decrease in Pajala, much due to further mechanization and rationalization. Jobs in the public sector dominated the labor market, but as the outmigration accelerated, so did the cutbacks in the public sector. Eventually, the region became dependent on government grants (Alalehto 2019: 108).

The experience of having to watch as your community, your world, slowly disintegrates is typical of many rural areas in the global north. The history of Tornedalen describes in many respects the drama of de-industrialization and out-flow of residents so familiar to many other rural areas — defined, in this case, not only by economic and material deterioration, but also by a feeling that one's history and cultural identity is languishing (Daun 1969; Agnidakis 2013). The sense of decline and disintegration would perhaps be even more pressing, were it not for one thing.

5.2 Iron Ore

The iron ore deposit under the Tapulivuoma bog north of Kaunisvaara has been known at least since 1918. LKAB, the state-owned mining company operating several mines in the region, including the world's largest underground mine in Kiruna, considered the possibility of exploiting the deposit in the 1970s but refrained due to concerns over the deposit's profitability. In 2010, three decades after LKAB had ruled out exploitation of the iron deposit in Kaunisvaara, a newly founded Canadian mining company called Northland Resources reached a different conclusion, and only two years later, in the fall 2012, Northland had turned Tapulivuoma into an open pit iron ore mine. A timeline for the process to establish the mine is presented in figure 2, in this text I aim to provide some of the context for this process in more detail.

Northland's mining venture in Pajala has been deemed the world's fastest greenfield mining project (Bergman 2012: 12); it is not unusual for projects of this kind to be delayed for decades through prolix legal processing. At least four factors contributed to the exceptionally swift legal handling of Northland's application to mine iron ore in Pajala municipality.

First, in 1991 Sweden passed a new Mineral Act (SFS 1991:45) with the explicit aim of increasing private investment in Sweden's mining sector. Increased investments in mining was seen as a public good with the potential to strengthen Sweden's economy, particularly by creating new employment opportunities in the northern parts of the country. The new legislation gave foreign companies extensive rights to search for minerals in Sweden, and reduced the tax mining companies pay to the Swedish state, from 50 percent of the profit to 0.05 percent of the value of the extracted ore. The Mineral Act can be described as a liberalization and deregulation of the mining sector in Sweden which gives priority to the interests of mining companies at the expense of other interests, such as environmental considerations and Sámi indigenous rights (Anshelm and Haikola 2018c).

Second, the world market price on iron ore peaked in the first decade of the 21st century when Northland Resources embarked on their mining venture in Pajala. The soaring world market prices and the deregulation of the Swedish mining sector created what has been referred to as a Swedish mining boom (Müller 2014; Müller 2016; Haikola and Anshelm 2019; Tillväxtanalys 2010).

Third, Northland Resources' environmental permit was not granted in accordance with standard legal procedure. According to normal procedure, environmental permits for mining are granted by the Land and Environmental Court. However, since the mine in Kaunisvaara has an environmental impact on Muonio and Torne Rivers which constitute the national border between Sweden and Finland, the case was handled by the Finnish-Swedish Transboundary River Commission. FSTRC was a state agency that according to an agreement between Finland and Sweden (valid 1972–2010 and replaced with a new agreement in 2010) was responsible for coordinating water, fishing and environmental issues pertaining to the border river and its effluents (Lag (1971: 850); Lagrådsremiss 2006; Finsk-Svenska Gränsälvskommissionen 2010). FSTRC has no experience of issuing environmental permits for mining, but because of the special agreement, Northland's environmental permit application was not processed in court, but issued by FSTRC. When FSTRC's decision came in August 2010, the government had initiated a legal review (Lag 1971: 850) that warranted FSTRC's authority over this issue.

Fourth, the story about Northland Resources' venture in Pajala taps right into the timeworn narrative (described in the introduction to Chapter 2) that places ore and lumber from Norrland at the center of Sweden's successful economic development, past and future (Sörlin 2023 [1988]); Forsberg 2015; Envall 2018; Sveriges mineralstrategi 2013; Tillväxtanalys 2010; Tillväxtanalys 2018). Against this background, it is perhaps no wonder that the establishment of an iron ore mine in remote, rural, waning Norrland became subject to such hype. The success of mining operations in Norrland — their ability to create wealth and development — was *a priori* symbolically and discursively anticipated and accounted for.

The expectations on Northland's mining operation as a means to economic and demographic development were high. Ministers and royalty visited Pajala, including the Swedish crown princess and her husband (Svt Nyheter Norrbotten 2010). Stefan Löfven, then leader of the Social Democratic Party and later prime minister of Sweden (2014-2021), visited Pajala in 2013 and promised to "support Pajala's social transformation" as a matter of "national interest"[7] (Nyberg and Haupt 2013, my translation). "It can be difficult for a small municipality like Pajala to incorporate the needs of a mining company in the community planning, and it is of national concern to make that work,"

[7] Swedish words used for social transformation is *samhällsovnadling.*

Stefan Löfven said to local TV news (Nyberg and Haupt 2013, my translation). During a visit to the mine, Löfven uttered the often cited words "this smells like money," (Wallroth 2013) and added that since five billion SEK had been invested in the region so far, it was going to be a joy to see how people "are now able to benefit from the wealth of which they have been aware for a long time, and which now enables Pajala municipality to go from degradation to development" (Wallroth 2013, my translation from Swedish).

Fredrik Reinfeldt, at the time prime minister of Sweden, visited Pajala in 2012 to meet with Northland Resources' CEO, the head of Pajala's public employment services office and the chief administrator of the municipality, and was informed of the emerging labor supply shortage in the region. The civil servant commented on the prime minister's visit to Pajala in the following way:

> There have been many visitors, but he was of the highest rank. It has to do with the new mining establishment. Of course it is of interest when a region like ours, where everything was pointing downwards and we were about to be extinguished, gets this. It is a big thing, and you see it in the community. (Samimi 2012, my translation)

Calculations from researchers at Luleå University of Technology conducted on behalf of Northland Resources predicted that Pajala's population would increase to 9000 in 2014 (Ejdemo and Söderholm 2008). Estimations predicted that Northland Resources would employ 1071 people between 2013 and 2017, and that the planned mine would generate a further 1575 employment opportunities in other sectors. The Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Analysis (Tillväxtanalys) pointed out already in 2010 that those figures where likely overestimated:

> Ejdemo and Söderholm have assumed that the adjustments of the labor market [in Pajala] are driven by immigration, which would give a population increase of 5.8 percent per year. Only Värmdö and Vaxholm [two municipalities in the metropolitan Stockholm region] have come close to such a high population increase, with an average annual population growth of four percent over the past six years. WSP finds it unlikely that Pajala, a municipality with a limited and one-sided labor market, would be able to create such rapid, labor market driven, population increase. (Tillväxtanalys 2010: 19, my translation)

The somewhat downbeat official report does not seem to have made any great public impression. On the contrary, local public expectations seem to have exceeded even Ejdemo and Söderholm's optimistic calculation. Many of my interviewees say that the general expectation was that Pajala's population would grow to 10,000 inhabitants as a result of the mine. Besides the Messiah metaphor, my informants describe the mine as the light at the end of a long, dark tunnel. Those who had been forced to move to find work elsewhere, were now offered a long sought-after chance to return home. Some people started to paint and renovate their houses, the hotels were overbooked, new storefronts opened, and you could see new faces in town. It was a "gold rush" and a "hallelujah moment." Pajala was "Klondike."

Three men from Northlands' C-suite, including the CEO, became familiar faces to most people I have interviewed. They are referred to as the "three Canadians" or simply "the Canadians." The three Canadians traveled around the municipality and talked about their mining plans to politicians, residents and stakeholders. They held public information meetings, visited local businesses and showed up at the yearly market, *Pajala marknad*, the biggest event in the municipality, visited by around 45,000 people every year. People I have talked to have only good things to say about these three Canadians; they were likable, trustworthy and inspired hope and reassurance. Northland Resources' presence in Pajala, and their open communication style seems to have contributed to the local support enjoyed by the company. Their trustworthiness got most people onboard, reassured that Northland Resources and Pajala municipality had embarked on a joint journey. The municipality became Northland, and Northland became the municipality, as one of my informants put it. Municipal employees and local politicians who I have talked to have told me about how the local government did their best to pave the way for Northland during this time. Some have even gone so far as to say that facilitating the establishment of the mine became the municipality's primary task, a view that is confirmed by Haikola and Anshelm (2019) who have highlighted the economic risks Pajala (and other small municipalities) are forced to expose themselves to in their efforts to attract capital investments. For example, Pajala had an investment budget of SEK 17 million, but the investments they needed to make to facilitate the influx of new residents amounted to at least SEK 350 million. To secure housing for the increasing population, Pajala municipality invested SEK 80 million

in housing, only a few years after public housing had been liquidated (Haikola and Anshelm (2019).

In what seems indeed a cruel twist of fate, however, the euphoria was short-lived. Only months after the mine had opened in 2012 it was revealed that Northland Resources was in serious financial trouble. By December 2014, Northland went bankrupt, leaving behind 14 billion SEK of debt, which makes for the biggest bankruptcy in Swedish history (Ekblom 2020). What followed was a "collective depression." It was as if the blooming future that the mine had promised was found and lost at the same moment. Northland Resources packed up and left. The anticipated increase in population and tax revenues defaulted, prompting new austerity measures from the local government, which even had to borrow money to be able to pay the salaries of public employees (Carr 2018; interviews with municipal employees, June 2019). Remaining on the mire in Kaunisvaara were locked buildings, unproductive excavators, and a pit that started to fill up with water. No one seemed to know what would happen to the mine, or to Pajala. There was talk of selling the machinery and the fixed capital, and of starting a research mine (Carr 2018), but the hope, on the part of Pajala's residents, seems to have been that the mine would reopen.

5.3 The Day of Joy

In May 2015 it was announced that five Swedish investors had bought the mine, including the concentration plant, parts of the machinery and transportation vehicles, for 50 million SEK (Sundkvist 2015). The initial plan was to sell these assets, a plan which proved unsuccessful, and in August 2017 it was finally announced that the five investors had reached a deal with Northland's bankruptcy trustee and bought the remainder of Northland's mining assets with the intention of opening the mine within a year. This was the day of joy many of Pajala's residents had been waiting and hoping for. By coincidence, I was in Pajala on August 17th and could observe the joy firsthand when the newly founded Swedish mining company announced that they intended to resume the ore production in Kaunisvaara. In the evening, I waited for my pizza in the local pizzeria in Pajala when a man and a woman came in and sat down at my table to wait for their order.

"Now you have to sell everything you have back home in Lebanon and invest the money in the mine!" the man said jokingly to the pizza chef, who

had also joined us at the table. “You can buy my house, but the price just doubled!” The chef smiled and shook his head. The man had actually lost some savings in Northland’s bankruptcy, but he had already decided to support the new mining company wholeheartedly and would buy shares in it as soon as possible. As the man handed his phone to the chef to show him the news article stating that Kaunis Iron had reached an agreement with Northland’s bankruptcy trustee and bought the mine, the chef read the headline out loud, “The Day of Joy in Pajala.”

“What surprises someone like me who’s not from here is that people are not disappointed about the past but really have the courage to focus on the future,” I said.

“Well,” the woman said, “I think that’s because there’s not much else to hope for. There is no other business that can save Pajala and Tornedalen the way a mine can. Then you must have faith.”

When I returned a few months later, in October 2017, to conduct interviews with politicians and Kaunis Iron management, I learned that since the news about the mine had been released, they had received calls and e-mails from ex-mining employees who were eager to return to Pajala to work for the new company. Kaunis Iron resumed production in July 2018. In the summer of 2018, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency applied to the Land and Environmental Court for a revocation of Kaunis Iron’s environmental permit, which Kaunis Iron took over from Northland Resources. The application was overruled. In December 2022, Kaunis Iron received a new, extended, environmental permit from the Land and Environmental Court. The new ruling permits an expansion of Kaunis Iron’s mining operation to two new deposits, Sahavaara and Palotieva.

According to Kaunis Iron’s calculation, the mine in Kaunisvaara has a lifespan of up to 20 years and it will secure over 500 employment opportunities in Pajala (Kaunis Iron 2022). In 2022, Kaunis Iron employed 175 people and Kaunis Iron Logistic 175. Snells Entreprenad (local subcontractor) also employed 175 people. In total, these three companies alone employ 23 percent of the municipality’s workforce (Regionfakta 2023). Pajala’s population has not increased since Kaunis Iron resumed production in 2019. In fact, it has

decreased from 6052 to 5883 people (SCB n.d.A).[8] It is possible that population decline would have accelerated without the mine.

5.4 Negative Aspects of Mining in Kaunisvaara

Besides generating job opportunities and tax revenues for the municipality, the mining operation in Kaunisvaara has required costly infrastructure investments. As a result of Northland's and Kaunis Iron's decision to transport the ore by truck from Kaunisvaara to Svappavaara where it is reloaded for further transport by train to the port in Narvik, Norway, the road had to be adapted for the heavy vehicles. The bill of 2.3 billion SEK will be footed by Swedish taxpayers (Keskitalo 2019; Trafikverket 2023). Despite the costly improvements, nine people have died in traffic accidents involving ore trucks on road 395 since the mine reopened in July 2018 (Asplund and Brenklert 2019; Svt nyheter Norrbotten 2018b; Asplund 2023a). In addition, several non-fatal accidents with ore trucks have been reported on the road (Svt Nyheter Norrbotten 2019; Appelgren och Isberg 2019; NSD 2019; Hedman, Carr and Vikström 2018; Appelgren 2019; Kaunis Iron 2022). In January 2019, six tourists from Switzerland died after their minibus collided with one of Kaunis Iron's trucks. (Sveriges Radio Norrbotten 2019.) Several of my informants have expressed fear of driving the road between Kaunisvaara and Svappavaara, which was also reported in the local news after an accident in March 2023 where a couple died in the wake of a collision with a mining truck (Asplund 2023b). The same article remarks that Kaunis Iron's economic success has come at a high cost for the local community, the loss of nine human lives in accidents with mining trucks:

> The ore generates billions in profit. Despite the pandemic and turbulence on the world market, Kaunis Iron made a profit of SEK 982 million in 2021, and 691 million in 2022. But the profit has come at a cost. Nine people have died in accidents with mining trucks between Kaunisvaara and Svappavaara, and a number of truck drivers have been injured or died on the job. (Asplund 2023b)

[8] Neither has the population between 18 and 65 years old grown since the mine reopened in 2019. However, the age group 25-34 increased with 7 people between the years 2019 and 2022. Age group 35–44 increased with 43 people during the same period. (SCB n.d.B)

An excerpt from a conversation with two informants illustrate the fear of driving road 395 in a more vivid manner:

> Clara: I have met a truck in every damned curve on that road. You have half a meter, maybe one meter, to the truck that weighs 90 tons. My strategy when I see the truck approaching is to check if I can just take the ditch should something happen.
>
> Elin: I rarely drive on that road, but even I have actual nightmares about it.
>
> Clara: Every Friday and Sunday when I drive that road, I think about these things. And it is scary, I know I am not the only one who feels that way.
>
> Katarina: Yes, it seems to me most people think so. But, what would you like to say to [Kaunis Iron], because they claim to work actively on traffic safety, making sure the cars cannot drive faster than 80 kilometers per hour. They give a different picture of this situation, what do you have to say about that?
>
> Clara: Sure, they can work with traffic safety and all that, do all they can to prevent things from happening. But nothing can be done about road surface conditions. You cannot do much about the fact that it is one human being up against 90 tons. I admire the truckers really, because those trucks are suicide weapons if something unexpected was to happen.

Besides increased traffic on road 395, the mine in Kaunisvaara has negative impact on primarily Muonio Sámi Reindeer Herding Association (henceforth Sámi RHA.) Members of the Sámi RHA have been forced to see their reindeer husbandry compromised by the mine, which is located in a grazing area for the RHA's reindeers. The RHA negotiated a deal with Northland Resources that both parties accepted, but since Kaunis Iron took over, the agreement was withdrawn (Johansson 2018; Stenberg Partapuoli and Söderlund 2022).

The potentially negative environmental impact of mining is a cause for concern for some of my informants. This concern has been underscored by the fact that three Swedish state agencies have appealed Kaunis Iron's

environmental permit. When Kaunis Iron resumed production, they operated on the environmental permit Northland had been granted by the Finnish-Swedish Transboundary River Commission. In 2018, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency applied to the Land and Environmental Court for a revocation of Kaunis Iron's environmental permit. The court declined the Environmental Protection Agency's application. When Kaunis Iron applied for a new extended environmental permit (to the Land and Environment Court) in 2019, three Swedish state agencies (the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, the County Administrative Board of Norrbotten and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency) wanted to reject the application. All three agencies found Kaunis Iron's environmental impact assessment incomplete or deficit (Håkansson 2021). However, the company was granted a new environmental permit by the Land and Environmental Court in Umeå in December 2022. The local newspaper reported that "scenes of joy" had played out in Pajala when the court announced the verdict on December 1 (Engström Andersson 2022).

2006	➔	Canadian mining company Northland Resources shows up in Pajala. Prospecting.
2008	➔	Northland applies for a concession permit from the Mining Inspectorate of Sweden , which they are granted in November the same year. The concession permit is valid for 25 years.
2010	➔	**August**: Northland Resources is granted an environmental permit by the Finnish-Swedish Transboundary River Commission).
		December: The building of the mine starts. The official name of the deposit is Tapuli.
2012	➔	**October**: The mine opens and production starts.
2013	➔	**February**: The first signs of Northland's financial problems become official. Northland lacks 1 billion SEK to cover their initial investments. Northland filed for company reconstruction at the district court in Luleå.
		May: Four Swedish companies (LKAB, Peab, Metso, Folksam) contribute 660 million SEK to Northland.
		June: Northland Resources is fined by the Oslo Stock Exchange for
2014	➔	**June**: Northland's stock is in free fall on the market and the company starts to dismiss employees.
		October: Production is shut down.
		October: 800 people in Pajala participate in a light manifestation in support of the mine.
		December: Northland Resources files for bankruptcy.
2015	➔	**March**: The inventory of the estate is completed. Northland Resources have debts worth 14 billion SEK.
		June: The County Administrative board of Norrbotten reports Northland to the police on suspicion for two new environmental crimes.
2016	➔	Charges against Northland resources are dropped.
2017	➔	**February**: The newly started company Abecede−which later changed name to Kaunis Iron−buys parts of the bankrupt estate and declares they want to resume the production (Vidgren 2017).
		August: Abecede and Northland's bankruptcy trustee reach a binding agreement according to which Abecede will buy the rest of the bankrupt estate. Abecede announce that they plan to resume production in 2018 (Andersson 2017).
2018	➔	The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency apply to the Land and Environmental Court for a revocation of Kaunis Iron's environmental permit (which they took over from Northland Resources).
		July: Kaunis Iron resumes the production of iron ore in Kaunisvaara.
2019	➔	Application for new, expanded, environmental permit to the Land and Environmental Court in Umeå.
2022	➔	**January**. Negotiations in Land and Environmental Court. Kaunis Iron's environmental permit is not revoked (Mark- och miljödomstolen mål M 1828-18). The decision is appealed.
		September: The Land and Environmental Court of Appeal rejects the appeal (Svea Hovrätt mål nr M 1697-22).
		December: Kaunis Iron receives a new, extended, environmental permit from the Land and Environmental Court. The new environmental permit includes two new deposits, Sahavaara and Palotieva.
2023	➔	**June**: Kaunis Iron announces that they are planning to list the company in the stock exchange as a way to secure capital for their planned expansion.

Figure 2. Timeline of the mine in Kaunisvaara.

Figure 3. Map of Tornedalen.

6. A Municipality of Hospitable Survivors

A dozen car wrecks filled the overgrown yard in front of the building that used to be the village school. Junk, trash, piles of car tires everywhere. Two shipping containers and a modular barrack.

"The municipality sold it to a man from Finland a couple of years back. He didn't pay more than 50,000 SEK so they gave it away for free basically, just to get rid of the overhead costs. He turned it into a junkyard," Frida said. "He runs his business from there," she said and pointed to a ramp that led to a huge opening at the side of what had once been the school's gym hall.

We had left the house with smoke rising from the chimney in Kitkiöjärvi, continued north and ended up in Muodoslompolo.

"I can't stand to look at it," Julia shouted from the backseat of the car. It was easy to see why she could not. Dreams about a blooming future can be projected onto a house covered in scaffolding, or a grocery store with windows covered with old newspapers, but it is difficult to project dreams onto a school transformed into a junkyard. The transformation seems too definitive, too drastic, the symbolism too blatant − from village school to junkyard, from social reproduction to destruction.

"It really looks awful, right at the heart of the village, but the municipality can't do anything, because he stays within the regulated number of cars he's allowed to keep in the yard," Frida said and opened the door to the driver's seat.

"Where do the kids go to school now?" I asked and got in on the passenger side. Frida hesitated.

"Kangos, I think. If there are any kids left in this village. Possibly one family."

Muodoslompolo is situated 120 kilometers north of Pajala and almost 80 kilometers northeast of Kangos, and has 61 inhabitants. There is no school,

nor any means of public transportation. It would take hours for a police patrol, an ambulance or the fire brigade to reach the village should they be needed. Instead of turning right onto road 99, which runs south towards Pajala, Frida turned left onto road 404. We were going north to Finland, to Muonio, less than 15 kilometers away. Julia had been talking about going to Finland since we left Frida's house, but I had objected since I needed to catch the 6.30 bus back to Luleå the following morning, and needed to check in to the hotel in town before they closed the reception desk for the night.

"Don't worry about that, worst case scenario, we'll drive you to Korpilombolo in the morning and you can catch the bus from there. Or we will drive you straight to Luleå, it really isn't that far and although the bus takes three hours, we'll get you there in two," Frida assured me. "You don't even have to check in to the hotel."

"Oh yes, no problem," Julia said, not looking up from her phone, busy posting some pictures on social media from our trip.

"Besides," Frida continued, "the road on the Finnish side better, it even has streetlights here and there, so even if we stop in Muonio, it won't take much longer."

The sun was setting over Muodoslompolo, over the junkyard, the church, the abandoned houses with flaking paint and over a couple working away in their garden to prepare it for the coming winter. I watched the glowing, flushed sky in the rearview mirror and recalled what Ove, a man in his fifties who I had interviewed a few times over the past months, had said about Pajala's future. "You know, there are only *survivors* left in the villages in this municipality. Only those who have learned to survive no matter what." The couple in the garden — two out of the 61 real survivors in Muodoslompolo. Anyone can imagine the eerie sentiments evoked by watching the autumn sun set over abandoned farms, overgrown houses and a village school turned into a junkyard. The image is ghostly in itself, but what makes the sight truly horrifying, for Julia and Frida, or anyone else living in Pajala, is the agonizing awareness that the tale of Muodoslompolo might soon be told of your own childhood village. *De te fabula narratur* — the tale is told of you — Marx's ominous warning to the German reader of *Capital*, who might "shrug his shoulders at the condition of the English industrial and agricultural laborers, or in optimist fashion comforts himself with the thought that in Germany things are not nearly so bad" (Marx 1991

[1867]: 90) reverberates in this recess 200 kilometers north of the polar circle, 160 years later, through Ove's words,

> You know, there are only the real survivors left in the villages in this municipality. Only those who have learned to survive no matter what. This is what is happening in Pajala today. What happened to villages thirty years ago is happening in Pajala right now.

6.1 The Survivors

Pajala, 14 March 2019

"How small can a municipality be?" Per asked. "There are smaller municipalities, Bjurholm, Dorotea, Sorsele, but our demography…it's bad. Really bad." We sat in Per's office in Pajala's municipal building. Brown veneer, machine coffee in paper cups. I had interviewed the previous chief administrator of the municipality in the same room two years earlier. She had lost her job as site manager at the mine as a result of Northland's bankruptcy, and before she took up the same position at Kaunis Iron, she worked as the municipality's cheif administrator, a job Per took over in April 2018.

The light flickered and it went dark for a second, like it had done yesterday when I was at the gym. "We have a backup power system, but it doesn't work for the ventilation," Per said. We returned to the conversation.

"We have said that under 6000 people…" Per went silent. "Well the day we dip below 6000 people it will become almost impossible to uphold an acceptable standard of municipal services.

"And how many are you today?" I asked.

"6047."

***

6047 residents in a municipality that does not know how to uphold acceptable municipal services with less than 6,000 residents. The memory of the hundreds of people who moved away when unemployment was high in the 1980s is still fresh in mind. At some point a sign reading, "The last man to leave must switch off the lights" had been put up just south of town. My informants have often told me that, contrary to what people might think,

staying in Pajala is what requires fierce determination. That it should take ambition, drive and motivation to simply pack up and drive south for university education, better paid or less mind-numbing jobs or winters where the sun rises above the horizon is rebuffed as an urban idea about what constitutes a good life. No, it is staying that requires the right proportions of perseverance, persistence and fighting spirit captured in the Finnish word *sisu.* You have to be thrifty and flexible, ready to take up any job, ready to commute, and somewhere at the back of your mind you still have to be prepared to move.

"The saying around here goes that you must plan your personal economy in such a way that a few months, perhaps more, on unemployment benefits is possible," Carola, born and raised in one of Pajala municipality's 80 villages, told me. She had worked a wide range of jobs, from taxi driver to social worker. Now and then she had been unemployed but leaving was never an option. She belonged in her home village north of Pajala and could not imagine living somewhere else. Good times come and go. You endure. You commute long distances, 200 kilometers to LKAB's mine in Kiruna, 160 to the mine in Gällivare, maybe all the way down south to Luleå, 230 kilometers. You hope that your forest holding will yield a decent revenue at the close of the tax year. You can take up a seasonal job in Finland if your Meänkieli is good enough. You take up different casual jobs − some hours at the kindergarten, help acquaintances with their tax forms. You hang in there, but gradually, capitalist modernization distrains the possibility to scrape along as a Jack-Of-All-Trades during hard times. Ulrika, a journalist, writer and filmmaker who I have interviewed several times over the years discussed the languishing prospects of living a life not completely dependent on full time employment in wage work:

> Sometimes you think, 'How has it at all been possible to survive [in Tornedalen]?' Because that is what it has boiled down to − a question of surviving. Always on the margin. People like them…Jacks-of-All-Trades.[9] People used to take pride in that way of life. You had cows and you ran a gas station, acted as a franchise for something, did the taxes for people with farm properties…or maybe you had some reindeers, or had some other useful skills…Things like that. [That way of life] used to have a certain status. And since then…the entire agricultural sector and

[9] Swedish word used: tusenkonstnär.

> the forestry sector…when that disappeared it was a real disaster. And it happened fast, too. Pajala used to have so many farmers, most farmers per capita in Norrbotten County; today I don't think there is one single dairy farmer left. Maybe one. The necessary conditions are not in place.

In the quote above, Ulrika is talking about a couple who ran a gas station and country store in Jarhois (40 kilometers southeast of Pajala) in the 1980s, when it was still possible to make ends meet through the way of life that Ulrika describes. Since the small farms became unprofitable and mechanization in the forest industry led to mass layoffs in the 1970s this do-it-all-man or do-it-all-woman life has become increasingly difficult to lead. Before 1971, what today is Pajala municipality was divided into four smaller municipalities, Pajala, Korpilombolo, Tärendö and Junosuando. After the four smaller municipalities were merged into a larger administrative unit, Pajala village became the new municipality's administrative center.[10] Since then, all public services (health care, dental care, most schools, municipal administration etc.) have been centralized in Pajala. As a result, employment opportunities have been concentrated in Pajala. For example, the municipality employed 619 people in 2020 (which is more than 20 percent of the population aged 18–64) and the majority of those jobs are located in central Pajala (Statistics Sweden). Perhaps this was partly what Ove had in mind when he said that what happened to the villages thirty years ago is happening to Pajala today. The villages went through the acid test decades ago, when the farms closed, the forestry jobs disappeared and public services and administration were relocated to Pajala.

"I get the impression that you always have to be prepared to move, that your children will move far away or that your partner will move or start long distance commuting. That there is always a feeling of having to be prepared," I said to Annika as we had lunch together at Pajala's Thai restaurant. Annika is in her fifties, and she is a typical *tornedaling*: fluent in Meänkieli, hunts moose, owns more than one snowmobile, and never locks her front door.

"Exactly!" she said, and continued:

[10] The process of merging smaller municipalities into larger administrative units happened all over Sweden, starting in the 1950s. Urbanization was the driving force behind this development. When people moved to the cities, small municipalities had to merge in order to handle the rising costs that came with a shrinking population. See SCB 2023.

> When [my husband and I] built our house, we thought 'we must build it so that we can [afford] to abandon it, [should it become necessary]' because neither I, nor my husband, had a steady job at the time. He worked in Malmfälten[11], left Sunday evening and came home Friday evening, and I worked different jobs, I always had some kind of job one way or another. We lived in Kiruna, in an apartment, and I don't like living in apartments. No!

Annika laughed and shook her head at the thought of having to live in an apartment again.

"So we decided, 'let's build a cabin [in Pajala]. We bought a small cabin and realized that we could actually turn it into a proper house, but we must build it so that we can leave it," she said, and continued to describe how they bought everything secondhand: the kitchen, the windows, all the doors. "It wasn't fancy, but it was enough for us." She continued:

> The whole point was that, if we would have to move, we could still afford to keep this small house. It is this preparedness that you sense when you talk to people around here. We are used to the thought of families being forced to split up. Many of us have moved, and there are so many people who have to live with this bi-weekly commuting. This is why I'm thinking that our roots are so deep, despite all this. Eventually you cannot take it anymore. But many of us are used to it. To always be prepared.

"Getting used to the thought of families being forced to split up" means preparing for several different scenarios. Someone in the family might have to commute long distance and spend long periods away from the family; parts of your extended family (brothers or sisters, adult children) might move to find work; your children might move to attend high school in Kiruna, Luleå or Gällivare already at the age of sixteen. You brace yourself and hope that they will return when they graduate so your efforts will not have been in vain. Through the sentences, "many of us have moved," "our roots are so deep" and "and many of us are used to it," a *we* that includes everyone in Tornedalen can be glimpsed. Annika assumes that most people in Tornedalen

[11] Malmfälten is an old name for a large area that roughly corresponds to what is today Kiruna and Gällivare municipalities. The word "malm" means "ore" and the name "Malmfälten" refers to the large number of mines that have been operating in the area over the past centuries.

recognize and share her experience. It is, in Annika's account of life in Tornedalen, completely understandable that people move because the conditions are such that eventually you cannot endure it. The necessary conditions are not in place, as Ulrika aptly put it.

What, then, is it about Pajala that makes people want to remain in the face of such struggles? Why become a survivalist? Why not simply pack up and leave, like so many others have already done? The question felt particularly relevant to me during my second visit to Pajala in October 2017. On the evening of my arrival, I walked through the city center to see if the pizzeria or the Thai restaurant was open. It was pitch-black with a freezing drizzle in the air, a compact fog rolled in from the west. The streets were empty, and at the Thai restaurant, I was the only customer.

"What attracts people to Pajala?" I asked Annika.

"Or, rather 'what is it that binds people to Pajala?' she replied. "Because I think that makes the question more accurate." The restaurant was full this time.

"How many of the people in here do you know?" I asked.

"About eighty percent" Annika replied without looking up from her plate.

Annika acknowledges that Pajala would not be a particularly attractive place to live for someone who is not already bound to Pajala in some way. Only those with strong roots can appreciate the beauty of this way of life, and continue to lead it in spite of the knowledge that, eventually, it may no longer be possible to endure.

6.2 Bonds

When asked to describe what makes life in Tornedalen worth all the hard work that it takes to stay, my interviewees would talk about the stunning nature of Tornedalen. Deep forests and mires strewn with cloudberries, a thousand creeks with clear water, hunting, skiing, fishing, snow scooter adventures, midnight sun and northern lights. The absolute silence. They mention, in other words, precisely those things that previous research has documented as particularly valuable to mining opponents in the rural north. However, to understand in what way nature, moose hunting and silence is valuable to people in Pajala we must, as I argued in the introduction, look at the imagined totality in which they become valuable. Annika's correction of my question "What attracts people to Pajala?" into "What is it that binds

people to Pajala?" provides a clue to this totality. This bond, as we shall see, is not so much about the beauty of nature as it is about the people with whom you share it. I have so far described the widely acknowledged sentiment that life in Tornedalen is about survival and perseverance. People are, in a sense, bound or tied together by this shared experience, but as we shall see in this chapter, this bond reaches back in time, linking people in a narrative about who they are and why they are tied to Tornedalen. Easily detectable in my interview material is an idea about a "culture" that is unique to Tornedalen. The history of the Finnish-Swedish borderland is fertile soil for this idea. The region was Finnish speaking well into the 20th century, and the memory of the Swedish state as a colonial power that forcefully dislodged Tornedalen from Finnish culture, language and kinship ties is far from forgotten. Sweden is still, at least to an extent, the other. "Do you have a family in Sweden?" an informant asked me once, as in "Do you have a family back home in Sweden where you are from?", an odd question for those who are unaware of the colonial relationship between the Swedish state and Tornedalen. "We have very big and special funerals; do you have that too?" is another question intelligible only if you know that *we* refers to the people of Tornedalen and *you* to people living in Sweden.

6.3 The Hospitality of Tornedalen

I have engaged in several conversations about the dos and don'ts of a form of hospitality that my informants insist is constitutive of the culture of Tornedalen. In this section, I recount and analyze several of these conversations. I begin, however, with a summary that acts as a stepping-stone into my theoretical understanding of the stories about hospitality.

In short, the hospitality of Tornedalen stands on three legs: 1) do not call, 2) do not knock, 3) do not let visitors leave without offering them coffee. First, calling friends or family in advance and asking if you are allowed to pop by for a visit is considered a "modern" phenomenon by some, typical of tense urban people with a compulsive need to plan everything, which contrasts sharply with the traditional way of doing things in Tornedalen. Surely, people do call or text each other these days to announce their visit, especially since the advent of smartphones, but dropping by unannounced is considered an important part of the culture.

Second, doors should be opened without first knocking. “To knock can almost be considered a violation of domicile,” a man in his mid-fifties said jokingly when we were on the topic of hospitality. “’Why are you standing there, staring? Why don’t you just open the door and walk right in?’” I never quite knew how to handle this custom of not-knocking when I visited informants in their homes for the first time. Opening the door to the house of a complete stranger felt too rude, so I knocked.

“Here in Tornedalen we don’t knock. We walk right in” was the standard reaction.

“I know, but I was thinking that since we’ve never met, I should knock,” I explained to a man in Kaunisvaara as I took off my muddy rubber boots on the porch before I entered the house. It was during the moose hunt in October; two hunting rifles were the first thing I saw in the hallway.

“Well, you get to know people once you open the door and see who lives there” was his response. “The whole house is full of hunters; really, you’ve never seen a real hunting rifle before? Coffee is ready; just have a seat in the kitchen; do you take milk?”

There are those who keep their doors locked and who prefer that people knock — most likely people who have moved to Tornedalen from more urban areas like Luleå, at least in the stories I have heard.

Third, visitors should always be welcomed and offered at least a cup of coffee. One woman told me that visitors who keep their coat on are served only coffee, but if the coat comes off, the visitor should also be served food. When I asked others about this special code, some did not recognize it at all; others said that it might be that this was the custom, but that they had never really thought about it explicitly.

How often this idealized form of hospitality materializes empirically must be left unsaid. I treat it, therefore, as precisely that, an idealization, and imaginary, of a certain kind of hospitality. The ethnographic relevance of the narrative about hospitality in Pajala rests, as I see it, less on its empirical prevalence than on the viability of the narrative itself. In practice, people may occasionally — often even! — call, knock and skip the coffee ritual. The interesting question is why they nevertheless describe this hospitality vividly, through examples and anecdotes, and not without pride, to an outsider like me. This idealization of hospitality can be read, I argue, as a glimpse of the imagined totality described by Graeber as indispensable for theorizing the production and realization of value in a given context. This

hospitality exists, at least primarily, as imagination. But as such, it symbolizes a permanent possibility — an idea of what Pajala really should be like, and possibly might still be like. Likewise, this imagined totality, which I believe we catch sight of in the idealization of hospitality, is the symbolic totality in which certain actions can be symbolized as valuable.

I have so far only given a schematic description of this idealized hospitality, and I will devote the rest of the chapter to concrete examples. First, however, I want to provide some theoretical depth to the idea about hospitality perceived by my informants as unique to their area.

Derrida's notion of "hospitality of visitation," as opposed to "hospitality of invitation", describes this idealized kind of hospitality with some precision. Whilst "hospitality of invitation" is conditioned — "I invite you, I welcome you into my home, on the conditions that you adapt to the norms of my territory, according to my language, tradition, memory, and so on" (Derrida 2003: 128) — "hospitality of visitation" is to be "[o]pen to someone who is neither expected nor invited, to whomever arrives as an absolutely foreign visitor, as a new arrival, non-identifiable and unforeseeable, in short wholly other" (2003: 128-129). The concepts appear in this context to be very concrete — what Derrida writes about here is the specific event of a stranger entering your home. However, the attitudes governing this concrete situation (trust or contract) have political implications reaching far beyond the concrete and specific situation which arises when a stranger comes to your home, something I return to in Chapter 7. For now, it is interesting to note that hospitality founded on trust is idealized as typical for Pajala where it regulates the most concrete situation possible: the reception of a complete stranger who one day knocks on your door.

The most telling example of how close Pajala is to the kind of hospitality of visitation described by Derrida is probably the story about a Danish tourist on a kick-sled, as told by a woman named Monica. The Danish man appeared on the threshold of her family's house in village Aareavaara the day before Christmas in 2016. Monica's husband had opened the door, certain that it must be a complete stranger since the visitor had knocked, and the Danish man had asked if he could possibly *buy* a cup of coffee. Monica's husband found the question humorous, and welcomed the man inside for some coffee, sandwiches and reindeer meat. It turned out that the man had planned to celebrate Christmas Eve on his own in a cottage without electricity nearby. Monica explained her family's reaction:

> And we were just thinking 'he is going to freeze to death. It was minus 30 degrees Celsius and the forecast had promised even colder weather. We asked him if he wouldn't like to stay with us, but no, he wanted to be in that cottage, so we gave him reindeer skins, pots, and candles, thinking that he is not going to die on our watch.

The man took off on his kick-sled, and the morning after he came by Monica's house to wish them Merry Christmas.

"We asked him again if he wanted to stay, but he wanted to be in the cottage. He had met people up there who had given him some food, a reindeer herder had given him a smoked reindeer steak that he was going to eat." Once again, the man disappeared on the kick-sled, but later in the afternoon Monica and her husband decided to check on him, "because now this man was our responsibility, a weight on our conscience."[12] This time, the man agreed to have Christmas dinner with them.

"He looked at the piece of reindeer meat that the reindeer herder had given him, asking if he could bring that to eat." Monica laughed and said "well sure you can, but it's not like we need any more food so if you want to, you can have it all to yourself."

The man spent Christmas Eve with Monica and her family, "he told us his stories, and we told him ours, it was so interesting to meet him!" Later in the evening, they drove him back to the cottage because he did not want to stay. "When we came back the morning after we were expecting to find a dead frozen man, basically, but he had kicked off, and all the stuff we had lent him were there, neatly packed up. This is how we do things. Sometimes you adopt people for a little while," Monica explained.

Continuing the exploration of the kind of hospitality that my informants perceive as constitutive of their form of life, it should be noted that visitors do not always have to be actively invited to enjoy this hospitality. Actually, just leaving the door unlocked so that visitors may come in and help themselves to a cup of coffee is sufficient. A woman from southern Sweden who is married to a man from Pajala gave the following anecdote:

> A few weeks ago my husband woke up from an afternoon nap. When he came down to the kitchen, his brother-in-law was sitting at the kitchen table with a cup

[12] In Swedish: "Den här mannen var på vårt samvete."

of coffee. He isn't really the talkative type so he didn't say much. He drank his coffee and left. This behavior is completely normal here.

I have heard similar stories from other informants. The first time I refrained from knocking at the door of an informant who I had both interviewed and visited several times, I realized that I did not know how to behave when I was not greeted in the hall right away. I stood on the doormat, calling out a modest "Hello?" but could not bring myself to just walk right in. When she showed up after a couple of minutes, she asked me why I was just standing there, "Why haven't you made coffee?" she laughed, knowing such behavior was completely counterintuitive to me.

It is easy to imagine how jokes about the confusion of outsiders offer an enjoyable opportunity to let the outsider glimpse the beauty of life in Pajala, in contrast to views of abandoned houses and closed schools. But this kind of hospitality is not free from risk. For Derrida, hospitality of visitation entails a risk that must be accepted. Because of this inevitable risk, it is perhaps not surprising that anecdotes about hospitality of visitation are accompanied by idealizations of safety and security that are collectively constituted. This might explain why so many of my informants mentioned that Pajala is a municipality largely free from crime and social unrest.

6.4 A Sense of Safety

On a Wednesday morning in February 2019, I read the local newspapers in the restaurant of the hotel where I was staying. Breakfast was over and the dinner buffet would not open until 5 pm, but the guests could always help themselves to the filter coffee kept warm on a hot plate. I ended up having a conversation with the hotel owner who knew I was from Uppsala and had come to Pajala to write about the mine.

"How do you dare to live in Uppsala with all the gang violence? All the shootings? And you have a little daughter? Don't you worry that something could happen? Here in Pajala we never have to worry about these kinds of things, violence or burglaries, I think we have the lowest crime rate in Sweden," he asked me.

In total, 350 crimes were reported in Pajala municipality in 2017, this corresponds to almost 5,900 reported crimes per 100, 000 inhabitants, which is the measure used by Swedish authorities to compare crime rates between

regions. By comparison, the corresponding number for Stockholm was 21, 254 reported crimes per 100, 000 inhabitants in 2017. For municipalities of similar size located in Norrbotten County, the number varies between roughly 9,500 and 15,000 (Svt Nyheter 2018). This seems to suggest that the crime rate in Pajala is indeed very low, but the police are a rare sight in northern Sweden, which might affect people's inclination to report crimes. There is even a joke with the punchline that all crime disappeared from the neighboring municipality Övertorneå when the local police station closed. Either way, the general opinion seems to be that Pajala is a safe place, with a high level of "social control." The term "social control" likely carries a negative connotation for many of us, but in Pajala people largely used it in a positive sense, referring to a feeling of security stemming from the certitude that everyone was looking out for each other. You keep an eye on the neighbor's house when they are away, on all unknown cars passing by your house and on the youth who might be up to mischief. In a certain sense, this is the opposite of the meaning we've place in "social control" when that sense of security is upheld by law enforcement.

A woman with teenage children told me that through the years she had always been certain that if her children went home with friends after school they would always be served dinner, unless the friend's family had moved in from the south, then you could not be sure, because there the customs seem different, she explained. Like the story about the family from Luleå who preferred if guests used the doorbell, or Julia's joke when I stood in her hallway, this story establishes a division between insiders and outsiders, between those who grew up in Tornedalen and know how to behave, and those, like me, who do not. From the following story by a woman who recounts what she had told her son before he moved to start high school in Kiruna, it seems as though outsiders are not only unaware of Pajala's customs, but are also a little less reliable or dependable:

> I told him before he moved that 'Kiruna is not like home. What kind of skills to be street-smart have you really got? You haven't learned anything about that here. Who are you going to call if something happens? […] If you go to a party with some friends from school that you know well, you still can't trust all the other people at that party…if someone gives you something to drink, and if you accept it—and I know you would [accept it] because this is just how [teenagers are]—you just can't take for granted that someone there is going to help you [if

something happened]. So, who are you going to call, what emergency numbers do you have in Kiruna? The security [that we enjoy here] cannot be moved somewhere else.'

6.5 *Tornedalslåset* — Locking the Door with a Broom

Where these two features intersect, the custom of not knocking and the sense of safety and security, we find the practice of "locking one's front door with a broom." Houses, cars and bikes are often left unlocked. I even heard a story about a newcomer who was scolded for locking his bike outside the local grocery store. An older lady had simply informed him that this was not how things were done in Pajala, bikes should be left unlocked. Cars are also left unlocked when parked in the village. I know this since I have borrowed cars, or items inside the cars, from informants who simply left the car unlocked, placing the key on a tire or some such place, for me to use. Some even leave the key in the ignition switch when they park their car at home, because "someone might need to borrow or move it." When I went with an informant to her cabin 70 kilometers from Pajala she told me that the door to the house was always unlocked. As a matter of fact, she was not sure if they even had a key to the place anymore. There had been a key, and since it was not their permanent residence, they used to lock the door when they were not going to be there for some weeks. "But the neighbors got so annoyed that the door was locked when they needed to borrow something or get in for some other reason, so now we just leave it unlocked," she said.

Another informant told me that they never locked the door, "but when we're not at home we place the broom before the door to tell people who pass by our house that we're away." This seemed to be the direct opposite of what people in most metropolitan cities do when they leave their home to go away—to lock the door properly and leave some lights to give the appearance that someone is home. The custom even had a name, "the lock from Tornedalen," *Tornedalslåset.*

"So you never lock the door?" I asked.

"When we go away for several days we lock the door, but we place the key on a nail on the side in case, you know, someone needs to get in," she said. I laughed.

"But if you leave the key completely visible, why bother at all?" I asked.

"Well, that's a good question," the woman said, laughing, too, "it's just the way we do it."

The custom of leaving the key hanging by the door is perhaps difficult to explain from an instrumental perspective. It is, however, easier to grasp on a symbolic level: where trust is idealized, it is important to display trust. If, for whatever reason, you do not trust all potential strangers enough to leave your home unlocked when you are gone for several days, to leave the key by the door effectively signals that the house is closed for the time being. This is how you invest trust, knowing that you can count on being rewarded for it—with trust, or favors requiring the presence of it. In a scarcely populated place, with limited access to commercial solutions to everyday problems, it is after all the more important that neighbors are not unaccountable strangers, but friends you can rely on.

6.6 "We Help Each other Out," or: How to Get a Taxi in Pajala

A Friday evening in June 2019, Frida invited Julia and me to dinner at her place in Erkheikki, 10 kilometers west of Pajala. When we planned the evening, I realized that this was not going to be a sober event; Frida had bought wine and Julia wanted mojitos.

"How do we get back to Pajala?" I asked, knowing there are no buses and no taxis anywhere near Pajala. "Don't think about that," they said, "we'll sort it somehow." I offered to stay sober to drive home, but it was out of the question.

"No, wouldn't the whole thing be more fun if you too could have a glass of wine? And a mojito? Now we've been talking about mojitos the whole day, so I really think we should not take the car. We'll sort this somehow," Julia said. Frida agreed, "Don't think about it. There is always someone who can drive. I'll ask my neighbor Johnny and there are others who can be asked too." We had even found mint at the grocery store, something that apparently was not a given. Frida told me that a couple of summers ago when she was all hooked on mojitos, she had grown her own mint in a bucket, and wherever she went — to the cabin, to Luleå, to archipelago down by the cost — she brought her mint plant. Fortunately, Frida has a station wagon and drives wherever she is going.

It was a beautiful summer evening with midnight sun over green hills and dusty roads, the first really warm day of the year. We barbecued salmon, fed the leftovers to a wild fox that occasionally shows up in Frida's yard, brought in firewood and lit the sauna. As we waited for the sauna to heat up, Frida and Julia started the serious discussion about how we were going to get back to Pajala. We sat around Frida's kitchen table, with our mojitos that were mostly melting ice cubes at this point, Frida and Julia scrolling through their phones, discussing who might be awake (it was just after 11 o'clock at night). The people at the top of the list had declined, one was just about to fall asleep and the other had had a few beers. I looked out the window to see if I could catch a glimpse of the fox. Frida had told me that it was not the common red fox, but a completely black fox, bigger, shyer, and heavier than red foxes. Apparently, it could be taken for a small wolf if it were not for the absence of gray and yellow pigments in the fur.

"Should I text Björn?" Julia said. "Yes, why not," Frida replied, "he'll do it."

"Yes, I know, but I'm formally his boss at work, so it feels a little bit wrong to ask him to pick us up?"

"I don't think he cares about that? I'm sure he'll do it. Just text him."

"No, it feels wrong. I'll text my friend in Aareavaara."

"But Aareavaara?" I asked, "how far is that? 40 km?"

"Something like that, maybe more like 30," Julia said.

"So your friend would have to drive 30 km from Aareavaara to Erkheikki and then the 10 km from here to Pajala and then it's 40 km from Pajala to Aareavaara?" is asked.

"Yes."

"Is what we are doing now normal? Is this how you organize transportation around here?" I asked.

"Well, yes?" Julia and Frida agreed. I had heard about similar situations, about the very same discussions taking place outside the nightclub in Pajala (open about four times per year.) When I thought about it, I realized that I had done something similar two years prior when I had to get to Pajala airport at five in the morning to catch the flight to Luleå. I asked at the hotel reception if it was possible to pre-order a taxi for the next morning. "Does Janne still drive?" the girl at the reception desk called out to someone in the hotel kitchen. "No, don't think so, he quit some time ago," someone shouted back. "Maybe my boss can drive you," the girl said, "he's usually up very

early. I can give him a call and ask." In the end we agreed that the most convenient solution would be if I walked over to the other hotel where the airline crew stayed and asked them if I could get a ride. That is what I did and at 4.45 the following morning, I met them at the parking lot. When we arrived at the airport it turned out I was the only passenger in the tiny seven-seat plane that October morning.

Julia's phone beeped. "Oh, my friend in Aareavaara says she can't come, she is going to bed now."

"Okay," said Frida. "We'll have to text some more people later, but don't think about that anymore now, the sauna is warm so let's bring our mojitos and get in the sauna."

It turned out Frida and Julia were right when they told me not to think about how to get back to Pajala. When we came back to the kitchen after the sauna Frida checked her phone, "Eva's boy will pick you up in about an hour," she said. Around 1 am, an old blue Volvo with a broken windshield, driven by a man in his early 20s named Tobbe, showed up outside Frida's kitchen window. Julia took the front seat and did the talking, even though she had never met this young man, or his mother Eva. As per instructions from Frida, Julia asked him about his new job as a driver for Kaunis Iron.

"I'm starting on Monday," he told us, as he turned right onto the larger country road and accelerated quickly. When we stopped outside Lapland River Hotel ten minutes later, I thanked him for the ride and asked him if I could give him some money as a token of gratitude, but Tobbe refused to accept any money. "I just like to drive," he said.

The lack of public transportation (two or three departures daily to Luleå, Kiruna, Gällivare and Haparanda) means that you are dependent on having a car in Pajala. When I came to Pajala for fieldwork in the winter of 2019, I had brought my family with me. One weekend we wanted to go to the outdoor recreational area Vasikkavuoma, 15 kilometers from Pajala. Since I did not know anyone in Pajala at that time, we went to rent a car from one of the two car rental places, which besides renting out cars sells toys, makeup, wallpaper and paint. Renting a car turned out to be expensive, 1000 SEK even though we only needed the car for a couple of hours. The young woman in the store apologized for the high price and said that she could not do much about it since they were only a franchise for a big international car rental firm. We left the store and went to have a cup of coffee at the café next door.

When we walked by the car rental firm on our way back to where we were staying, the young woman opened the door and stepped out,

> There you are! I've been looking out the window to see if I could catch you. I just wanted to say that you can borrow my car to get to Vasikkavuoma if you want, I'm working all day and the car is just sitting there anyway, and besides I live right around the corner, so I don't even need it to get home.

It was not the first, nor the last time as I had the honor to enjoy the hospitality and trust my informants' describe as part of the culture in Tornedalen. On a later occasion, I was offered to borrow not just a car, but an entire house with the fridge full of food.

11 July 2020

Mid July 2020. I had taken the night train from Uppsala to Luleå this time, and paid almost 2000 SEK for a private compartment. One way. I had no choice; I could not risk catching COVID-19 on the train. On the bus from Luleå, the hotel manager in Pajala called and said that I could not stay in the one room apartment that I always rent when I am in town; a doctor on a short-term contract at the healthcare center had stayed in the apartment for a couple of weeks and needed to prolong her stay. I called Frida and asked her if I could stay at her place.

"Of course, I had never planned for anything else."

Sofia picked me up at the bus station in Pajala when I arrived in the evening, and after a quick stop at Frida's parents' house in Pajala, where we picked up two life vests, we headed northwest on road 99. The evening sun broke through the thick gray clouds. I was struck by how green and lush everything looked: the birch trees, the meadowland, the river slopes. At Frida's place, we packed sandwiches and beer, and put on wool thermals and rubber boots before we made the short drive down to the river where Frida kept her traditional Tornedalen riverboat.

"You have to put on life vests," she said to Sofia and me.

"What about you?" I asked, since we had only picked up two life vests.

"Just put it on," she said and laughed.

When it was my turn to row, I discovered that the river was not even one meter deep.

"You forced me to wear a life vest when the only thing I would have to do if I fell in the water is…stand up?" I said.

"There are people on the other side of the river, haven't you seen them, the fishermen? And you made the girl from Stockholm wear a life vest, no wonder people up here think we are useless dorks." Frida just laughed and said that the river was actually quite deep with strong currents a little further out.

The next morning Sofia went back to town. Frida said that she would drive out to her other house, where her daughter and husband were.

"Take my car into town tomorrow when you pick up your rental car, park it at the gas station and hand the keys to the owner, I'll pick it up later. Also, don't buy food, eat from the fridge and the freezer, I think there are even some cinnamon buns in the extra freezer in the basement. You know where the key is, just make yourself at home. Good luck with your work, see you in a couple of days!" Frida drove off, and suddenly I had a big house all to myself. After breakfast, I took Frida's car into town and parked it by the gas station. The man behind the counter somehow knew who I was right away, even though we had never met before.

"Yes, and you are here to hand me Frida's car keys. Where did you park?"

"Just around the corner, by the flower shop."

"Great!"

I walked to the color/ wallpaper/ make up/ toy/ car rental store and picked up the keys to the rental car. Just like last time they did not ask to see my license. If this was because they knew who I was, or because they just trusted me, I still do not know.

6.7 A First Glimpse

The stories about unlocked doors, spontaneous visits, generosity, trust and hospitality provide a first glimpse of the values that my informants perceive as constitutive of life in Pajala. Although I have devoted a good part of this chapter to discuss empirical manifestations of how these values are socially realized, my attention to these examples should not be read in a positivist light; the examples are not proof of "how things actually work" in Pajala. Similarly, the question of whether these examples are "representative" misses the mark. Rather, I approach the empirical displays of trust and hospitality as iterations of an imagined totality—a collectively shared idea

about what is valuable and why. To appeal again to Jaeggi's definition of a "form of life" I interpret hospitality, safety and trust as parts of a larger nexus of "practices, orientations and orders of social behavior, [including] attitudes and habitualized modes of conduct" concerning the collective conduct of life in Pajala (Jaeggi 2018: 50). The idea that trust and hospitality is valuable seems to regulate the space for action; it has normative implications for how you ought to act towards friends and family, but also towards strangers, if you want to be perceived as a decent person within the community. A woman from southern Sweden who had moved to Pajala with her husband some years ago told me that she recently found out what new acquaintances in Pajala had been saying about them behind their backs: that they were people who "did not even serve coffee" if you came by their house. Rather than interpreting such statement as pertaining to the speakers' love of coffee, I suggest that we interpret it as a remark targeting the woman's "failure" to display hospitality, and thus also her failure to reproduce the speaker's imaginary of what life in Pajala should be like. Yet, it is hard to escape the feeling that generic versions of these stories could fit many rural communities in Sweden. That the same kind of hospitality and trust is also recognized by others as specific to *their* home village somewhere along Dalälven or in Småland seems to indicate that it would be possible to enjoy the same kind of safety, security and hospitality elsewhere in Sweden — should life in Pajala really become impossible to endure. To put it bluntly, why become a survivalist and mobilize the strength and perseverance to stay, no matter what, when a similar form of life could be enjoyed somewhere else without all the hardship that comes with life and survival in Pajala?

That this way of reasoning is nonsensical to my informants indicates that there is more to be disclosed about the sorrow over a vanishing municipality and community and the capacity of a single mining company to resuscitate it, than we can make out from this rosy representation of local hospitality. To me, there seems to be a gap between the intensity with which some lament the gradual degeneration of this community, and the generic small-village description that emerges from their stories about it — something tacit between the description of Pajala as an idyllic and friendly village and the idea of the mine as the community's savior. Obviously, the mine can be thought of as something that saves Pajala from disintegration, but if we want to understand the messianic dimension of that which the mine promises we cannot quite do that only by taking descriptions of picturesque village-life at

face value. In what follows, I argue that the narratives from this chapter are only the first layer of a story that runs much deeper. The idea that hospitality, safety and trust is constitutive of one's community may not be unique to Pajala, but the historical circumstances that have formed this idea may nonetheless be specific and possible to reconstruct. I turn my attention to these historical circumstances in the following chapter.

7. Final, Trembling Moments

The field stories in the following chapter indicate that the imaginary of what life in Pajala should be like provides a regulatory "habitualized mode of conduct." This imaginary regulates not only who must be served coffee and when, but also relations between (some of) Pajala's inhabitants to banks and public administration in a way that probably seems peculiar to those who understand people's relations to public and private bureaucracy as ipso facto impersonal. As we shall see, an appreciation for personal, manystranded (Wolf 1966f) relations that can be *traced back in time*, seems to add one more layer to our understanding of what makes life in Pajala perceivable as unique and non-replaceable to my informants.

7.1 Whose Girl Are You?

In October 2017, I stayed at one of Pajala's two hotels. During the weekdays the hotel was busy with construction workers, who commute to Pajala for work, but this Sunday evening I could tell from the number of keys behind the check-in counter that there were only two guests. I sat at a table in the hotel's empty lounge, transcribing an interview, when the other guest appeared. A man in his early sixties, he sat down to watch the evening news, and proceeded to ask me what I was doing in Pajala. I explained that I was a researcher writing a dissertation about the mine. He himself was born in Pajala, but his family had moved to Luleå when he was in his teens. He had stopped for one night in Pajala on his way to Kiruna, where he was going to visit family.

"What is your connection to Pajala?" he asked me. "Do you have family here?" I told him I had never set foot in Pajala before I started my doctoral studies, and that I do not have any family north of Gävle.

"So, you've come all the way from Uppsala just to write about the mine? Why would you come to Pajala unless you have your roots in Pajala?" he asked, sounding somewhat puzzled.

This was neither the first, nor the last time people were curious about my connection to Pajala, but my answer, I learned later, was always a disappointment. Julia explained it to me by reference to her own experience. She had moved to Pajala a couple of years ago from a neighboring municipality south of Pajala, and told me about the reactions she gets when people in Pajala ask her, "Whose girl are you?"

"The disappointment in their eyes when I say that 'I'm my own girl' is just…you know...total disappointment."

"And they are disappointed because that answer means you have no news?"

"Exactly, so the conversation dies, and then I have to say where I'm from [a neighboring municipality], which gives them a little bit of hope, because then they'll say, 'well, okay, so do you know so and so?' and if I say no, they'll give up and ask, 'so what are you doing in Pajala anyways?'"

Other newcomers had learned to mitigate this disappointment. Mia had moved from Luleå to Pajala a couple of years back with her husband, who has family ties to Pajala and Tornedalen. Mia happened to know that both her maternal grandmother and grandfather had their roots in a village in Pajala municipality, but she had not given it much thought until she came to Pajala and people started asking her what she was doing there and she had to come up with an acceptable answer. She quickly learned that referring to her grandmother and grandfather, to their surnames and home village, did the trick:

> I just said that I am this and that family and then everything made sense to people. I hadn't even thought about it before we moved, because it had nothing to do with our decision to move here. In my mind, we moved to my husband's home country, he has his roots here. I had to discover my roots, who I was related to, because I had no contact with them before.

Mia's and Julia's comments indicate that identity in Pajala is linked to your place in a nexus of social relations. Mia's need to discover her roots, as well as her specific choice of words — "I just say that I *am* this and that family" — even indicate that who you are in the eyes of others depends on kinship

ties in a manner quite unusual for urban areas in Sweden. Thus, who you are in Pajala is not the outcome of your personal choices and achievements alone, because regardless of the choices you make, you *are* nonetheless "this or that family".

7.2 The Inside Perspective

To have a place within this social network means more than just an opportunity for small talk. Your position within this network constitutes, in quite concrete terms, your social capital (Bourdieu 1986). On an exceptionally hot day in June 2019, I interviewed a man in the pizzeria in Pajala. We talked about the importance of social ties and connections, and he told me that when he was young there were two TV and radio stores in Pajala.

"My dad ran one of them, in that building right over there," he said and pointed at a house across the street, a small wooden building with big windows covered with brown paper. "Some people came to my dad's store, and others went to the other store. Some people would rather drive to Luleå than buy something from my father's store. The people from the villages came to him, because he is from Anttis, and people from Pajala went to the other store," he explained.

This was twenty years ago, and this "village mentality," as the man called it, was now changing — "now as people from outside are moving in." Even though people "from outside" are moving to Pajala and mitigate the impact of the "village mentality," a more recent story indicates that it still matters "whose girl or boy you are." A woman in her late thirties wanted to move back home to Pajala after some years in Luleå. She needed to buy a house, but she soon learned that even though there is no shortage of empty houses in Pajala, there is nothing like an open housing market in the municipality. Few houses are sold through commission agencies, instead people prefer to sell to someone they know (Pajala kommun 2018). For this woman, who is born and raised in Pajala and whose parents are familiar faces to many of the village's residents, the fact that people want to sell to someone they know did not pose a big problem:

> I'm born in an entrepreneurial family with a big social network, so if I see a house that I like in a village somewhere and I want to get in touch with the owner, that's not a problem for me, I'll just call my dad and ask: who lives in that house? If he

> doesn't know, he'll just say, 'call Birger' and I'll call Birger and he'll know who lives there and send me that person's contact details and then I'll call them. So, to me this was easy…but for someone who's not from here…I don't know what they'd have to do.

I asked her if she thought it would have been different if I had been the one calling a house owner in Pajala, asking to buy their house:

> Yes, many people are like, 'whose girl are you?' and then you start telling your story and then you have an advantage, which is also a little bit unfair. It's the same when you're talking to the bank, they try to be accommodating, and that is based on what they know about you. It's nice that they can do that, but it also feels a little unfair; something like that would never work in a city where everybody is treated equally, you become a number in a bank account, sort of. Here, it's more like this: 'Well, maybe you can have a loan anyway, because you're usually good at finding work.' That's a great benefit of course, but it's unfavorable for people who are not from here, it makes it difficult to integrate into this community, and that's what makes me feel that it's unfair. I'm ambivalent about it, because it makes it more difficult for people who are not from here […] For people who are not from here buying a house would be really difficult, and if they made that phone call, [if you, as an outsider, would make such a phone call], I don't know [how it would turn out].

In this case, this woman's position within her social network made it possible to convert her social capital into actual capital, a house and a bank loan, something she believes would have been significantly more difficult for someone without a place within this network. I cannot say how common this is, but I know this woman is not the only one in Pajala who has been granted a loan due to her familiarity with the staff at the local bank. I interviewed a former teacher in his late fifties, who said that even though he is sure the bank makes an "ice-cold businesslike assessment," he knows that the bank's knowledge about the person influences their decision:

> There are many personal relations here [in Pajala] and that's both good and bad. For me it has been mostly good, because when the bank knows something about me that influences their otherwise very businesslike assessment — and I'm sure

> everyone would not agree with me on this — I feel a little safer. If they know I'm a little bit careless and I want to borrow 800 000, they can say, no, we'll not lend you that much money, but we'll lend you 600 000, and if you go home and talk to your mom and dad and they can vouch for you, then you can borrow 800 000. Maybe it's not so fun when it happens, but in the end it's good for you to get an assessment based on more factors than just your income.

I asked this man if it could be the other way around, that the bank grants you a loan because they know who you are.

> Oh yes! That happened to me! 'I know what jobs you have, and well, I know you only have a short-term contract, but I've heard you'll get a permanent position.' And it has even happened that the old bank accountant quit, and they took in a new one who said, 'O my goodness, how could he lend you this much money? I would never have signed off that loan.'

Not everyone is fortunate enough that their reputation or position within this social network gives them advantages. On a rainy evening in July 2020, I interviewed Rebecca in her hair salon after closing. She too had returned to Pajala with her partner after a couple of years in southern Sweden.

"We live in an apartment now, but we're looking for a house, obviously," she said when we talked about the nonexistent open housing market in Pajala. "If you want to buy a house you basically have to come knocking on the door, and ask the owner if you can buy it. We haven't done that just yet, but I think that's what we have to do soon. No one wants to sell," she continued.

"Why is that," I asked, "if the house is empty anyway?"

"It is the very last tie that people have [to Tornedalen.]"

"It sounds complicated," I said. "I'm thinking that if I would like to buy a house here I couldn't just knock on someone's door and ask to buy the house."

"No, no. Do you have family here?"

"No."

"No, then I suggest you dig deep and hope you find some distant relative."

We talked about the importance of developing the skill to get along with everyone in a small place like Pajala when Rebecca returned to her hunt for a nice house. She had found one that she liked and wanted to buy.

"But my dad said that the owner of that house is a real oddball and that I should not buy his house. A client [at the hair salon] who has also seen the house said the same: [the owner] is strange and I wouldn't want to buy his house."

"How come?" I asked.

"I don't really know," Rebecca said. "I think it is because you should not mix with these people, that it could stain your own reputation."

"I was just thinking that when you've bought the house you don't need to see the seller again?"

"That's what I thought, too. I didn't see the problem and that's what I told my dad, but he just said that this man was too much of an oddball. Maybe [my dad thinks] you should not benefit these people in any way. And when this client said the same about this man today, I'm thinking that he must be very, very strange."

Rebecca's story confirms that "being someone's girl" can be a valuable asset if you want to buy a house in Tornedalen. Yet, it also shows that a clear place in this social network does not automatically grant someone benefits; the man Rebecca is talking about is clearly known, but that does not work in his favor in this case. That social relations in Pajala are, in many cases, both more concrete and manystranded than relations in a more urban setting does not mean that everybody is treated equally.

However, the main reason for quoting Rebecca is not primarily to illustrate that a given place in a social network has downsides. Instead, I want to draw attention to what seems a fragment of the logic imbued in classical gift economies (Mauss 2016 [1925]), disclosed by Rebecca's description of the situation with the house her father has advised her not to buy. What I detect in her story is a clash between the logic of the gift economy and the capitalist monetary transaction. The central feature of gift economy for the case at hand is that any exchange is mediated through personal relations. Through the exchange of gifts (i.e. goods like food, clothes, jewelry, tools, etc.) strangers enter into personal relations, and gifts are of course exchanged through already existing personal relations. In a capitalist economy, however, everything, including the houses we live in, are commodities that, when they change hands, are usually exchanged for money on the market. Monetary transactions of this kind are in essence impersonal, or even a stand-in for a personal relation, a way to make commodities circulate without the need to mediate this circulation through personal ties between people. Buyer

and seller can be complete strangers, and more importantly, once the transaction is complete and money and commodity have changed hands, the commodity is alienated from the seller. This means that it is fully and completely detached from the seller, and transferred to the buyer without reservation. The standardized procedure for buying a house facilitated by a real estate agent serves as a good example of this type of transaction–buyer and seller do not have to meet before the deal is closed, and once the key has changed hands, they are even more unlikely to meet. The question of whether or not the seller is an oddball never has to cross the buyer's mind.

This perspective is clearly present in Rebecca's story; when I said that she would not have any business with the odd man once the house was sold, she said that this is the argument that she initially presented to her father when he advised her not to look too long at the strange man's house. Her father, however, seems to view the house as impossible to completely detach from the seller; it would not be possible to completely alienate from the seller. Furthermore, the relation between the buyer and the seller is far from an empty non-relation mediated through a third party, but a concrete personal relation. The logic behind Rebecca's father's argument as to why she should not buy the house is, as she put it, that one "should not mix with these people."

What strikes me as a remnant of the logic of gift economy is that for Rebecca's father, and for her client who agreed with her father, people who do business together stand in a personal relation to each other. The contractual relation that operates as a stand-in for personal relations — exchanging a house for money, regulated by a third party (i.e. the state) — does not completely erase personal ties, and personal relations. The monetary exchange does not become an empty, impersonal relation; instead, you have inevitably mixed with the other party. Who you choose to do business with has implications for how others will perceive you, and thus also for your place in the network of relations of which your identity is a reflection. This is, as I see it, in line with the hospitality of visitation that I described in the previous chapter. In a place where personal, non-contractual relations still matter to the extent that they do in Pajala, contractual, capitalist relations are not developed and implemented without creating a certain friction with the non-contractual, personal ideal. What we can glimpse is rather a mix of the two; people do have to handle things through capitalist relations, but personal relations are not rendered insignificant by this fact. The friction which the observation of such relations creates when you actually need to buy a house

is real, as is also, as we shall see, the friction that materializes when people deal with local authorities as if bureaucratic relations were also personal relations.

7.3 The Locked Glass Door

Who you are and who you know may not only prove important if you need to buy a house or get a bank loan. It can also have an impact on your access to municipal services. At least according to some, that is, because others deny this completely, arguing instead that there is no chance Pajala municipality would ever get away with circumnavigating municipal laws and regulations. A woman I spoke with who has held several positions within the municipal administration, concluded that for some of Pajala's residents the possibility to exercise political influence is high because of the closeness between people in a small community. People call someone they know at the municipal office when they need help with something, even though that is not the way an issue should be handled. Sometimes it happens that elderly citizens call her with different concerns and questions that were not hers to handle. She remembers one man in particular:

> When he called me and I realized this was not my thing to handle, I did what I should do, I sent the complaint to the civil servants. Of course that did not help, the calls kept coming, and the man said 'I always called [your successor] about this and he always solved it.' In the end, I said, 'now you drive up to this man and do it the old-fashioned way, he is an elderly man and he's used to this way of doing things.' And they went to his house and had coffee and sat down and talked and then the problem was solved. I had tried to go about things the way you should, to send it to the civil servants and let them handle it, but it didn't help so then they had to go to this man and have coffee.

This elderly man is not the only one who calls his contacts at the municipality. This woman also told me that it happens that business owners call civil servants at the municipality and ask them to make a certain decision.

"And then we help them with that, but that can of course make other business owners envious, because they think that some people get more help than others from the municipality," she said.

Sometime between my second and third visit to Pajala, a locked glass door was installed in Pajala's municipal building to prevent people from walking straight into the municipal office. A waiting hall with a reception desk could be accessed by anyone, but if you wanted to talk to a politician or civil servant, you had to be admitted to the office area. Until recently, people could, and did, walk right in when they wanted to speak to someone. Allegedly, the glass door had not been the municipality's idea; the directive came from a central Swedish authority. The locked door — which some considered completely obsolete in a place like Pajala — seems to cause annoyance. This is what a civil servant, interviewed in an office behind that glass door, said:

> Some local entrepreneurs are very annoyed that they can't just walk right in when they need to talk to someone at the municipality — 'If I need to talk to someone I know down at the municipal office, why should there be a locked door, we don't need that here,' that's how they feel. But if you think about it, is it really advisable that entrepreneurs can walk right in and talk to [politicians and civil servants] informally?

Perhaps the frustration over the locked glass door at the municipal office is a little too uncanny of a metaphor about the tension that materializes when impersonal bureaucracy meets the idealization of personal trust and hospitality of visitation. The power and scope of personal relations must be halted, at some point, and perhaps the locked door constitutes a symbolic representation of that point. An interesting testimony to the importance personal relations are allowed to have in Pajala, is the fact that it is, in practice, not obvious just where personal relations should be disregarded. The very presence of different views on the matter, among bank clerks, civil servants, and people's expectations to circumnavigate bureaucracy, indicates that the line between the personal and the institutional is more flexible and fluid than the rigidity of the locked glass door and the reception desk permits. In a community where personal relations are important in this way, the person you are becomes important; something that may have consequences for outsiders without connections to Tornedalen that stretch back through generations.

7.4 The Outside Perspective

Those who can answer the question about whose girl or boy they are can be located within the social universe — to be someone is to be *someone's* girl or boy. Not having an answer to that question, to not be able to place oneself in that universe, can have tangible implications. It does not matter where you are from — China or Stockholm — if you are not from Tornedalen, you are always, to one extent or another, an outsider. Thomas, a man who has lived in Tornedalen for at least twenty years, but who grew up in Denmark, describes it this way:

> There's always that question about who you are and where you're from. And then you answer and people know, okay, you're from there and you have family in this or that village. I'm always outside those conversations. For me personally it's not a problem, I've always been a maverick. But if you're a social person, like my wife for instance, it can be quite difficult, because you'll never be fully included in this society. If you're an outsider looking for work it can be very difficult. Let's say you're a carpenter, you won't find work, because people here will hire a carpenter from Pajala. Unless there's some kind of crisis. The same thing with the dentist; even though there's a real shortage of dentists, people will say: 'We'll go to our dentist from Pajala,' all until one Saturday night they'll find themselves at home with a terrible toothache, that's when they'll accept the other dentist. Not everyone is welcome here. If you're well educated for example, and can compete with local businesses, then you're not welcome.

You do not even have to have moved as far as from Denmark, sometimes it can be quite enough to have moved only 100 kilometers. Sofia moved to Pajala from another village in Tornedalen and started working at the municipality. She felt that she was sometimes harshly criticized for minor mistakes. When she received a new job within the municipal administration, a girl named Karin took over her old job.

"'Oh, Karin, Lena's girl, how nice!'" that's what people said when they found out she was taking over my job. And things that they criticized me for...I don't think that would have happened to Karin the same way, because they knew so much more about who she was. If someone thinks your grandmother or great grandmother or mom or dad or some other relative is nice, they assume you are too."

Although there are perceived disadvantages of being outside the kinship ties and social connections which are constitutive of identity in Pajala, what is not perceived from the outside perspective is what it means to navigate this universe of kinship ties and personal relations. To be someone in this universe requires you to manage and consider relations and connections to people that you do not like, or that you do not personally know (as in Rebecca's case).

7.5 The Historical Perspective

When asked about the origins of the human relationships that emerge as defining Pajala and the inclination to give priority to personal rather than formal relationships, people tend to emphasize a historical situation on the margin of a territory, where cooperation was necessary and formal authority largely absent. Below is a quote from a man in his late fifties reflecting on the origins of the hospitality of Tornedalen.

> I think that we [people from Pajala] see the charm in the familiarity and the closeness, and we have an old tradition of hospitality and open doors, because people living on the North calotte have always been mobile. Moving across national borders has been natural, we've never given borders much thought. Norwegians, Swedes, Finns, Sámi, sedentary people, Romani people, we have just moved across this territory, and I think this is the root of our hospitality—doors are left open for natural reasons. We have been mutually dependent, practicing exchange. The Sámi have given us meat, and we have given them crops, and it's been like that for generations. […] So, this hospitality is a very old and very beautiful tradition.

Themes of human mobility, barter and cooperation that predate an economy governed by capital and state regulations appear in several accounts, as does the theme of a rather late transformation of the old agrarian society. As mentioned in Chapter 5, wage labor in the timber industry emerged on a small-scale during the late 19th century in Tornedalen. Yet, self-sufficiency through farming was the dominating form of subsistence as late as the 1950s (Alalehto 2019). Thus, capitalist relations of production did not come to get a real grip of people in Tornedalen until the 1960s or even 1970s (Alalehto 2019). This is something that my interviewees over age fifty are aware of.

Gunnar, who is in his mid-fifties, said that he grew up in the "final trembling moments of the old agrarian community,"[13] which he describes as a society where people were self-sufficient to quite a high extent and where everybody knew each other. This is a snippet from our conversation:

> I grew up in the final trembling moments of the old agrarian society. As a child, I went by horse with my grandfather's brothers to get birch twigs that the women used to make brooms that they sold. Other relatives kept milking cows, and my family had a patch where we grew potatoes for my whole extended family. When we built something or renovated something, my dad got the timber from his own piece of forest, and we sawed it in the small communal lumber mill in the village. So, if you talk to someone a little bit older than me, anyone over seventy years old, you can be sure they built their own houses, and have never called a carpenter or a mechanic. But my son has not seen this community.

A man some ten years younger than Gunnar said that right before he left for university studies in Lund in the late 1990s, Pajala was demographically dominated by people who had grown up in the pre-industrial agrarian community.

If we take a local resident's own explanation at face value, it would seem that the weight of personal relationships and the idealization of principles (seemingly belonging to hospitality of visitation) originate from the mutual dependency of people exposed to harsh conditions. Though the economic basis for such a social formation is long since gone, its moral codex seems to live on in the imaginary about what life in Pajala should be like, and which still occasionally manifests in concrete actions. Perhaps the continued relevance of that moral codex would also seem to owe itself to the fact that there has never been a moment when the subordination to capital forced local residents to cease relating to one another on a personal level. Even though you do business with someone, or work for someone, you most likely have kids in the same school or soccer team, live in the same village, go to the same gym, hunt in the same hunting team or are members of the same political party.

Perhaps it is even possible to talk about remnants of a certain type of social structure. Imagine, for example, what type of structure is presupposed

[13] Swedish phrase: *det gamla bondesamhället.*

if the question "whose girl are you?" is to make sense to ask. This implies not only a social structure defined by networks that are relatively stable over time, but also one that emphasizes kinship and ties between people and place, since the "correct" answer to this question is to answer in those terms.

A social structure of this kind is not unique to Pajala. Conversations of similar kinds doubtlessly occur in rural places all over the world. What is more, we could easily imagine something similar happening in an urban setting, though the question asked would not be, "Who's girl are you?" but rather something along the lines of "What do you work with?" or maybe "Where do you work?"

My understanding of social structure largely corresponds to Radcliff-Brown's definition of the term in his essay *On Social Structure* (1952), where he writes that "in the study of social structure the concrete reality with which we are concerned is the set of actually existing relations, at a given moment of time, which link together certain human beings" (Radcliff-Brown 1952: 192). To this he adds that, "it is not this that we attempt to describe in its particular." (ibid.: 192). Rather, the anthropologist's task should be to abstract from this direct, empirically observable social structure, its underlying social form. To distinguish the two, he writes:

> Thus, the actual relations of persons and groups of persons change from year to year, or even from day to day. New members come into a community by birth or immigration; others go out of it by death or emigration. […] But while the actual structure changes in this way, the general structural form may remain relatively constant over time. (Radcliff-Brown 1952: 192)

Hence, it is not that interesting, perhaps, to note that Karin may receive favorable treatment at her work place because her colleagues once used to hold her grandmother in high esteem, or that you were granted a bank loan because the manager has his own personal reasons to suppose that you might eventually find a steady job. Rather, what is interesting to note is that the recurring nature of such things suggests that Pajala is a place where the personal and informal easily override what we would think of as the formal. In other words, you are not who you are because of the job that you hold, or do not hold, or because of anything, really, that might be documented about you by public or private bureaucracies. You are who you are because you stand in a nexus of relationships to living as well as dead people who

constitute you as a person in the eyes of your peers. A glimpse of this "general structure" that outlives actual human beings in Pajala is found in the continuation of Mia's story about moving to Pajala with her husband and children. Not only did she have to, as she put it, "discover her roots", she also had to discover her *feuds.* Her kinship ties to Pajala offered her a possibility to situate herself within this structure and thus to make herself make sense to people. This opportunity, to make yourself intelligible through a surname or place name, had granted her a warmer welcome than newcomers without this possibility, she thought. "But," she added, "since I don't know so much about the different clans and families I never know about any family feuds!"

7.6 A Second Glimpse

In the first two ethnographic chapters, we saw the form of life my informants perceive as unique to Pajala or Tornedalen. I have described how there seems to be a definition of value present in this form of life that renders actions of hospitality, trust and security constituted by a form of social control valuable, not because they contribute to the production of capital, but because they contribute to the social reproduction of a certain form of life. As such, the gesture of welcoming strangers into your home keeps the imaginary of what kind of place Pajala is alive. Pajala is seen as a scarcely populated border area where strangers must be treated as friends because of the harsh circumstances, and which is, at least to some of the older residents, still tainted by its colonial relationship to the Swedish state. This idea about what life in Pajala could be like cannot be realized unless a critical number of residents recognize a house key on a nail by the door as a display of trust and security that emanates from a nexus of social relations, and not from bureaucratic contracts. Likewise, a bank clerk who signs off on a loan knowing he has based his assessment not only on publicly accessible data about income levels and employment status, but on personal knowledge about the loan applicant, indicates that, in Pajala, your place in a particular social structure matters in a way quite different from many urban settings.

I closed the previous chapter by pointing out what I perceived to be a gap between the intensity with which Pajala's residents seem to lament the gradual degeneration of this form of life and the picturesque small-village description that emerges from their stories about that form of life. There is

something unarticulated between the description of Pajala as an idyllic and friendly place and the idea of the mine as the community's savior. The unarticulated *promise* of the mine becomes somewhat clearer if we consider the political dimension of hospitality of visitation. Derrida frames it the following way:

> And unconditional hospitality is, to be sure, practically impossible to live; one cannot in any case, and by definition, organize it. […]. And I well recognize that this concept of pure hospitality can have no legal or political status. No state can write it into its laws." (Derrida 2003: 129)

The political dimension of hospitality of visitation arises precisely out of its externality to the state, which by extension is also an externality to a capitalist market dependent on the authority of the state. The friction between hospitality of visitation and state bureaucracy becomes evident when people expect local authorities and banks to adhere to the principles of hospitality of visitation. It becomes even more tangible when civil servants and bank clerks occasionally act in accordance with such expectations. After all, which government, and which bank, could function if bureaucratic rules were set aside and replaced by personal relations and trust?

It strikes me as hurried to suggest that people in Pajala welcome the mine as part of a political dream. Yet, the imagined totality that we can see a glimpse of in the way insiders describe what it means for them to live in Pajala is a vision that is not reducible to something personal, but one which is intimately related to what kind of society or world they wish to live in. This vision is political in an objective sense — in the same sense that hospitality of visitation is objectively antithetical to a state — even though Pajala's resident do not think about it in those terms. This is why the promise that the mine offers seems reminiscent of the specter in Derrida's (1994) vocabulary, which, as Vighi and Feldner suggest (2007: 39), is precisely a *promise* of ontological fullness.

In this chapter, I hope I have shown how, although not necessarily unique to Pajala, in the sense that it exists nowhere else, the form of life my informants appreciate nonetheless cannot be enjoyed elsewhere *by them*. The nexus of social relations that make you who you are — the people who have witnessed your whole life — is tied geographically to Pajala. Pajala is also the geographic location of the "collective audience," to again appeal to

Graeber (2001: 76), that recognizes the value of the act of leaving your car unlocked. Removed from that audience, one is also removed from the symbolic order through which certain actions can be recognized as valuable. As I argued in Chapter 4, we get a sharper view of this form of life and its allure to my informants by examining how they perceive life outside this social structure, away from the audience that recognizes the value of hospitality, safety and trust. Chapter 8 and 9 therefore explores my informants' perspective of life away from Pajala.

8. Diaspora

When Northland Resources went bankrupt in December 2014, Frida felt that life in Pajala had hit a dead end. She had lost her job as a truck-driver for Northland and had to find a new job. When long-distance commuting to Gällivare seemed the only option available, she decided to leave Pajala and move to Luleå. Through her description of life in Luleå, outside the nexus of relations she enjoys at home, it is possible to discern somewhat clearer what seems implicit in the inside-outside relations in Pajala — that social relations are constitutive of people's identity. She said she had never really liked Luleå, but sick and tired of everything, Frida decided to give it a chance. "It can't be that bad, I thought, everybody lives there," she said, "but very soon I felt that Luleå was not for me." Frida's explanation as to why she did not appreciate Luleå deserves to be cited in detail because it contains a number of telling word choices:

> It was so anonymous. I was never really content with my free time. The guy I was seeing at the time had a boat and we were out in the archipelago, he had a cottage on one of the islands, so it wasn't that, you could do everything you wanted, but it just wasn't home. It just wasn't as beautiful. I felt as if I was just doing nothing, and as soon as I had the chance, I wanted to go home [to Pajala]. […] I didn't like [my daughter's] preschool, it was impersonal and anonymous. You felt as if you were just one in the crowd, as if it didn't really matter if we existed or not, I guess that's the feeling I had. If [my daughter] would have quit her recreational activities, no one would have cared, the leader didn't even have the time to learn the names of all children because they were so many: one child more or less, it doesn't really matter, there are twenty kids in line to take my daughter's place if she'd quit…That's the feeling I had [when we lived there]. Maybe it's a little exaggerated, but it's how I felt, like one in the crowd and as if [we] didn't matter, [and I think it is because] I'm used to living in a small place where everyone is so

> very important and where you make things happen out of your own work. And then you come to [Luleå] and you don't have to do anything and no one cares, the fact that I'm there is not important to anyone [Swe.: "man gör varken till eller från"]. It's such a big contrast and to me it was almost as if it was pointless, like what does it matter when nothing is important, when it's only me on my little treadmill, going to work, paying my bills, and then I'm supposed to enjoy myself by attending some activity that someone else has arranged for me? And I take my girl to activities that were like…as if it was all a big machinery. Pointless. And I didn't get any boost or stimulus from being in nature [like I did at home in Pajala] and I thought, how can it feel so different? So, I went into the forest, thinking that it must be beautiful here, too, and I just felt like I wanted to go home. All in all, it just felt wrong. […] People go to Umeå to study, and when they want to come home, they move to Luleå, thinking that's home, but to me, having lived here all my life and then come to Luleå…it was just such a cultural clash.

Frida came home to Pajala after a couple of years in Luleå. She found a house she liked and a job she could endure. Since Kaunis Iron resumed operation of the mine, she dreams about taking up her old job as a truck driver and move to a village about 70 kilometers from Pajala, where she lived before she moved to Luleå. The village is small, around 100 residents, and doors and cars are left unlocked. Everybody knows everybody else, and help each other out when needed. The tiny house where she lived is still in her family's possession, and she spends a lot of time there when she is not working. I visited her in the house for the first time in August 2019. The house is at the very end of the public road; if you pass it, you end up on a narrow dirt road that takes you through forest and vast mires. As the house is at the very edge of the power grid and water pipeline, a cast iron range for cooking and heating stands side by side with the electric stove in the kitchen. Power outages can last for hours and are not uncommon in the wintertime. We sat on the wooden couch in the kitchen and Frida asked me what I thought about the future, about life and work and children and how to fit everything together. Frida looked out the window. A four-wheeler with a man and a boy came out of the forest and continued slowly down the road. The boy sat in the front and the man sat behind him, helping him to steer.

"That man is always out with his grandchildren on that four-wheeler, the kids love it," Frida said. Before I had the chance to respond, Frida began to answer her own question. She said that even though she likes the village and

the house where she lives now, she longs for a different kind of life in this small village:

> I'm thinking about selling the other house, thinking we could live here, and I could work as a truck driver for the mine again. Besides, there's not really a community feeling [in the other village] at least not if you compare it to what it's like here. Here we did everything together, and there are always things that need to be done — clear the routes for the snowmobiles through the forest, repair the hunting huts and the small bridges across all the creeks before the hunting season, those kinds of things. Here it's like everyone's so very important.

She returned to her appreciation for life in the small village at a later occasion:

> [Life in that village] felt real. People just walked right in whenever, things were truly unaffected, and we did everything together. There was no such thing as an invented activity; we just did what needed to be done. Like when the old fellers called my husband one morning and they needed him to come and help fix a broken cable bridge [out in the forest.] One of them had a big tractor so it just made sense that he's the one who's going to fix it.

Frida would still pay her bills, her daughter would still go to preschool and attend evening activities, she would, on one level, do exactly the same things as she did in Luleå. Yet, life in this village also offers other means and ways of making the world one's own; other ways of appropriating it, shaping it, and through that appropriation also shape and realize oneself. The crucial point here is that this kind of social-realization, this particular way of appropriating the world and making it one's own, depends on the social structure that I discussed in Chapter 7. Detached from the people who have been long-term witnesses to your life — to whom you are *someone* because they know not only you, but your history, your family, the origin of your family name, what village you are from, a certain form of life and self-realization is, as Frida's story demonstrates, no longer possible.

8.1 “As if it was all Pointless”

In Frida’s description, life in Luleå is anonymous and impersonal. She feels as if she is just one in the crowd, someone who is not important to anyone, who is struggling on her own treadmill. Despite good access to her favorite activities, it just does not feel like home, because in Luleå she is “supposed to enjoy [herself] by attending some activity that someone else has arranged for [her]”. The vocabulary that Frida uses to describe her experience of life in Luleå corresponds quite closely to that which is used to characterize a state of alienation — visibly so, even, if we pay close attention to Rahel Jaeggi’s understanding of the notion as a descriptive social psychological term rather than a metaphysical one.

What strikes me as particularly central to Frida’s experience of alienation is the depersonalization of human relations. Concrete, human relations are emptied of their uniqueness, particularity and nonfungibility — to paraphrase Jaeggi (2014: 4–5) — and function instead as abstractions. It seems to Frida that when her daughter attends one of her activities, her unique qualities and personality are unimportant to the point where the leaders do not even bother to learn her name, because if she would drop out, there are twenty other children in line to literally take her place. Frida also describes how life in Luleå appears as given rather than created, as a place where you do not have to make things happen out of your own effort. Instead of engaging in the creation of her own experience, she is supposed to be entertained by consuming the creativity and labor of others. This is, I believe, an example of how a “relation of appropriation” — ”the subject’s power to act and form and to impose its own meaningful mark on the world” (Jaeggi 2014: 39) — is experienced as disturbed, which is what Jaeggi places at the center of alienation in her re-working of the concept, which seeks to free it from its “essentialist or metaphysical presuppositions” (2014: 32).

What Frida describes is the experience of having been disengaged from the social relations that constitute her as a person. She is detached from the place (geographically and socially) where she is allowed to reproduce herself as a unique individual who carries meaning for, and importance to, others: where she is involved in a collective, social, creation of her experiences. In Luleå, at least in Frida’s experience, her uniqueness, particularity and importance are turned into an abstraction. She feels that she is one in the crowd and that her presence is replaceable or even unimportant to others.

8.2 Dispersed and Lost in the Crowd

Frida's experience is, on one level, personal and can speak for no one else except her; we must remain open to the possibility that some of those who have left Pajala feel differently, maybe they even love living somewhere other than Tornedalen. The anonymity of big city life offers a different kind of freedom, which, while unbearable to Frida, doubtlessly allures others. Likewise, the social structure through which Frida feels that she can realize herself has its downsides, which Frida and other informants acknowledge. It is both good and bad, it was often remarked, because this familiarity could get to the point where "others know more about you than you do yourself". Frida even said that she could see how it could be considered "unequal" and "unjust" that some enjoy benefits and others do not, due to personal ties and relations. It is not difficult to imagine that some people genuinely prefer the anonymity and "impersonal" relations over life in Pajala. However, during my time in Pajala I have encountered similar stories about the experience of leaving Pajala that resemble Frida's. Therefore, I believe that it would be fruitful for the investigation at hand to allow the interpretation of Frida's relatively clearly articulated experience, not to speak for anyone else, but rather to cast light on other stories about what it feels like to leave Pajala. When considered separately, these stories add up to a rather disparate collection of personal experiences of emptiness, homesickness and nostalgia for times gone by. When read through the lens of alienation provided by Frida's story, however, a degree of intertextuality emerges that renders them possible to interpret as a plurality of expressions of one and the same social phenomenon.

8.3 Birgit and Thorvald: Returning to Your Roots

It takes about twenty minutes to drive to Sahavaara from Pajala. Seventeen minutes on the brand-new road built for Kaunis Iron's 90-ton trucks. The road is broad, has new asphalt and good visibility. For the last three minutes you pass a number of abandoned houses and homesteads along a dirt road. Northland had negotiated with homeowners in Sahavaara and Kaunisvaara and bought some of the houses, planning already then for an expansion of the mine. In hindsight, Sahavaara's residents could have stayed in the village for at least one more decade had they wished. Birgit was outside, I parked the car on the road, but she told me to park in the yard. Tall fir and pine trees

surrounded the property on two sides. Two men stood further away in the yard, outside a shed with open doors and discussed something in Meänkieli. It was mid-July but they, just like me, wore rubber boots and long-sleeved sweaters. It must be something other than just small talk, I thought, because they both seemed very engaged in the conversation. They did not take notice of me, even though they must have seen me. Neither of them said hello. Birgit, who I had spoken to on the phone the day before, welcomed me into the house; she had set the kitchen table with coffee cups and buns. We sat down at each of the short ends of the big kitchen table. She did not serve the coffee, which I thought was strange at first, but then I remembered something an informant had told me two years ago: serving coffee means that the visit is coming to an end. Offering visitors coffee right away is, at least to the woman who told me this, a subtle signal that you want the visitor to leave when the coffee is finished. "If they put the coffee on the table right away, you just think 'do you want me out of the house right away, or what is the matter?' she had said.

Birgit and I started to talk, but it was difficult to keep the conversation going since one of the men walked in and out of the house, shouting something in Meänkieli to the man in the yard. "Something is wrong with the electricity, he's here to look at it now, good thing to be friends with an electrician", he said in Swedish, and then, "I'm sorry I'm interrupting you all the time".

"He is looking for something", Birgit said, "he never knows where he put his stuff and he is not very good at finding them. He just does not see them". This was Birgit's husband, Thorvald, I learned when the electrician left and he joined us in the kitchen.

Birgit grew up on a farm in Kaunisvaara, only a few kilometers north of Sahavaara. The two villages are so closely integrated that some even refer to them as two parts of the same. Thorvald has his roots further north, in the Muonio Valley, close to the village where Frida, Julia and I watched the sun set over the village school that had been turned into a junkyard. This small house is not their permanent home, at least not for the moment. Perhaps when they are both retired, they can live here permanently, even if by then, Kaunis Iron's plans for expansion are realized and they will be only a couple of hundred meters from the mining area. I asked Birgit what makes this place so special to her.

“The family roots,” she said. When her parents died one of her brothers took over the “home farm”. “The ‘home farm’, I still call it that” she said. “It wasn’t very important to me to buy that exact house where I grew up, but when I walk there, just behind that house, I feel like this is where my roots are tied to the ground.” Just behind that house, the barrier between past and present is fragile; right there where Birgit’s roots are tied to the ground, memories and episodes from bygone times can be evoked and re-lived. “It is about memories that you want to recreate”, Birgit said. I recalled an interview with a man in Sahavaara from a few days earlier, “Sure, you can go fishing anywhere, even in Kiruna, but it is not the same as the fishing waters where you have been fishing since you were five years old”, he had said when we talked about his fear of losing his home should Kaunis Iron expand.

We talked about Birgit’s husband who was still outside with the electrician:

> He is from Kitkiöjärvi, but his family left already in 1965. They sold everything and just moved south, so he has nothing to return to. But every Friday evening the car was packed and as soon as they finished work, they got in the car and just drove home in one go, from Skåne to Kitkiöjärvi”. This is a 1200 kilometer drive.

When Thorvald joined us at the table after a while, he said that his family was forced to move when the Swedish state “was in the process of deporting people to the cities”. His father lost his job at the local sawmill when it was decided that the timber from the area was going to be ripped at sawmills down by the coast. The family lived in a couple of cities in southern Sweden before they ended up in Stockholm, but one day Thorvald applied for a job at the Swedish telecommunication agency, Televerket.

“Not because it was a particularly interesting job with a particularly high salary, but only because it would let me come home”. That is how Thorvald finally made his way back home, after many years in the diaspora. It is in Tornedalen, in Muonio, where “roots and belonging” are found, roots that reach far back in time. There is kinship and “cousins and grandchildren and when you meet them you know who they are right away”, Thorvald said. It has been a very homogenous area with people in small villages with families and their feuds, but no one else, no outsider is allowed to say or do anything to the family or to other members of the village, Thorvald explained.

"So, you lived most of your childhood and early adulthood in southern Sweden?" I asked Thorvald, slightly surprised that I could not detect even the slightest trace of the characteristic southern accent in his speech. "Judging from your distinct Tornedalen accent it sounds to me as if you've never been further south than Piteå", I said jokingly. Thorvald laughed.

"Really? I'm very pleased to hear that! And I'm pleased every time I'm away from home and meet someone else who can hear I'm from here, and immediately you start to talk about which village you are from and who you are related to".

Thorvald does not say anything at all about what it was like to grow up in southern Sweden. Not one word about something like a cultural clash or feelings of pointlessness. Yet, three details in his story open it to an interpretation that centers on the same unpleasant feeling of detachment from family, place or cultural milieu described by Frida. First, Thorvald says that his family was forced to move when his father lost his job around the time when the Swedish state "was in the process of deporting people to the cities". Second, although Thorvald grew up more than 1200 kilometers away from the farmstead his parents sold when he was just a boy, he never ceased thinking about it as his home. Neither did his parents, it seems, considering that they took every chance they had to pack the car and drive home. Lastly, that Thorvald's story is one about forced detachment from social involvements, family, place of origin, community, and cultural milieu becomes clear when he describes why he wanted to return home to Tornedalen: because that is where he belongs, through kinship, language and roots. In this sense, I think Thorvald's experience of belonging to a place and to people from whom he has been forcefully detached, captures the "relation of relationlessness", which Jaeggi places at the heart of the experience of alienation (2014: ix). She writes,

> Thus, alienation denotes relationlessness of a particular kind: a detachment or separation from something that in fact belongs together, the loss of a connection between two things that nevertheless stand in relation to one another. Being alienated from something in which one is in fact involved or to which one is in fact related−or in any case ought to be. (Jaeggi 2014: 25)

Ideas about what things belong together are not lacking in theories about alienation. Central to Marx's theory of alienation is the idea of an original unity

between man and land[14]. The separation of people from their land (through primitive accumulation, in Marx's version) creates precisely this relation of relationlessness, a separation of elements that belong together. I will refrain from making claims about any original or natural unity between Thorvald and his home village. Rather, I take his own narration of forced displacement and belonging to indicate that, on the level of personal experience, the move to southern Sweden constituted the separation of things that ought to belong together. Put differently, Thorvald presents a meaningful narrative in which he belongs in a certain place, through kinship, language and culture. Hence, detachment from that place evokes the experience of the kind of alienating separation captured in the concept "relation of relationlessness".

8.4 Mimi, Gunnar and Annika: The Things that Belong and Ought to Be Together

A similar experience of separation between things that ought to belong together underlies Mimi's choice of words when she told me that although she had lived in other parts of Sweden for some time, she had never referred to these places as "home". Home was, and will always be, her childhood village, the farm where she had lived with her parents as a girl. "The apartment" is simply how she referred to all other "homes" except that childhood farm.

Gunnar seems to describe the same thing. Despite having lived in Pajala for 35 years, "home" is still the village 70 kilometers from Pajala that he left at the age of sixteen. "People treat me like home there, and that is where I feel at home. I know everything about everyone". We can contemplate the more fundamental sentiment that underlies his experience of not belonging anywhere other than Tornedalen, neither in Sweden, nor in Finland:

> I don't feel Swedish. I really don't. If I go to Umeå…it's just not…There's something with the Finnish [language and heritage]. It's very closely connected to the language, but there is more to it, something I have never quite managed to describe. But I'm not Finnish either. I don't feel Finnish. Absolutely not. […] I've always felt like that. I remember very clearly living [in southern Sweden] to attend high school, and around that age, seventeen, eighteen, I had a real longing to just say something in Finnish, despite the fact that I didn't speak it [my parents spoke

[14] I return to Marx and alienation in the final section of Chapter 9.

> Finnish, to each other, but never to me]. So, despite not speaking Finnish I just had to say something in Finnish, and I was lucky because there were two other boys from Pajala at that school, and they both spoke Finnish.

"Finnish" in the quote above refers to Meänkieli. What emerges in this short quote is thus a close, partly inarticulable, connection to language and place. This connection — this feeling of belonging and attachment to a certain village or to Tornedalen — even predates, in some cases, the subject's experience of actually living there. Annika did not move to her "home village" until she was over twenty years old. She was born in Kiruna, and moved with her family to Pajala when she was ten years old. She moved back to Kiruna for a couple of years as an adult, but did not like it at all, she said:

> Then we moved to [a particular village in Pajala municipality] and that's when we moved home. Although I had never lived there, it was nonetheless home. I have my family and my roots there and that is a very strong bond [Swe.: "och det sitter hårt"].

The strong bond between Annika and her "home village" is thus "logically, ontologically, or historically" (Jaeggi 2014: 25) implied before she moved there.

A similar tie is perhaps implied in the idea that people who have left Tornedalen "are living in the diaspora" [Swe. "bo i förskingringen"]. It is, after all, only possible to be dispersed if you somehow belong together in the first place. The stories recounted in this chapter let us catch a glimpse of what it is like to be dispersed from Tornedalen. Annika's laconic and succinct answer to my question of what it was she did not like about Kiruna, adds to this description: "It is a fucking labor camp". It was neither the first, nor the last time I heard the labor camp metaphor. Neither is Kiruna the only "labor camp" I heard about. Erik, a man in his mid-forties who returned to Pajala after fifteen years of studies and work in southern Sweden, thought of the whole capital region, Mälardalen, as one big, unintelligible labor camp [Swe.: "arbetslägret Mälardalen"]. According to Erik, no one in their right mind would choose to live there. Annika seemed certain that she was far from alone in thinking that Kiruna is a "labor camp". In fact, she expressed that this was a shared view among the inhabitants of Tornedalen, "we [the

people of Tornedalen] have this view, and we [would] much rather have a split life than [move to Kiruna]". It is to the split life that I devote the following chapter.

9. The Split Life

The stories recounted in Chapter 8 center on alienation induced by displacement. The "split life," which in this context refers to a life that is divided by long distance or bi-weekly commuting, is a means to escape alienation by displacement. It follows from Annika's description that a split life achieves this goal, at least partially, by splitting life in two parts divided by the commute: one lived in Tornedalen and another in the "labor camp." However, the split inflicted by long-distance commuting itself has tangible consequences.

The "labor camp" in Kiruna is central to the stories about the split life. Kiruna is located almost 200 kilometers northwest of Pajala, and its history and existence is inseparable from that of the state-owned mining company LKAB. Founded around 1900 as an appendix to the mine, Kiruna remains to this day dominated by iron ore extraction. The decision to move (or tear down and rebuild) the entire city in order to enable further ore extraction illustrates this fact [see López 2021; Nilsson 2009 LKAB n.d.]. Besides Kiruna, the mining town of Gällivare, located 160 km west of Pajala, figures frequently in the stories about the split life. People commute to Kiruna or Gällivare almost exclusively to work in the mining industry, either directly for the mining company or for their subcontractors. No available statistics describe the frequency of long-distance commuting in Tornedalen in a way that is meaningful to this thesis.[15] Yet, judging from the way people talk about the commute, the words they use, their tone of voice or even the frequency with which the topic enters conversations about life in Pajala, we

[15] Statistics from Statistics Sweden indicate how many people commute to and from a certain community for work. However, this says nothing about how far people travel to work. It would not be surprising if the frequency of cross-municipal commuting is higher in the Stockholm-Uppsala region, on account of the fact that the municipalities are geographically smaller and well connected through good roads and public transportation networks.

have reason to assume that it is not only common, but a significant aspect of life in Tornedalen. The kind of long-distance, bi-weekly commuting even has its own humorous moniker, *tornedalsrallyt*, The Tornedalen Race, which refers to the increased traffic flow caused by commuters to and from work on Friday and Sunday evenings.

While commuting to Kiruna or Gällivare offers the possibility of living in Pajala, it nonetheless takes its toll on family life. This is how Vanja, a fifty-something year old woman who lives in Pajala with her husband and teenage son, puts it when we discussed commuting:

> Well yes. Everybody commutes, that goes without saying for all the people in the northern part of this country. It is insane, really, that you are not there for half of your children's early years because you have to go away and work every other week.

Vanja does not have to commute, neither does her husband, but she has many friends who jokingly refer to themselves as seven-seven wives.

> I have so many friends that…we joke and we say 'I'm a seven-seven wife: seven days with a husband, seven days without.' And it's really not easy to live like that, because then you have to be the one to take care of everything alone, plan everything, the logistics of the family. And then when the partner comes back, if he comes back over the weekend, then what comes home might be just a rug that has to sleep for the first twenty-four hours, because they work very long shifts.

Fredrik, who was briefly introduced in Chapter 5, is well acquainted with the seven-seven lifestyle. He knows both what it is like to commute and to have a father who commutes to Kiruna. Let us return to the kitchen table at Fredrik's parents' house in Pajala in October 2019.

9.1 Escaping the Labor Camp

"I'm sorry I can't offer you coffee, the power is out." I thought it was only in the smaller village where I stayed, but Fredrik said it was probably the entire municipality, an area bigger than Stockholm County.

"Commuting is challenging," Fredrik said. "It eats at your private life and it eats at your closest relationships." His dad, a zealous mine advocate who I interviewed during my first fieldwork in 2017, commuted when Fredrik was a child. According to Fredrik, it was hard having one parent who was away a lot. However, for his own part, it was the only available option. He trained as an electrician in high school, but when he graduated there were hardly any jobs in Pajala.

"The Monday after graduation, I started in Kiruna, seven-seven. That was the only available alternative, commute or move," he said. He worked a lot when he lived in Kiruna:

> When you work away, you take all the overtime you can get. All extra shifts, all emergency duty. There is nothing else to do anyway. You go home to your apartment that the company rents for you, you eat, you go to bed, you watch some series. Your whole life is on pause, so you have to make sure it is worth it. And it is not worth it until you start making a lot of money.

Despite the money, long distance commuting eats away at your closest relations and also at your health. "Many of the older men who travel a lot in their work, who have been in this bi-weekly commuting for a long time, have problems with alcohol. They drink when they are alone. That's a well-known fact," Fredrik explained. Regardless of the accuracy of this statement, that is, whether or not the prevalence of alcoholism is higher than in the rest of the population, the statement illustrates just how taxing this lifestyle is acknowledged to be.

Since the mine in Kaunisvaara opened, Fredrik has worked in Pajala. If he can avoid it, he prefers not to visit Kiruna, "not even during the Kiruna festival," he said. He said he has developed an "aversion" to Kiruna and associates the place exclusively with work: "Kiruna is a labor camp, you are there and you work and it is such a relief when the work week is up and you can go home".

I asked what Fredrik's hopes had been when the mine opened.

"Well, my hopes were that I could work there all my life. […] But you knew things would go to hell. It was too good to be true," he said.

Though it would not be incorrect to describe Fredrik's appreciation for the mine in Kaunisvaara as a hope for employment opportunities − my hopes were that I could work there all my life — Fredrik's description of the seven-

seven life testify to the existential drama undetectable at the surface level of his straightforward answer to my question about his hopes. Isabelle, one of the few women I have talked to who have worked in the mining industry in Kiruna, describes a similar experience to Fredrik's.

9.2 The Day Hell Freezes Over

Isabelle is around thirty and lives in a house close to Pajala with her husband and two small children. She is well acquainted with the taxing lifestyle of long-distance commuting — how boring it is to spend the weeks in a tiny apartment in Kiruna, and also what it is like to have a husband who you only see every other week. I met Isabelle in October 2017, three years after Northland Resources went bankrupt and almost a year before Kaunis Iron announced that they would resume production. Isabelle worked three different jobs: some hours at the gas station, a couple of days a week at a pre-school and a few hours at a grocery store. She worked in the mine in Kaunisvaara when Northland Resources went bankrupt in 2014, and before that in the mine in Kiruna. Although she requested it several times, she was not assigned a seven-seven schedule. Instead, she had to drive back and forth to Kiruna on Friday afternoons and Sunday evenings. Just like Fredrik, she spent most of her time off from work in the tiny apartment that LKAB had arranged for her. There was nothing wrong with the work or the colleagues.

"We could laugh and have fun, but then they went home to their families or met their friends, and I went home to an empty apartment," she said.

When Northland Resources opened, she did not apply for a job there right away. Like Fredrik, she felt that the whole thing seemed too good to be true. Many of her older colleagues at LKAB said that they were sure that the mine in Kaunisvaara would not last long, that it was nothing to take seriously. Yet, some months after the mine opened, Isabelle felt she had to give it a shot.

"I thought that if I only get three months at home, three months that I don't have to be in Kiruna, I'm happy with that." She had to quit her job at LKAB as she was not granted a leave of absence, but her boss told her that she was always welcome back. "The day hell freezes over, that's when I'll come back, that's what I thought," Isabelle told me.

She got almost two full years at home before Northland went bankrupt and she lost her job. She, like most people, describes the time around the bankruptcy as hopeless. People who had moved to Pajala to work in the mine

and who had no other connections to the municipality moved out. Those who wanted to stay had to go back to commuting. “So many people went back to [commuting] and felt really bad when [Northland] went bankrupt,” she said. While Isabelle did not want to move, she and her husband had to confront that possibility:

> We had the discussion, my husband and I, and I said that if destiny plays out in such a way that they dismantle everything, the concession plant, then we to have to move…Then we have no reason to live here anymore, but we will wait until that day, when there is nothing whatsoever left to stay for. And I think this is how most people think. They really waited… [until the] last person turns out the light, or however the saying goes…

Yet, for Isabelle, the thought of going back to work in Kiruna felt just as unpleasant as the thought of moving. “I know what I was thinking, that now it’s over. This was it. Just the thought of having to start commuting again provoked so much fucking anguish. So, I thought ‘ok, I have to find some other solution.’” The solution for Isabella is working three different jobs, and for her husband to work in Kiruna seven-seven. She admits that it is taxing, that it is a way of life that entails sacrifices, but it is at least better than moving away:

> You make sacrifices when you live like this. I have a friend who has lived in Luleå for almost ten years, and she sometimes says, “I don’t get how you manage to be alone for a whole week. I count the seconds until my husband comes home from work, and we live in the same city, I get to sleep next to him every night, and he sees [our son] every day. Your husband sees [your children] only every other week. [and when he is away working] you have to take care of everything. But I know that if I would have stayed in the village, it would have been the same for me.” To get away from Pajala, only 200 kilometers, realize that you can have a nine-to-five job, and see each other every day…Sadly that’s not how it works up here. Not to the same extent, at least. Some people are lucky enough, but you think of it as a privilege, to see your husband every day. That only happens when [my husband] is free from work in the summer. Since he is working seven-seven he gets a long summer vacation, seven weeks this summer. […] If it wasn’t for this I honestly don’t know for how long I could endure this kind of relationship, this way of life.

At the beginning of this section, I said that the "split life" is a means to escape alienation brought about by displacement. Yet, the stories of Isabelle, Frederik, and Vanja illustrate that this kind of life is in itself taxing, associated with sacrifices and struggles. It offers the escape from one kind of alienation at the cost of another; it simply splits, fragments, life in another way.

9.3 An Intertextuality of Alienation

The stories presented in chapters 7, 8 and 9 voice experiences of home-sickness and nostalgia, of pointlessness and emptiness, of displacement and uprooting. I suggested in Section 8.2 that, if treated as pieces of a puzzle rather than as separate stories about separate lived experiences, a certain intertextuality emerges between the stories. It is possible to understand them as expressions of a social phenomenon rather than as isolated experiences. This approach to narrative analysis breaks open the seal imposed on a story by interpretations that take a story's meaning to be intrinsic to the story itself, or inseparable from the speaker's conscious intentions, in order to reach for a layer of social reality that is not directly accessible through the immediate verbal form of the particular story in question. Some of the stories emphasize the lack of meaningful life in a place away from home. Others emphasize more explicitly something about home that the storyteller deeply misses. However, the theme of separation from certain kinds of human relations is notably present in all of them. This is why it is fruitful to capture the experience that emerges from the intertextual interpretation of the stories as experiences of "detachment or separation from something that in fact belongs together, the loss of a connection between two things that nevertheless stand in relation to one another" (Jaeggi 2014: 25).

The variation in vocabulary and focus in the stories does not necessarily present any problem to an interpretation that captures them as expressions of the same kind of alienation. To the contrary, loneliness is inherent to the experience of alienation as such. Alienation is, for the subject, a private, inexplicit experience, which tends to evade distinct and direct verbal form. This, it would seem, makes it logical to expect a certain variation in vocabulary and focus when people describe such experiences. Perhaps this is why operationalization of the notion of alienation is so complicated. Critics of the Marxist notion of alienation have targeted its "failure […] to find an accurate measurement of the levels or intensity of alienation" (Healy

2020: 27). Jaeggi concedes that alienation is a concept with "fuzzy edges" that resembles and occasionally overlaps with concepts such as reification, inauthenticity and anomie (Jaeggi 2014: 3). While "fuzzy edges" is rarely a merit of theoretical concepts, the value of the notion rests here less with its descriptive precision in social psychology than with the analytical question it raises. Alienation is, after all, not only a widespread subjective experience. Integral to the concept (and I speak now of the Marxian notion of it) is also the premise that experiences of alienation are produced by historical conditions that inform the concrete setting in which this subjective experience is formed. Alienation is thus a profoundly dialectical concept in that it describes a sentiment with a clear place in history. When we talk about alienation, we also talk about the process that brought it into being, or, in a sharper phrase: its historical genesis is inherent in the concept itself. This means that even when the experience of alienation is private, lonely, and inarticulate — felt as subjective — it is a concept that points towards larger material circumstances surrounding those whose feelings or mental state it may be deployed to describe.

Thus, the deployment of the concept of alienation may actually serve to redeem the fragmented, lonely, individual, and particular experience in two steps. Firstly, by linking such particular experiences to each other, turning them into a social experience, reassembling them into a whole that does not manage to escape our attention. Secondly, it is possible to reconstruct the historical conditions under which this experience was formed. Such reconstruction would situate personal experiences of loss, homesickness, melancholia and detachment in a historical context where the existence of such emotions acquires a tangible meaning. In the following section, I will attempt to outline the historical conditions for the experience of relationlessness on which the stories in this chapter center. My hope is that such reconstruction will provide not only a fuller understanding of the stories presented in this chapter, but also show that the popular praise for the mine in Kaunisvaara occupies a particular place in history.

9.4 Escaping Alienation through Wage Work

To Marx, alienation was not merely a social phenomenon, but a social phenomenon conditioned by the specific workings of the capitalist mode of production (Marx 1988: 69–114). Marx described how the separation of the

sphere of reproduction and the sphere of production ensnares humans in productive activities that have nothing to do with their lives, but which nonetheless consume the better part of them. When humans' productive and creative capacities are locked up in activities that are detached from their personal relations and self-fulfillment, they become estranged in four different ways: from themselves, from their fellow humans, and from the process and product of their labor (Marx 1988: 69–78). In this way, work (the production of our means of subsistence) becomes a sphere entirely separate from the affective labor and social relations that constitute who we are. However, for Marx, the geographical separation of the spheres is not the hinge; in theory, it does not really matter if the workplace where the worker performs alienating labor is located 100 meters or 100 kilometers away from home. For Marx, the sphere of production and the sphere of reproduction are just as separated, and thus the worker just as alienated, regardless of whether the workplace is located in Kiruna or in Kaunisvaara. The crucial point for Marx is rather the qualitative change that the labor process undergoes once subjected to capital. In a well-known passage from the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts,* Marx described estranged (alienated) labor in the following way:

> The fact that labor is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. […] His labor is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labor. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it. (Marx 1988: 74)

Although Marx mentions four inseparable aspects of alienation, his analysis of the experience of alienation takes the workers' estrangement from their product and their working process as the starting point. Humans' alienation from themselves and from each other is an "immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labor" (Marx 1988: 78).

However, the stories in this chapter seem to indicate that we need to shift our focus somewhat in order to understand the experience of alienation in Pajala. People do not, after all, complain about wage-labor as such. What

they complain about is the long distance between the sphere of reproduction and the sphere of social reproduction, which either severs you from family, friends and the relations that make you who you are, or reduces the time you get to enjoy at home to a minimum. This indicates that it is the long distance between the place of production and the place of reproduction that is key for the experience of alienation, rather than the character of the work one performs once away in the "labor camp." Piecing this together is not hard; working for a wage in the mine in Kaunisvaara is not the same, not as alienating, as working for a wage in LKAB's mine in Kiruna, because it does not pull you away from the network of relations through which you constitute yourself. We are, as David Graeber noted in an essay on the implications of separation between the spheres of production and reproduction, "in large measure, simply the internalized accretion of [our] relations with others" (Graeber 2007: 101). Separated from those relations, one is also separated from oneself. In Pajala, (and this is what sets Pajala apart from larger urban areas and big cities), the social reproduction of oneself as a person takes place within a particular kind of historically produced social structure. This means that you are allowed to reproduce yourself as a person within a network of social relations, including family, extended family, friends, and acquaintances − people who are, as Sennett (2006) puts it, long-term witnesses to your life, and who perhaps have been so for generations. These long-term witnesses also include, it is worth noting, the people you do not like; the oddballs, the loners, someone whose grandfather perhaps quarreled with your grandfather over a piece of land, and they all make up the social structure in which the story about you and your life is told. Leave town, and there is no longer any social support for your own idea about yourself. You become cut-off, quite simply, from the possibility to actually experience yourself. It is precisely this last point that makes the long distance between the place of production and the place of social reproduction appear as an alienating separation of things that people feel belong or ought to be together. This explains why wage work on site in Pajala, in the Kaunisvaara mine or at other local businesses that may flourish because of the cash-flow it propels, offers an attractive option for many of Pajala's residents. The mine does after all offer the possibility to imagine a life where you can both work and reproduce yourself as such − remain entangled in the social structure that supports your understanding of who you are.

For Marx, estranged labor (from which the three other aspects of alienation can be deduced) originates in the forceful separation of peasants from their land, described in the final section of *Capital* as the process of primitive accumulation (Marx 1991 [1867]: 873–940). Marx theorized this separation primarily as a separation of humans from their means of production, as it forcefully untied the bond between man and land. Yet, this process was just as much a forceful separation of the organic mix of the production of things and the reproduction people, and there are good reasons to believe that something was lost in the process. Community relations must, in a very tangible way, have been turned into relations of relationlessness. A theory of alienation that centers on the separation of people from their means of social reproduction rather than the separation from their means of production could help us understand the role that geographic distance between home and workplace plays in the experience of alienation, as well as for people's appreciation for wage work.

Silvia Federici (2014 [2004]) allows us to imagine that the distance between the place of production and the place of social reproduction was crucial for people's attitudes to wage labor already in Early Modern Europe, at the very moment when capitalism began to strike up the rift between these two spheres. In her exploration of the link between the rise of capitalism and severe oppression of women in Europe, Federici notes that,

> Not surprisingly, with land expropriation came a change in the workers' attitude towards the wage. While in the Middle Ages wages could be viewed as an instrument of freedom (in contrast to the compulsion of the labor service), as soon as access to land came to an end wages began to be viewed as instruments of enslavement. (Federici 2014 [2004]: 72)

Federici's observation about early modern Europe becomes interesting for my purposes because it points us in a slightly different direction than Marx did on the matter of alienation and its relation to wage labor. Starting from Federici's observation, it could be argued that the engagement with wage labor — with all that it entails in terms of discipline, repetition, and new forms of instrumental relations — is acceptable, even appreciated, so long as we are not dislodged from the social relations through which we become who we are. Rather than taking as a starting point for the theory of alienation man's relation to his productive activity, and the estrangement that arises

from entanglement in capitalist labor relations, we could focus on the estrangement that bear on the detachment from, or disintegration of, the sphere / place of social reproduction. This does not contradict Marx's theory of alienation; it merely changes the focus, stressing that alienation pertains just as much to the dispossession of means of social reproduction as it does to the dispossession of means of production.

This means that it is not primarily against the backdrop of Marx's theory of alienation as a mental state inscribed in all workers under capitalism that we should look at the experiences glimpsed through the narratives presented in this chapter. What I have discussed in this chapter pertains to the separation, the split, which precedes the kind of pre-reflexive mental state of alienation that Marx locates in all people subsumed under capitalist living conditions − the separation of people from their social context through the process of primitive accumulation (Marx 1991 [1867]: 873–940). As the term implies, Marx assumed primitive accumulation to be a precondition for capitalism, which, once the capitalist mode of production had become dominant, plays only a minor role.[16] However, what I hope to have shown is that even though the separation of people from their means of production is completed, in Pajala as well as in Sweden and most of the world, the separation of people from their means of social reproduction still repeats itself at the very center of capitalism. The capitalist mode of production demands absolute flexibility from all of us. We need to follow capital in its cycles of investment and divestment, of crisis and expansion, of boom and bust, its seesaw motion (N. Smith 1984) between developed and under-developed regions. Such conditions demand the development of an "unusual sort of human being" (Sennett 2006: 5): a human being that must learn to live with discontinuity and uprooting. We must learn to migrate "from task to task, job to job [and] place to place" (Sennett 2006: 5). The value of previous experiences, friendships and acquaintances must be discounted, and so must everything that creates continuity and chronology for us as human beings. Our own narrative about who we are and where we belong must remain exposed to constant redaction and revision. Capital's demand for flexibility compels us to disregard concreteness and particularity to the benefit of the abstract, commensurable aspect of reality. Only a certain kind of human being, with a peculiar set of personality traits can prosper under

[16] David Harvey has argued that processes of a similar kind are integral to the functioning of capitalism (Harvey 2003).

such conditions, argues Sennett (2006: 3-5) in his excavation of the culture of contemporary capitalism. Therefore, it is not too far-fetched to assume that when social reproduction takes place within a social structure where non-capitalist, non-market, manystranded social relations still play a significant role, the detachment from such social relations is more likely to be consciously experienced as an alienating separation of things that ought to belong together, as opposed to when one's means of social reproduction are directly subjected to the needs of capital.

Hence, what the opening of a mine in Pajala offers is a geographic reunion of the place of reproduction and the place of production, which ameliorates, or makes less prominent, the experiences of alienation that result from the split life. I do not mean to suggest that the geographic reunion of these two spheres annul experiences or sensations of alienation all together; there are still plenty of ways in which you can be alienated, as Jaeggi underscores (Jaeggi 2014. See also Marcuse 2002 [1964]; Healy 2020; Alfonsson 2020). However, the analysis presented in this chapter makes it possible to grasp the joy over the mine in Kaunisvaara as relief before the possibility of reconstructing or reattaching what capitalism otherwise threatens to tear apart.

10. Dead Silence

Pajala, 16 August 2017

I dialed the number on the yellow Post-it note. I had received it from an informant when I mentioned that I had not been able to talk to someone who had a slightly more critical view of the mine than the official story. The man who answered the phone refused to be interviewed. He explained that because of his role as a professional journalist he wished to remain neutral and to preserve a sense of objectivity.

"I just interview people about their opinions, so you must find someone else to talk to," he said.

Despite this initial signal of rejection, the journalist went on talking. Eventually I said, "I was surprised to discover that everybody seems to be so positive." The voice on the other side of the line went silent for a second.

"There are those who have opposed [the mine]. I know it because I have interviewed them, but many of them do not dare to speak publicly about it. They are concerned about the environment. The environment and the trucks. All the noise pollution. The jobs are all that matter. Jobs, jobs, jobs. That there could be 300 new jobs. But no, there has not been any organized resistance to speak of," he said, and repeated that I must find someone else to talk to before we hung up.

***

The focus of the ethnographic chapters in this dissertation has been the form of life that people in Pajala wish to see reproduced through the capital influx from the mine. In this and the following chapter, I shift my focus to the perceived negative aspects of the mine in Kaunisvaara − the heavy traffic,

the noise, the displacement of residents in the vicinity of the mine and the environmental risks associated with mining. During the course of my exploration, however, I found that these concerns could not be disentangled from the silence that surrounds them. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, I have found Robin E. Sheriff's (2000) concept cultural censorship useful for conceptualizing the lack of debate and public criticism of the mine's negative aspects. Cultural censorship refers to a lacuna in the public discourse that is the outcome of neither political censorship, nor of the oppression of minorities or women, but rather of a collective effort to omit certain things from public debate. Sheriff writes:

> Although there may be meaningful, even profound, psychological motivations underlying this silence, it is socially codified. Unlike the activity of speech, which does not require more than a single actor, silence demands collaboration and the tacit communal understandings that such collaboration presupposes. (Sheriff 2000: 114)

Sheriff's notion of cultural censorship resonates with my informants' explanation as to why critique of the mine is lacking in public discourse. For example, while on the topic of the hefty resistance to the mine in Jokkmokk municipality, the following dialogue played out between myself and two informants, Clara and Elin.

> Clara: Gállok [Kallak, Jokkmokk municipality] is in my mind the most obvious example of colonization. A friend of mine has been involved in the resistance group seeking to stop the mine. […]. She told me that the battle [against the mining company] comes at a price when you oppose it.
>
> Katarina: It does not seem to be like that here.
>
> Clara: But that is because we are in an extremely vulnerable situation. Here, it is about surviving. So I think that people are averse [to the mine], but they do not express this openly.

> Elin: It is almost a form of political correctness, you know, at home you can feel averse [to the mine] but in public you must not [talk about it].

In a similar fashion, Sofia, whose story is recounted in Section 10.6, referred to the lack of criticism as a *tystnadskultur,* which translates literally to a *culture of silence*, but which may also be rendered as a *conspiracy of silence.*

Yet another anecdote that illustrates rather than labels the co-creation of this silence concerns the public response to a documentary about the mine that aired on national TV when the mine was still in the planning stage. In the Meänkieli-language documentary, a filmmaker from Pajala portrays the ambiguous feelings towards the mining project on the part of the residents of Kaunisvaara, who would be forced to move if Northland's plans were to become reality. In 2017, I got the chance to interview the filmmaker and ask her about how the film was received in Pajala. She was convinced that everyone in Pajala would have seen it. A film in Meänkieli about the event of the century and broadcast on public service TV to boot — surely everyone had seen it! And yet, she said, very few had commented on the film. In her own words, the film was met with *dead silence*.

The following stories illustrate *how* this silence is created and maintained, but also more precisely *what* the silence works to exclude from articulation. I turn to the question of *why* the topic is at all sensitive, and subject to this culture of silence, in Chapter 11.

10.1 Another Yellow Post-it Note

Pajala, 9 October 2017

Another post-it note with yet another telephone number. It belonged to a woman whose name had cropped up time and again during my inquiries for contacts who might express criticism of the mine. She picked up when I called, but like the journalist I had spoken to in August she did not want to be interviewed.

"Do you have anything to do with the mining company? Are you associated with Luleå University of Technology? Who is funding your research?" she asked me. I said I have nothing to do with either the mining company or the university in Luleå, but to no avail.

“There have been so many different researchers here, writing reports for the mining company, so I don’t want to talk to any more of you.”

I never got the chance to interview this woman but I have been told that she has sought appeal against official decisions made in favor of the mining company by local authorities. The official records confirm this, which suggests that the woman is one of the most persistent and committed critics of the mine. Interestingly enough, she is also described as an outsider, with phrases like “she is a little bit special,” “she is a bit odd” and “she is a bit different.” This, to me, was the first subtle indication that social pressure of some kind was involved in deterring mining critics from voicing their criticism. The following stories by Kalle and Louise offer further insights into this deterrence.

10.2 Kalle: A Different Day of Joy

Kalle is the most uncompromising mining critic I have interviewed. He is about sixty years old, born and raised in a village close to the mine which he left, as many people do, to attend high school in Kiruna the year he turned sixteen. Since then he has lived in several places in Sweden, but always returned to his childhood home in the village as often as he could. That is where his life is — a life which, he wants to make clear to me, the mine has ruined. The heavy trucks that run through the village several times per hour, the constant noise, the risk of environmental hazards and the threat posed by the opening of a new mine even closer to his home — to Kalle, there is something terror-like in this situation, and he is eager to talk to me about it. Kalle expressed discontent with the research and reports that claim to have studied the attitudes of locals to the Kaunisvaara mine. There has been no serious investigation of how people who live close to the mine feel, he explained to me, and no researcher has even been curious enough to explore local resident's attitudes to the mine.

“The research that has been done focuses exclusively on employment opportunities and economy and they have been conducted on behalf of the mining company. No one has looked at this objectively, and this is why it feels good to express my opinions to you,” he said when we spoke on the phone in October 2019.

Despite the employment opportunities and possible increase of tax revenues that might come with the mine, Kalle says that the mine has ruined

his life. The day of Northland's bankruptcy in December 2014, which represents the start of the period referred to as the collective depression by several of my informants, represents something very different to Kalle; "it was the happiest day of my life." Kalle's joy was, however, short lived. And since I interviewed him in 2019 and 2020, Kaunis Iron has received permission to expand their production and open new mines, which means that Kalle's fear of a second mine closer to his home is about to materialize.

"I'd much rather have a good life than a mine," he said. I asked him what a good life is, and Kalle explained that a good life entails silence, closeness to nature and an environment free from pollution. A mine might provide employment opportunities, but it also leaves scars on the landscape in its wake. Holes, which, if Kaunis Iron have their will, must be connected through roads and infrastructure. The very same infrastructure that will integrate and connect Kaunis Iron's production lines will also fragment life in the village. Places, buildings and activities that belong together will be disintegrated, fenced off, enclosed, transformed beyond recognition. Berry picking, sports activities, hunting − the whole relation to the environment will forcibly change, and what is worse, "almost the entire village will be dug up and ruined," Kalle explained, all for a mine with a lifespan of a couple of decades.

Kalle knows that not everybody shares his opinion about the mine and its encroachment on what Kalle thinks constitutes a good life. Young people in particular are happy about the mine because it saves them from commuting elsewhere for jobs, he says, and maybe he would have been more sympathetic to that perspective had the lifespan of the mine been longer, a hundred years or more, like in Kiruna. He knows of people in the village who have made a good deal of money by letting their houses to one of the mine's subcontractors for a period of five years. Others are optimistic that the opening of the mine will mean that their children can return home to eventually take up residence in the houses where they grew up. Some have returned home from Kiruna and Gällivare. "But even if they do come home, they don't dare to build because mining is such a volatile business. The world market price on ore fluctuates, and if it gets too low, Kaunis Iron will pause the production," Kalle said. Yet, even those who agree with Kalle are reluctant to voice their concerns. When I first asked him about this, he responded with a reference to the stereotype of Swedish northerners as reserved and quiet. Later on in our conversation, however, Kalle made clear

that the subject is “incredibly sensitive.” He described the meetings that Kaunis Iron organize in Kaunisvaara to maintain a dialogue with the local residents. In Kalle’s description there is not a lot of dialogue going on during these meetings, what happens is rather that Kaunis Iron provides information about what is going to happen, and people listen in silence. Kalle reads this pervasive silence as a sign that the people present do not want to "give themselves away" as critics. This is at least why he keeps quiet in the meetings, even though he does not want a mine in Kaunisvaara at all. I asked him why it was so important not to give himself away as a critic.

“There’s a risk you make enemies, with your neighbors for example. Maybe they will stop greeting you, stop saying good morning, for example.”

Guided by what we know about Pajala at this point, it is not too farfetched to suppose that that absence of a simple *good morning* is probably only a symptom of your new position within the network of relations as the oddball, the person you should not do business with or buy a house from. Since the subject is sensitive people suffer in silence, he said. “I will be forced away from my home, and I can do nothing about it. Is it possible to measure that suffering in money?” he asked me rhetorically.

10.3 Louise

I called Louise and asked her for an interview while I was in Pajala in September 2019. She did not have time to see me, but assured me that she wanted to talk.

“The day after tomorrow I am driving up to Kiruna in the afternoon, I’ll call you when I am on the road and then we have about two hours,” she said. Louise wasted no time when she called me two days later. Less than a minute into the conversation, she had made it clear that she is angry and discontent with both mining companies involved in the Kaunisvaara project, Northland Resources and Kaunis Iron. Louise was born and raised in Sahavaara. She left for Finland in her early twenties, but returned to Pajala a couple of years ago. Her father lives in the house in Sahavaara, and the plan has always been that she will take over the house one day. “But we might have to revise that plan now when we’ve got the mine in our backyard,” she said. At the time of our conversation, Kaunis Iron had recently informed Louise’s father that their plans to expand their business and open a new mine in Sahavaara would not affect his house directly. According to Kaunis Iron’s most recent

calculations, they will be able to keep the house, even if the new mine would be very close. Yet, for ten years, Louise and her father have lived in uncertainty, not knowing what will happen to the family homestead in Sahavaara. Louise has felt uneasy about this situation already when Northland started their business. “I am pissed off,” she said. “And we have criticized them [both Northland and Kaunis Iron]. We have complained to them about the lack of adequate information.” Louise’s father has attended the informational meetings Kaunis Iron arrange in the village hall in Kaunisvaara, but feels that Kaunis Iron are unable to give him straight answers, on big as well as small questions:

> We need to know what is going to happen, because the feeling is that our lives are in their hands. We need to know who will be displaced from their houses, what this process in its entirety looks like, and how much money they will give us for our houses. But we also need to know other things: how frequent and how loud will the bangs from the explosions be? How much will the china in the cupboards rattle? Will the water pipes hold up?

That the mine might turn her entire childhood village into a pile of sand dawned on Louise more than ten years ago when Northland Resources started to buy up land and properties. They bought her maternal grandmother’s farm. Her mother had sold it to “some couple from Stockholm” and they had given it up to Northland on the first offer. “Now the house rots away. The doors stand open. All the furniture is still there. I went into the house not too long ago, and the smell of mold…it is insufferable,” she said. “They’d turn in their graves if they knew what it looked like, the dead,” she continued. “It should be burned to the ground. That would be for the best, not for it to stand there and rot to pieces.”

To watch the farm and all the memories attached to it slowly deteriorate is painful for Louise. Her grandparents built that farm and they farmed the land “with their bare hands.” Their toil and persistence, their joys and their sorrows, manifested in the farmhouse that will soon collapse under the mold and the damp. “It is terrible. I have been away from Sahavaara for so many years, and when I return…it is to this.”

Louise is more open about her negative outlook on the mine and its possibility to “saving Pajala,” than Kalle is, but she is, as she put it, often “attacked” when criticizing the mine:

> If I curse the mine, saying that I have never asked to have a fucking mine in my back yard, someone will attack me right away: 'Why do you say that? Are you against Pajala's future? What will happen to me?' But our future is not over. Maybe Pajala's future, but not mine, not [Sahavaara's]. The mine cuts off our roots.

"So people get annoyed if you say something along those lines," I asked Louise.

"Oh yes, and what I am about to tell you is terrible but also very interesting," she said:

> We tried to start a Facebook-group, some of us living [around the mine]. And right from the start they attacked us [other people in the villages]. You see, they have been very clever, the mining people, hiring people from the village. […] There is no wonder we have wars in this world. That Hitler managed to do what he did: he brainwashed people! In this case, the mining companies have brainwashed people into thinking that a mine is our last chance to survive, and if you disagree, people attack you right away.

The locals who work for Kaunis Iron, and they are, according to Louise, quite a few, mostly the younger generation, are loyal to their employer. "'We're not allowed to talk,' that's what they say when different issues come up," Louise said. "So they sit there and say nothing." The Facebook-group was not Louise's idea. A man called Ingmar started it, she told me, and he has tried to get people in Kaunisvaara and Sahavaara organized to voice their opinions about the mine. His efforts have not been well received, but Louise joined. Another woman did too, but after a while, she stopped coming to the meetings because she was afraid her involvement in the group would hurt her business — she ran a small company and Kaunis Iron was one of her clients.

Louise and Ingmar sent out a survey to the residents in Kaunisvaara and Sahavaara, asking them about their opinions of Kaunis Iron and the mine.

"We were attacked immediately," Louise said, "[by people who said] 'What are you doing, running around sending us surveys like this, creating a resistance group to the mine?' The group was contacted by the media, and Louise chose to express her opinion, she cursed and told the paper that she had never asked for a mine. With hindsight, she regrets her words. The

journalist smeared them, Louise said, and the criticism from acquaintances and neighbors was instant. “People are afraid to say what they think. Not all opinions are accepted: there is no freedom of speech and no freedom of the press. You are attacked, verbally, and that makes you scared.”

Louise avoids the people who have verbally attacked her. She thinks that Ingmar does too. “He wrote something in the Facebook group a while back, and people immediately said, ‘When are you going to stop that gibber? […] So, I try to avoid the people who say things like that.”

Why people want the mine is a mystery to Louise; the idea that Pajala municipality could not survive without it is nonsense to her.

“We [Pajala] have survived without the mine [for a long time]. Sahavaara would, too. Now the mine is coming and Sahavaara will become a pile of dust.” No matter what Kaunis Iron says, Louise is sure that the company will expand beyond the current plan. The ledge runs right through the hill on which Sahavaara is built, that has been known since LKAB was here prospecting in the 1970s.

“This means that to get to the ore they must dig up the hill.” As they do, they will dig up the village. I asked Louise about the meetings Kaunis Iron arrange in the Village Hall in Kaunisvaara. What is the atmosphere like? I asked. “Dead silence,” Louise said:

> People just sit there and listen, and they [Kaunis Iron] do the talking. It is like a sermon! They talk and show pictures. ‘This is what this flower looked like three years ago, and this is what it looks like now.’ But I walk in those forests with my father. We walk over these bogs, and he says that it should not be possible to ride a quad bike over these lands, but they have dried the bog [so today that is possible].

Just like Kalle, she was “terrified” when she heard about Northland’s plans for the bogs around Kaunisvaara. However, Northland, she said, were “very clever,” excellent, even, at manipulating people into supporting the project:

> They filmed everything [during their informational meetings at the Village Hall [in Kaunisvaara], and then they watched it afterwards to study people’s reactions. The next time they came back they had excellent answers to those questions. A very clever way to get your will through with people.

I asked Louise why Northland Resources had to be manipulative. “Yes,” she said:

> You have to be if you are going to take someone’s village. You have to make friends with people. You say, ‘You can trust us,’ and then, just like that, they tell you that you have to move. Where is the local government? Where is Sweden? They [the mining company] are allowed to take over the entire municipality.

For both Kalle and Louise, Kaunis Iron’s mining operation is perceived as an existential threat. The physical place that has been, and still is, the node that ties their past and their present together will be extinguished if Kaunis Iron chooses to pursue their plans for expansion. The negative social implications of putting these existential concerns into words become even more visible in Louise’s story. Though she does not talk about a conspiracy of silence, she says that there is neither freedom of speech, nor freedom of the press, by which she means that if you want to remain on good terms with neighbors and friends, there is only one acceptable opinion about the mine — that it is essential to the community’s survival.

Yet, even though both Louise and Kalle seem to think that Kaunis Iron has corrupted its supporters with money and jobs and that there is indeed a contradiction between a good life and the hunt for profit, it seems at least possible to imagine that it is a very similar existential concern that motivates Kalle’s and Louise’s opponents that deter them from voicing their concerns. At least this is what the two following anecdotes seem to indicate. They also provide two tangible examples of just how sensitive the topic is, as they display that even questions or opinions that do not come off as particularly critical to an outsider nonetheless spark negative reactions from other members of the community.

10.4 The Journalist

A journalist I interviewed told me about the reactions he received after he had written a short article about anti-mine protests in Finland. After publication, he received a phone call from a man who lived in Pajala municipality who told him that he should not give these anti-mine activists a voice. “These people are taking the bread from my son’s mouth. He is working for the mine in Kaunisvaara,” the man told the journalist.

“In Finland they are opposed to the mine because they have an option,” the journalist told me, “they have tourism so they don’t need the mine. But we have no choice.”

This is an incidence of the kind of deterrence that both Kalle and Louise have described, yet knowing what kind of life could be waiting for his son should the mine close — long distance or bi-weekly commuting, unemployment or even leaving Pajala to find work elsewhere — the man’s choice of words strikes me as an appeal to the journalist’s compassion. It is a terse appeal put forward by the man on behalf of his son, but reading between the lines, I believe it could be expanded into something like this: “Please don’t amplify these protestors because their ideas might spread to Pajala, and maybe then the mine has to close and my son will lose his job. He would then be thrown right back into the kind of life that you and I both know eventually becomes impossible to endure.”

That the news story was not about anti-mine activists in Pajala, but in Finland, says something about just how much the man whose son is working in Kaunisvaara fears the possibility of a shift in majority opinion in Pajala, and the consequences such a shift could bring to the viability of the mine, and the community.

10.5 The Meeting in Kaunisvaara

Yet another example of how some try to deter others from expressing criticism is an incident that took place at a meeting at the Town Hall in Kaunisvaara a few years ago. Kaunis Iron held a meeting in the village to inform people about their plans to expand the mine. At the meeting, a woman asked how much noise there would be from the mine. Before anyone from Kaunis Iron had the chance to answer, a man living in the area replied to the woman in Meänkieli: “Why do you even ask that question?”

I was not at this meeting; I have had the story recounted to me. The man who recounted the story said that what happened at the meeting did not really sit right with him, that he no longer saw the point in going to these meetings where those asking “critical questions” so obviously ran the risk of being “branded” by fellow residents. An outsider such as myself can grasp only a negligible fraction of what was actually communicated in that room, through that short phrase in Meänkieli. I, for one, did not even perceive the question about the noise as particularly critical, but through the reaction of the man

who told me the story, we see that some kind of social pressure, discouragement, or deterrence, must have a role in the apparent lack of open criticism of the mine in Pajala.

Judging from the stories presented in this chapter, the line of conflict between mining proponents and mining opponents seems clear cut. Mining proponents try to deter mining opponents from speaking openly about the negative aspects of mining since the mine is instrumental to the realization of a certain form of life which has crumbled under decades of depopulation and unemployment. However, the story that closes this chapter blurs the line between mining proponents and mining opponents. What if the decision to either oppose or support the mine is not as uncomplicated as it is for Kalle, Louse, and the man who called the journalist?

10.6 Misrecognition

One day in August 2019, I was in the car with Sofia, approaching Pajala on road 395. We met one of Kaunis Iron's black trucks, loaded with iron ore. Sofia was driving.

"But, there *is* enough space to meet here," she said. We were not talking about the mine or the road conditions — we rarely did — so Sofia's remark surprised me. She had spoken with assertiveness, as if she wanted to convince someone, but it was not obvious who she felt that she needed to convince. Was it me, was it an invisible audience of mining critics, or was it, perhaps, primarily herself? Sofa continued talking about the traffic situation on road 395, saying that as soon as one of Kaunis' trucks is involved in an incident, she felt like people want to make a big thing out of it. I asked her why she thought so.

"Because there are people who are not happy about the mine establishment, and then it is easy for them to point to the accidents." I asked Sofia why these people are discontent with the mine. She did not really answer the question.

"Have you met my friend, Aina?" she said after a moment's silence. "She is against the mine, says that they come here, take what they want before they leave us with all the ruined nature." Sofia went on to explain how Aina had said that the mine was leaking polluted water into the river and how their dams did not live up to required standards.

"What do you think when you hear that?" I asked Sofia.

"I have complete confidence in Sara [one of the highest ranking executives of Kaunis Iron] and she has convinced me that [the mine in Kaunisvaara] is possible without harming nature. If she says so, I believe it." She paused for a moment, then continued: "but I believe it to the point where this has become my own filter."

When Sofia says that Sara's assessment has become her "filter," in the sense that she is reluctant to consider information that contradicts or challenges Sara's assessment, it can be interpreted against the background of a conversation I had with Sofia in June, 2019. In that conversation, Sofia told me that she could not have an informed opinion about the mine and its environmental consequences, because she has no knowledge of such things. Nevertheless, Sofia knew exactly why she "knew nothing about those things. This is how she expressed herself in June 2019:

> And what is the real reason that I don't know anything about the environment and how it might be affected [by the mine]? It is because I have stuck my head in the sand as far as I can. I don't want to know," […] I remember this one time, […] Sara was frustrated with people who…well, you know [Sara said] that this mine was in principle eco-friendly. And the two sentences that Sara uttered then, they have become my source [of knowledge] because she is [an expert], she knows.

"Of course," I said, "she is an expert on these things." Sofia nodded.

"So those two sentences, plus the fact that I want to believe," she concluded.

When we drove back to Pajala that afternoon in August, Sofia changed the subject slightly and talked about how Kaunis Iron could contribute to Pajala's growth and economic development. She said that it would be desirable if they could contribute to keeping Pajala's airport open. The airport is located 15 kilometers from Pajala where it offers two daily flights to Luleå in a tiny propeller aircraft.

"But something like that would of course be invasive to their business," Sofia said. I asked her what she meant by "invasive."

"Well, [Kaunis Iron] is a business like any other business, and they want to make money. If they were to sponsor the airport, that would affect their…" she interrupted herself.

"It would affect their profit negatively?" I asked.

"Yes, exactly."

I noticed that the subject made Sofia uncomfortable. She is usually cheerful and talkative, but this time she spoke slowly and thoughtfully. Feeling that we knew each other well enough at this point, I decided to challenge Sofia a little.

"But Aina," I said, "isn't she right, on some level? I know I'm playing the devil's advocate here…" Sofia was quiet.

"Maybe," she said slowly, but what she meant was probably "no."

"I mean, from one point of view, perhaps there is a grain of truth in what she says, even though, at the same time, it is equally true that the mine creates jobs that makes it possible for people to stay here," I said. Once again, Sofia said "maybe" in a tone that gave away her disagreement with what I had just said. We sat in silence for a couple of seconds, maybe five, but it was long enough to make us both slightly uncomfortable. Had I made a mistake and pressured Sofia too much? Maybe we did not know each other well enough for this kind of conversation?

"What would you like to say to your friend Aina who says that the mine does not live up to environmental standards and that it is leaking polluted water?" I asked.

"Has any of that been confirmed?" Sofia asked hesitantly.

"No, none of it, as far as I know," I said. "I don't know of anything suggesting that there is any harmful leakage from the mine. What has been confirmed is that they [Northland Resources] lowered the water levels in the bog, and there are those who say that there is some kind of requirement that their dams do not meet, but I have no idea if that is at all significant. This is what the Land and Environmental Court will investigate." Sofia muttered something that I could not hear, but I did not ask her to repeat herself, and the whole situation felt awkward until she dropped me off outside Hotel Lapland River. (Luckily, the awkward moment in the car was forgotten the next time we spoke, a couple of days later.)

Sofia had made it clear to me that she wants to believe in Sara when she says that the mine is safe and that nothing about its business will harm nature in Tornedalen. However, Sofia is aware that Sara represents the mining company's perspective, and that information from other sources may add nuance to, or possibly even contradict Sara's official version. What is more, Sofia admits that her choice to trust Kaunis Iron's official version of the mining establishment in Kaunisvaara sometimes creates social friction. A certain segment of her social circle have negative opinions about the mine

and the mining company, and sometimes they want to share this with Sofia. Occasionally she notices how someone is trying to start off a critical conversation about the mine, but Sofia does not want to participate in such conversations. Instead, she says that she knows too little about the mine to have an informed opinion. At one point I asked her what happens when she says that, to which she responded: "Well, it kind of kills the whole conversation." When I heard this, I wanted to hear Sofia's reaction to Elin's opinion that talking about the mine in a positive way was a matter of political correctness. Judging from what she had just told me about how her unwillingness to participate in critical conversation about the mine was a conversation killer, it sounded like the opposite was true. To my surprise, however, Sofia agreed with Elin:

> Even though you are scared when you drive up to Junosuando [road 395], you still have to think that it's great that the trucks are on the road. 'O yes, it is good that they are rolling!' Actually, it is kind of like a conspiracy of silence.

Sofia was open about the fact that the reason she, as she put it, "did not know anything" about the mine, was her own ignorance — she had put her head in the sand because she did not want to know. "Maybe if I would do some research, what I would find would confirm everything [that Sara has said]. Or, it could actually turn out that everything is really, really bad."

I entered the hotel through the hotel pub, which had just opened for the evening. Soft music, a smell of french-fries, local news on a TV in the corner, the hot plate with the coffee pot. I had really come to like the place. Even though both the conversation in the car and the interview in June mainly revolved around negative environmental impact and traffic safety, I believe that the "really, really bad things" Sofia is afraid she might confront if she pulls her head up from the sand refers to other aspects of the mine, too. In June, we had discussed Kaunis Iron's plans to explore the ore deposit in Sahavaara. "But no one has to move, right?" Sofia asked me in a tone marked by an odd mixture of confidence and uncertainty, a question that she did not want answered and therefore posed purely rhetorically. It surprised me since it was obvious that people in Sahavaara would have to move if Kaunis Iron were to realize their plan for a mine in Sahavaara. It is not a matter of mass-displacement, but nevertheless a case where people would have to leave their

homes and see Kaunis Iron turn their childhood village into a mining pit, just as Louise describes.

"Some people will probably have to move if Kaunis Iron gets the permission to exploit the ore deposit in Sahavaara," I said. Sofia remained quiet.

I believe that Sofia understands that it is likely that people will have to leave their homes in Sahavaara if Kaunis Iron gets the permission to excavate the Sahavaara deposit. Sofia and I have driven through Sahavaara together and seen the abandoned houses. Yet, she prefers to remain in the dark about these things, because she wants to believe in the official story about how the mine enables economic development for Pajala municipality and the whole region without noticeable negative consequences. I know how emotionally invested Sofia is in the narratives of belonging to Tornedalen that I describe throughout this dissertation. I know how well she knows the history of Tornedalen; a history which does not lack examples of how the Swedish state has forcefully implemented policies that displace and alienate the people of Tornedalen, from their homes, from their language and their culture. The forced language switch from Meänkieli to Swedish is one example, the strong incentives created to make people move south during the 1980s and 90s is another. The situation that is now under way for the residents in Sahavaara seems to repeat parts of that history. People in Tornedalen have to leave their homes so that a privately owned corporation that is not paying taxes in Pajala can dig up Sahavaara and extract ore for a decade or two before the deposit is depleted. This is why I believe that when I say that an expansion of Kaunis Iron's business will displace some of Sahavaara's residents, Sofia is silent, not because the information is new, but because what I say is uncomfortable to hear. Displacement and a village turned to dust for the profitability of a private company is the inevitable, *obscene underside* (Žižek 2014: 70) of the mining project that she wants to believe is the provider of desperately needed economic development. What is going on in Sahavaara hits a little too close to home for Sofia. Inscribed in the awkward silence in the car, her reluctance to search for information that might challenge the mining company's official story, and the odd intonation in her question about Sahavaara's residents, is an element of misrecognition — a "maintained and approved self-deception," (Bourdieu 1977: 6), a *refusal* of disturbing knowledge. Hence, when Sofia "kills the whole conversation" when her friends want to discuss the downsides of a mine in Sahavaara, her

primary objective might not be to censor or contradict them, but to shield herself from the disturbing information such conversation might confront her with.

Sofia's story seems to indicate that even mining proponents who cling to the narrative that the mine will save the community from disintegration struggle to completely fend off the criticism put forward by the likes of Kalle, Louise and Sofia's friend Aina. An unpleasant feeling of ambiguity seems to haunt Sofia's opinion of the mine, and as we will see in the chapter to follow, Sofia is not the only one to display ambiguous feelings about the mine. I believe that this feeling of ambiguity, rather than any surface conflict between mining proponents and mining opponents, holds the key to understanding the lacuna in the public debate about the mine in Kaunisvaara.

11. Ambiguity

Let us return to the conversation recounted in the prologue. It played out in Frida's kitchen on October 5, 2019. By that time, I had hours of recorded interviews with both Frida and Julia, in addition to all the informal, unstructured interviews I had conducted as they guided me through the municipality. I had never heard Frida say one negative word about either the mine, Northland or Kaunis Iron. On the contrary, she had worked as a trucker for Northland, a job she had liked and thought about taking up again, now that Kaunis Iron's business was up and running. Her husband worked on-site for the mining company in Kaunisvaara. During my many visits to the municipality, I had the great privilege of Frida (and Julia!) showing me around the municipality. Village life, cold lakes, dirt roads, riverboats, northern lights, snow from November to May, sauna culture and cheese cubes in black coffee: Frida had shown me the joys of all these things. She, if anyone, sees how the mine offers people the opportunity to return home to a place and a community — a form of life — that the people from Tornedalen could not find anywhere else. Frida had dismissed the kind of concern for road safety voiced by Clara and Elin, and she never expressed uneasiness about the mine's impact on the natural landscape, that it would leave "big holes" in its wake, as Clara feared. Neither had I heard her frame the mine as a threat to the way of life in Pajala, as Elin did when explaining how a mining company damages Pajala as a community. And yet, that Saturday morning on October 5 before we drove up to Muodoslompolo, I heard her speak about the mine in a different way:

> We have these big companies, mining companies, energy companies like Vattenfall, really big players, they get some kind of VIP lane in terms of local political support. But what's in it for us? Look at Gällivare, look at Kiruna, they

each have a big mine, they have employment opportunities and industry, they have big companies that pay high wages, yet these municipalities are not doing very well economically. Especially not Gällivare, people are moving out despite this, so clearly it does not help. Why is it like that?

I was surprised to hear Frida talk about Pajala's future with this kind of despondency. It was the first time I heard her doubt that the opening of the mine in Kaunisvaara would benefit the municipality. I had thought that Frida was completely clear on what the residents of Pajala stood to gain from the mine, but in this moment, she did not seem so certain. An hour later we passed Kaunisvaara and the mine. From the road, you can see the mining area to the left; to the right, you see a road blocked by a boom gate leading into the forest.

"If you turn right here you come to a big slag dump. A pit just as big as the mining area, filled with shit," Frida said. I asked her if we could take a look at it, but she said that the area was closed to the public. Her husband, who works for the mine, had told her about it. Then, for the first time, I heard Frida mutter something about the mine's negative environmental impact. "It does not feel good to know that there is a dam, the size of a mining pit, filled with slag," she said. We passed the mine and road 99 turned narrow and bumpy again.

This short episode invites the assumption that even those who publicaly dismiss worries about the heavy mining traffic, the exploitative aspect of mining extraction, the environmental impact of mining and the like, may nonetheless entertain the very same doubts as mining critics, however rarely voiced.

11.1 "We All Have to Make Sacrifices"

Annika, another avid mining proponent, seems to harbor the same doubts as Frida and Sofia. She, as we shall see in the longer quotes below, acknowledges that the mine has "harmful effects" that the local government must seek to mitigate. Annika is also well aware of the fact that, if Kaunis Iron's plans to expand production are realized, people in Sahavaara will have to move. Since I know that she is advocating for the mine, but also that she is very emotionally attached to the village of her childhood, I asked her what she felt about the potential displacement of Sahavaara's residents. Annika

said that she really feels for them, but wanted to tell me about an old man from Sahavaara who featured in the local news previously:

> He said that it is a real pity that everything he had built on his farm in Sahavaara, the barn and other things, will disappear, but this is not a reason for stopping the development that the mine brings for the entire community. And when we made a survey [among residents close to the mine] I remember this one person who lived on a property that would be torn down [if the mine in Sahavaara becomes reality] who wrote that it was nonetheless worth it. "Go ahead," is what this person had written in the survey form. This person was thinking that his personal loss was compensated for by the fact that the mine would bring development for the whole community. It really makes him a big person.

It is not only Sahavaara's residents who have to make sacrifices in order to contribute to a kind of development that is for the good of the whole community. In fact, Annika said, everyone has to sacrifice something:

> All of us are sacrificing something. Someone will sacrifice their home, their leisure activities, their reindeer husbandry, their land. How can we make sure that the return on these sacrifices is as high as possible for all of us? What can we do to limit the harmful effects of the mine? […] I'm slightly critical of the sitting municipal government on this point because they seem a little uninterested in [limiting the harmful effects]. You have to push the mining company because us and them, we do not share the same priorities. They want to make money and that's their primary goal.

Annika has made her own sacrifices, and the idea that they contribute to a greater good is what makes them tolerable:

> I can be an egoist too sometimes. When I am out moose hunting, for example. I hunt close to the mine and then the mine is a real annoyance because I can't hear the dog. In those moments I think that, can't they just pause the production. One pause in the morning and then again in the afternoon so you can hunt? And at those times I'm a little selfish. But then, you have to think one step further; this is what makes it possible for my husband to work at home [instead of seven-seven,

as before], and this is what makes it possible for our children to attend different activities. In those moments, you have to think one step further.

11.2 Ove: I Do Not Feel Good about All These Mines

In August 2019, I visited Pajala for the fifth time. I had been encouraged to get out of central Pajala and visit people in the smaller villages because it would give me "another perspective on things." One of the last days of August, I borrowed Frida's car and drove north to meet Ove. I had received his contact details from another informant, when I asked her if she knew someone who had been negatively affected by the mine. I spoke to Ove over the phone on the previous day, and the phone call is worth recounting: After I introduced myself, my research and why I wanted to talk to him, Ove politely said that I should try to find someone else to talk to and gave me a couple of names. I insisted politely, by saying that I needed to speak to him specifically. He listened to my plea, seemed to hesitate for a moment and then asked, "Does this have anything to do with the mine, or is this your own research?" I explained that I had been interviewing people who work in and for the mine, but that the mining company is not involved in my research. "I am employed by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala and they finance my research," I said. "But, yes, I have talked to people who represent Kaunis Iron." "Alright," Ove said, "then it's a whole different thing. In that case, you are welcome to interview me. I thought that the mine was involved in this somehow. Do you want to do it over the phone, or do you want to come here?" he asked.

At 10 o'clock the following morning, I parked Frida's car outside Ove's house. I wonder if he recognized it and knew who it belonged to, but he did not say anything. We sat down in the kitchen and Ove put coffee and homemade cookies on the table. I explained that I was interested in researching what the establishment of a mine could mean for a shrinking, rural municipality, such as Pajala.

"Is it mostly good or mostly bad, and for whom?" I had barely finished the sentence before Ove started talking.

"No, here is the thing," he said, assertively,

> …and this is my opinion, the mine will last maybe 25 years, that's what they [Kaunis Iron] say right now. This mine has a direct impact on 1000 hectares of [land with

special environmental protection status.] This will provide a boost for the community during the active period, with employment opportunities, but then it will not be possible to restore this area. Especially not using only the company's funds. That is never possible; the state must pay up to cover the restoration costs, because that is not a small thing. But, sure, during this period, during these 25 years during which we have the mine, the young people might not move, when there are available jobs and an actual possibility to stay.

"Is this something that is possible to discuss openly?" I asked.

"No," Ove said flatly. "It is not possible to state openly that you are against the mine." He explained that there are people who worry about what the mine will do to the nearby creeks and of course also the rivers, Torne and Muonio.

"This kind of engagement with the environmental aspects of the mine are more widespread among people this time," he said, "but it all happens covertly." I asked Ove if any of the local politicians are involved in environmental protection in relation to the establishment of the mine.

"No, no politicians, only members of the public. But covertly. No Facebook, no social media, but of course everybody knows who they are." Nature and the possibilities for outdoor activities are important for Ove and his family. Revenues from hunting, fishing and forestry, and wildlife tourism contribute to the household economy, and the mine interferes with all of these activities. The constant noise from the open mining pit creates problems during the moose hunting season. "You don't hear the [hunting dog], the dog doesn't hear you, and you don't hear the moose. Besides that, the noise ruins the experience of course," Ove said. Likewise, silence is a part of the wildlife experience that the tourist businesses in Norrland sell, and for tourists who come to experience the wilderness and the northern lights, the constant rumble of a mine destroys the experience.

Ove is certain that people "in the villages" are generally more skeptical towards the mine than people living in central Pajala. The reason for this is precisely because people in the villages are not as reliant on wage labor as people in Pajala. Over the past decades, the villages have shrunk significantly, to the point where they are almost extinguished. There are, in Ove's words, "only survivors left", people who have found ways to stay and sustain themselves on employment opportunities and public services, for example by becoming self-employed in the tourism sector.

"But right around the time when [Northland Resources showed up and said that they wanted to open a] mine, the effects of the population decline had become palpable even in central Pajala," Ove explained. "Pajala had really started to shrink. This is why the mine became the solution to all their problems; they could work in the mine and stay in Pajala."

"So, what you are saying is that people in the villages are more skeptical or critical of the mine because the mine interferes with their livelihood? And those who are more pro-mine do not live off hunting, tourism, etc.?" I asked.

"Yes, this is definitely the case," Ove said:

> You can also think of it this way: Is it reasonable that eight people have died, just last winter [in traffic accidents where mining trucks have been involved]? Some people say yes, if you count the kilometers driven and the number of cars [on the roads] it is statistically reasonable. But if you ask people who often drive the road [395] to Vittangi…The dust and the noise and the trucks that run every five minutes…Someone said that, considering the population numbers, eight deaths in Pajala corresponds to 900 deaths in Stockholm. Because of the establishment of one single business. You can twist and turn the statistics all you want, but if 900 people had died in Stockholm because of one single company…then people would have reacted differently.

I had heard similar reasoning before. A woman I talked to said that she could not wrap her head around the decision to allow Kaunis Iron to transport their ore by truck. "I don't think this transport solution would have been accepted elsewhere in Sweden. But, since this municipality, and the people who live here, are in an extreme situation, you accept it." When I asked her what she meant by "extreme," she referred to the lack of employment opportunities. "It is extreme in the sense that there are not that many employment opportunities. And then when you get a big industry, that creates ripples on the water for other parts of commercial life [in Pajala]. This creates tax revenue for the municipality."

For Ove, accepting this transportation solution was a matter of submitting to authority. He said that this is something that the people of Tornedalen are used to. But this time around, they have to submit to the mining companies.

> Now we get all these mines, there is talk of a new graphite mine in Vittangi, and in Pajala, too. I think about all the creeks and streams. And the river. Small

> streams, but they converge, and in the end, it is the accumulated environmental impact from all the mines on all the tiny streams that reach Torne River that count. I just have to say this: I do not feel good about all these mines.

Up until this point, I had not heard Ove say one positive word about the mine. He talked at length about how it affected his family and their subsistence, how it had dramatically worsened the traffic safety on Road 395, and how he had environmental concerns. I was therefore surprised when, right after his statement about the accumulated negative effects on the creeks, Ove said, "I really want to say this: I am not against mines, but they have to be built correctly." Later on in the conversation, Ove told me that he, despite his other businesses, is economically dependent on the mine. Considering that he is financially reliant on both the mine and on businesses on which the mine impinges, the remark that he is not against the mine made more sense.

Ove's story attests to both the culture of silence that encircles critical opinions of the mine and to a feeling of ambiguity that materializes when one's preferred form of life simultaneously depends on the presence *and* the absence of a mine in Pajala. Other informants have described this ambiguity as a feeling of schizophrenia, as the short exchange below illustrates:

> Clara: […] on the one hand, I understand the subsistence, but on the other hand, I am thinking about the wounds. I think about what we leave behind for generations to come. So, okay, if it wasn't for the mine, we might not have had any employment opportunities, but instead we leave wounds.

> Elin: Yes. Well, you feel schizophrenic, really.

However, the feeling of ambiguity that Ove expressed might not stem from the contradictory relationship between the mine's positive economic effects and its negative environmental impact. There is, as we shall see, an imposing awareness in Ove's narrative that implies that mining is inherently fraudulent and destructive. Akin to theft, even. We have glimpsed this perspective both in Louise's story and in Sofia's account of her friend Aina's thoughts on the mine. In the second interview I conducted with Ove, in October 2019, he described to me that he felt as though Northland Resources manipulated

Pajala's residents into supporting their mining venture in Kaunisvaara. I recount the core elements of that interview below.

11.2.1 "They Lied from the Start"

Before Northland Resources opened the mine in Pajala, "the three Canadians" visited Ove's business.

"When we sat in the sauna together one of them said, 'A mine is just a black hole in the ground with a liar on top.' That's true still. And I asked him how many shares he held in [Northland]. 'I have a boat load of them,' he said. Two weeks later, he had sold them all."

I had heard this before, that Northland Resources swindled a whole village. The hype, the hope of escaping the seven-seven life, the dreams of family reunions, had lured people in. The Canadians were likable, "they were agreeable, eloquent, came to the pub and talked to people". Thus people thought that they could not be lying. This is how Ove described it to me:

> You felt that you could not be fooled. You were close to the company and felt that it was an advantage that they were here in Pajala. You knew the management and who they were, and you thought 'how could they fool us?' But they did. Some blame the falling world market price on iron ore […] but that was not the problem. The problem was that Northland lacked two billion SEK and that their financiers were not ready to chip in more money.

By the time the mine opened, Northland had a new Swedish CEO, and the three Canadians were out of the picture. The Swedish CEO, Karl-Axel Waplan, was also agreeable, Ove said. He held meetings in Kaunisvaara, where they served coffee and buns, and spoke about developing a cluster of mines in the region:

> Kaunisvaara would not be the only mine, there were going to be several other mines, a project that would last at least 50 years, generating some 2000–3000 jobs. But no one could figure out how it added up. And they were fined by the stock exchange in Oslo for providing their investors with misleading information.

This has not yet materialized, and Ove is sure it never will. He is convinced that both mining companies have exaggerated the mine's lifespan.

> From the start they said that the ore would last for 34 years. Then we were informed that the lifespan of the mine would be 11 years. And the last [thing I heard from Kaunis Iron] is that the lifespan is 7–8 years. And I promise you that [in the end] it will be 3–4 years. I tell you, I have been right so far.

I asked Ove how the calculation could have been so wrong. Ove shook his head and said, "They have lied from the start. He continued:

> Now Kaunis Iron pushes this socio-economic agenda. Everyone is going to make money and be able to buy snowmobiles, and everything will be great. And the mining industry pays well. The salaries are high. And when they pay you thirty-five thousand SEK you'll keep your mouth shut.

We stepped outside onto the porch. The sun broke through the clouds. The property must have been an old farm — the house was surrounded by storage buildings and smaller houses, forming a courtyard in the middle. Ove's wife was putting on rubber boots, she was going out in the forest to pick blueberries.

"I can tell you this because you are not from here, you can find a lot of blueberries if you follow a small footpath just behind that house," she said while pointing to a house on the other side of the courtyard.

I mentioned that I had heard that a lawyer from Canada had traveled to Kaunisvaara to see how many people were interested in filing a lawsuit against Northland's estate to get some of their money back after the bankruptcy. Allegedly only eight people had shown up.

"Yes," Ove said, and continued,

> people were embarrassed. You know, people lean left in politics up here, to put it mildly, they had never bought stock shares in their lives, and then they bought stocks in Northland. Their [adult] children told them to buy stocks in Northland. And they did. You know, people up here scrimp. That's the Finnish culture. They eat porridge, carrots and potatoes, and have half a million in the bank when they die, but they have lived like rats their whole lives. [I know a couple] who bought shares in Northland. And I know a bank clerk who told me that the losses that he knows of in his circle of friends amount to 800 000. Most likely people have lost more, 10 million or more, just in Pajala.

> You ask someone, 'did you sell in time?' and they say, 'no, but it went to a good cause.' But that is a reconstruction of the whole event. You see, this is the nature of the human psyche: when bad things happen, you want a way to think that it really was not that bad. That's when people start talking like that. YOU chose to believe in what you say, but the truth is that [when you bought shares in Northland] you wanted to make money. It took a while, though. [Six months after the bankruptcy] I remember people saying that if Karl-Axel Waplan shows up in town he'd better wear his running shoes… a year before that, he had been voted the citizen of the year in Pajala municipality.

I got into Frida's car and drove south. I passed Kaalamakoski, Aareavaara and the mine. After Kaunisvaara. I turned right onto the road to Sahavaara. Sahavaara is Meänkieli for "the saw mountain" or "the sawmill mountain," though the sawmill is long gone. Sahavaara is not a mountain, but a hill measuring 200 meters above sea level. The road is not paved, neither with asphalt, nor with gravel. There are houses and farmsteads on both sides of the road, some of them rundown with flaking paint. Many of them are derelict. I had driven the same road before, with Sofia. "Look, they have just left everything, the car in the front yard, the curtains still hanging," Sofia noted then. As I stopped at the hill's western slope where Kaunis Iron plans to open the new mine, it struck me that almost all of houses I had passed would end up on the wrong side of the fence — a euphemism for being demolished. Should they not be demolished, they would end up trapped between two mines and a road carrying 90-ton trucks every ten minutes. I recalled what Ove had told me about a man he knows of in Sahavaara:

> I [know of a man in] Sahavaara who is torn between hope and despair. He has given up in a way because he has realized that his farmstead will end up on the wrong side of the fence. It will disappear. He says he does not give a damn about anything anymore, that he will sell and move to Pajala. But then he says he will fight for the hunting rights. Either way, his family farm will disappear.

I got back on the big road again. In Pajala, I parked the car where Frida and I had agreed, and put the key on the front wheel.

11.3 Selling a Kingdom for a Horse

Benny is a middle-aged man who works as a civil servant at Pajala municipality. Like several others, he has chosen to keep his critical concerns about the mine to himself. The topic is sensitive, he said when I interviewed him, and just like the man at the meeting in Kaunisvaara, he did not want to be "branded" as someone who is against the mine, which he emphasized he was not, despite his negative outlook on the mine in Pajala and on the mining industry in general.

The concerns he chooses to keep to himself pertain to the environmental aspects of mining. He finds it strange that the mining company has been granted permission to dig up the mire outside Kaunisvaara, given the area's sensitive ecological status. He told me that both the current and the previous mining company had been suspected of environmental crimes, but that the charges were dropped. He went on to talk about the heavy mining traffic on the narrow road from the mine to Svappavaara. He talked of how this heavy traffic is both dangerous and unpleasant for the people living in the villages along the road, who must endure the noise, dust, and high fences built to reduce the disturbance from the trucks.

However, just like Louise and Ove, Benny is aware of the exploitative dimension of mining extraction in northern Sweden. "Where does the money go?" he asked rhetorically, before providing the following reflection:

> So people feel that, really, we're just a colony: here they come, [big companies], exploiting our resources, and we're left only with the crumbs from their table…There is a…a form of hatred, a feeling of disdain, like something that leaves a bad taste in your mouth, the knowledge that they [mining companies] don't pay any tax in the municipalities where they dig up the ore.

I asked him why this hatred and disdain had not influenced the public debate about the mine in Pajala. This is what he replied:

> Well, we are in desperate need of employment opportunities. You could say we don't have a choice. If we are to have a chance to keep any of the young people still left…We're in the eleventh hour, and we are ready to sell, how can I put it, an entire kingdom for one horse. You see, we just really must have those employment opportunities, because otherwise we're finished as a municipality.

> And that means we're in a state of dependency, and that means you're ready to make big sacrifices.

Benny's emphasis on desperation and sacrifice in the quote above, emphases which is also present in several of the other stories recounted in this and the previous chapter, cast new light on situations where it seems as if mining proponents have tried to deter mining critics from speaking openly. Recall the incident at the People's House in Kaunisvaara. I was not there, I did not hear the man's tone of voice, did not see his facial expression. I do not know what kind of relationship the man and the woman shared, whether they were on good terms with each other, if they were friends, family, or acquaintances. I do not know what he thinks of the mine. But I would like to entertain the possibility that his comment — *Why do you even ask that question*? — was not primarily directed at deterring this woman's criticism, but rather at his own doubts. The reason why he did not want to hear anything about the disturbance and noise that the mine would generate is probably because he, and everybody else living in the vicinity, already know that the mine creates sound pollution. This sound pollution is a real annoyance to some, perhaps also to this man. Yet, when one is, as Benny put it, in a state of dependency, face to face with the insight that it will take big sacrifices if one's community is to survive, the woman's question becomes disturbing because it rubs those sacrifices in everyone's face. It breaks through the comfortable narrative in which the mine is Pajala's savior. Hence, we could perhaps read the man's comment as meaning something like, "Why do you even ask that question? You and me and everybody else know that there are risks and downsides and potential pitfalls with the mine, but why focus on that, why bring it to attention, when we so desperately need this mine?

11.4 Impossible Compromises

When we consider the stories of people like Benny, Ove, Annika, Frida and Sofia, the seemingly sharp line between mining proponents and mining opponents in Pajala dissolves. What their stories put on display is the subjects' internal process of working through a number of uncomfortable contradictions. The mine is destructive and productive at the same time; it offers the possibility to reproduce a way of life only on the condition that it can also destroy some of the elements that are constitutive of that very form of life. It appears that everyone has to sacrifice something — let the mine destroy something that they value — if their community is to stand a chance of survival. Before arriving at the position of either being for or against the mine, people are forced to make calculations of an absurd kind: How much of my childhood village am I ready to sacrifice for the opportunity to live in Pajala? Just how willing am I to give up moose hunting for the possibility of escaping the split life? How much pollution would I be able to tolerate for the joy of seeing my children take over the house I built? How many deadly accidents on Road 395 are tolerable considering that my children have moved back to Pajala to work in the mine? How many people in Sahavaara and Kaunisvaara must be displaced before it feels as if the mine takes more away from us than it gives back?

Although I believe that the stories I have recounted in this chapter all bear witness to how the conflict for-or-against the mine is internalized, I find a short quote from Thorvald particularly apt and clarifying. When I asked Thorvald if he could understand those who, unlike himself, did not want the mine, he said, "Of course I do, because I have that side within myself, too. I am critical. And I should be even more critical of how they do certain things."

Just how potent the fantasy of the mine's promise to reproduce a form of life that cannot be enjoyed elsewhere becomes clear in the chapter's final story, told by an elderly woman called Eivor. When she first heard about the plans to open a mine in the municipality she was baffled by the overwhelming support it received. In her opinion, mines are synonymous with environmental degradation and economic exploitation, and the mine in Kaunisvaara would be no exception. She suggested to friends and acquaintances that they should take inspiration from Sámi resistance groups in Rönnbäcken and Jokkmokk and "organize themselves" in order to try to stop the mine. Much to Eivor's surprise, no one wanted to join her on this mission. At this time, in March 2019, I had not talked to anyone who so

single-heartedly opposed the mine. Yet, at the end of an interview that had lasted for well over an hour, Eivor could not help but dream of the kind of joy she would experience if the mine would prove successful this time around. If Kaunis Iron would succeed, there might be a chance that her sons, who had moved south many years ago, would return home and work in Kaunisvaara. How lovely would it not be if they brought their wives and their children and took over the family homestead?

12. The Specter of Community

The aim of the exploration of the local support for the Kaunisvaara mine has been to bring into view the reasons why people desire mines where they live, and to deepen our understanding of mining conflicts in the rural north of Sweden in the 21st century. I set out to answer the following question: What hopes, dreams and expectations do Pajala's mining proponents wish that the opening of the Kaunisvaara mine will realize? I chose an ethnographic approach focused on exploring the form of life that people wish to see enabled by the mine. Graeber's concepts of value and imagined totality have served as the starting points for the ethnographic exploration of this form of life. In my representation of the empirical material, I have sought to show how people may, as a collective, idealize a form of life where human creative actions produce values that are not commodities on a market, and thus also prefer to direct energy to value-creating activities which are not wage-labor. Or, that life in Pajala provides my informants with the audience and the symbolic and material means by which certain actions can be socially realized as valuable.

12.1 Hopes, Dreams and Expectations

At this point, it is time to articulate what hopes, dreams and expectations that my informants in Pajala wish that the mining establishment in Kaunisvaara will realize. Put simply, my informants anticipate that the mining operation in Kaunisvaara will secure the viability of a form of life that they appreciate, and that they feel cannot be enjoyed anywhere else. The ethnographic description of this form of life, presented primarily in chapters 6 and 7, also brings into view some of the actual values that seem to underpin the support for the mine as they are perceived to constitute this form of life. To give these

values a neat verbal form I chose *trust* and *hospitality of visitation,* but I would add that there are probably many others that have escaped my attention. I chose these terms not without hesitation. Although I believe that the empirical material shows how the values of hospitality and trust are created and realized in Pajala, the act of referring to these values with two separate, clearly defined but generic words, alienates them from a much larger nexus of "practices, orientations, and other social behaviors," to appeal again to Jaeggi's definition of a form of life. Trust is manifested through doors left unlocked, and in the act of offering a complete stranger to borrow your car, or a relative stranger to live in your house when you are not home. Hospitality is manifested in similar ways: doors should be left open so that guests can come and go, and if a Dane on a kick sled appears in your house the day before Christmas, he ought to be invited in. There has been an overwhelming agreement among my informants that guests must always be served something, regardless of whether they have been invited or simply drop by. The political dimension of the idealization of trust and hospitality of visitation ought not to be overlooked. What we find at the very center of the idealization of hospitality is the idealization of non-contractual social relations that function exclusively through mutual trust, and which cease to exist as soon as they are subsumed under the regulation of a third party, (i.e. the state). The reactions to the locked glass door to the municipal office in Pajala testify to the clash between a local appreciation for non-contractual relations and the type of contractual relations that are indicative constitutive of public administration, which is per definition always impersonal and bureaucratic. In this way, an appreciation for noncontractual relations are simultaneously an appreciation of a form of life that is anti-state, and by extension also anti-market, anti-capitalist even, since a market economy is directly dependent on contractual relations that can be *enforced* through state power.

Although foundational to this form of life, the words trust, hospitality (and also the form of safety that arises from trust and hospitality) do not capture what seems to be a feeling of cultural and historical resonance that binds people to Tornedalen. Pajala (or Tornedalen) is home, not necessarily because it is your place of birth or because it is your place of residence, but rather because there is a space carved out for you in the structure of kinship, friendships, alliances and feuds that predate your own existence. Through the people who witness not only your life, but also your parents' and your children's lives, you become someone in particular, and not merely anyone

– you are *someone's* boy or *someone's* girl. Tornedalen is a place where even strangers are not really strangers, but part of the audience that recognizes the value in actions that represent trust and hospitality of visitation.

It is of course possible to ask to what extent the idealization of trust, hospitality and personal relationships materialize in concrete actions, to what extent they represent how things really work in Pajala. Yet, rather than taking the concrete manifestation of these practices as the ultimate proof of their "realness," which implies that these practices are rather insignificant so long as they are not translated into action, we could ask why my informants nevertheless perceive of these practices as definitive of what life in Pajala is like. I am inclined to think that these practices are, in fact, just as much an accurate representation of reality, regardless of people's actual compliance to their description of reality — the crux of the matter is just what layer of reality they are a representation of. This is where I think Graeber's concept imagined totality is particularly useful. What my informants' descriptions of trust and hospitality, but also other aspects of life in Pajala that they appreciate, such as safety, kinship and historical roots, ultimately represent is a *permanent possibility* (Graeber 2001: 87), an idea about what Pajala could be, and perhaps to some extent, still is. The value of trust and hospitality form, together with the human relations that allow this value to be socially realized, a part of this imagined totality. Aware of the political and existential dimensions of hospitality of visitation as a space outside the state, we must also recognize the political and existential dimensions ingrained in this imagined totality.

What we glimpse through the stories in chapter 6 and 7 is, I believe, a fragment of a collectively recognized definition of what actions are to count as valuable, not because they contribute to the production of capital, but because they contribute to the reproduction of a form of life that people like. We could think of it this way: In the university parking lot in Uppsala, the act of leaving a car unlocked does not carry any *specific* meaning. Neither does it send any particular message to my neighbors or friends if I do not lock the door to my home. At most, some of them would think of me as rather naïve or negligent. In Pajala, however, leaving the door to one's home unlocked, or locking it with a broom, brings a fragment of a vision of what Pajala could be like into concrete reality. The very same thing happens when someone offers their children's friends dinner, cautions their daughter not to buy a house from an oddball and pays someone a visit without calling first.

The examples go on. When the young man in the blue Volvo showed up outside Frida's house after midnight to give Julia and me a lift back to Pajala, this imagined totality can again be glimpsed. So, too, in the very fact that Julia and Frida were both convinced that "there is always someone who can drive." Even the reluctance to sell a house to a stranger through a real estate agency, or reindeer meat to someone who has not personally visited your business, seem to be tangible examples of how imagined totalities guide our actions. What we witness through these examples is ultimately a definition of value in action. The anecdote about the older lady who scolded a young man for locking his bike outside the grocery store in Pajala receives a new, significantly more existential meaning against this background. What the lady witnessed was not a locked bicycle but the failure on the part of the man to manifest the value of trust. The locked bike is therefore a telltale sign of Pajala's imminent disintegration, almost as eerie as a derelict house, a village school turned into a junkyard or an overgrown dirt road leading to a long since abandoned farmhouse, albeit in a slightly different manner. While an abandoned house likely serves as a reminder of the decreasing population and thereby also of the disintegration of the form of life one shares, a locked bike indicates that the people who are still around might not be as invested in maintaining the understanding of Pajala as a form of life to which trust — and by extension also other values — is essential.

Structural forces have gradually eroded the preconditions for this form of life. "The necessary conditions are no longer in place" to once again quote Ulrika from Chapter 6. As machines replaced manual labor in the forest industry and small scale farming became less profitable, people started to notice that public services disappeared from Tornedalen. Life was split in the middle. The alienating experience of leaving Pajala or trying to endure the split life is described throughout chapters 8 and 9. The existential implications of this rift become clearer when viewed also through descriptions of what life away from Pajala is like. In Chapter 4, I referred to this approach of looking also at the negation of this form of life as a form of labor of the negative. While I have described life away from Pajala, I want to draw the analysis together at this point. Stockholm, Mälardalen, Kiruna, and perhaps to some extent even Luleå — "a miniature of Stockholm" — are structural opposites of Tornedalen. These places are associated with wage labor and a deficit of the kind of trust and non-contractual relations that many of my informants idealize. Stockholm, Mälardalen and Kiruna have all been

referred to as "labor camps" by some of my informants. You work in Kiruna because you must. You put your life on hold and take all the extra shifts you can, counting the hours until the workweek is over and you can drive back home. Kiruna evokes aversion. Kiruna even makes you sick. Recall Fredrik's observation that the older men who have endured this bi-weekly commuting for a long time tend to drink too much. It is hard not to recognize Marx's description of the alienating experience of estranged labor through these descriptions of wage work in Kiruna: the work is external and dislodged from personal goals, dreams and desires; it is "not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labor" (Marx 1988: 74). Kiruna is even a place where you have to be street smart, since you have no one to call should anything happen (as Vanja reasoned when her sixteen-year-old son moved to Kiruna to attend high school.) Stockholm and Mälardalen are also work camps where people in their right mind would not want to live–unsafe places where doors must be locked, doorbells used and visits planned, strange places where you cannot rely on neighbors and fellow beings for help.

When we view my informants' appreciation for life in Pajala from the standpoint of what it is that they do not like about life in Kiruna, their instrumental relation to wage work and money becomes even clearer. In fact, my informants' appreciation for life in Pajala seems to pertain much to the non-capitalist elements of this form of life. That the preferred form of life displays non-capitalist elements does not imply that Pajala is not fully integrated into a capitalist economy and value system. Pajala is by no means a case of frontier capitalism where a non-capitalist economic system encounters capitalist social relations for the first time. Rather, in Pajala, two definitions of what actions are to count as productive (creating value) exist side-by-side, or perhaps layered onto each other, like a photographic double exposure. With the contours of the form of life my informants value thus drawn, I have brought into view the hopes, dreams and expectations that my informants hope will come to fruition as the result of the local mining operation. The dream is that their preferred form of life may endure a little bit longer — a form of life that is antithetical to the alienating life one is forced to lead if all efforts to stay in Pajala are exhausted. What underpins the support for mining in Pajala seems to be the hope that fresh capital influx will close the rift between the place of production and the place of social reproduction opened up by previous waves of divestments and deindustrialization.

What haunts Pajala seems to be the specter of community; the *possibility* of a future that incorporates facets of a form of life that we do not wish to see lost to the past. Again, I would like to reiterate that the existence of this dream should not necessarily be equated with its concrete manifestations, because, as Derrida puts it, "to haunt does not mean to be present" (1994: 161). The possibility of a form of life where the value of previous experiences, friendships and acquaintances is allowed to accumulate and grow stronger over years and decades; a form of life where repeated geographical and social discontinuance and uprooting is not necessarily a part; a form of life where the narrative about who we are and where we belong does not have to be open to externally imposed redaction and revision, but can remain within the control of the residents of a village in Tornedalen; a form of life where houses do not have to be built in such a way that they can be easily abandoned; a form of life that does not include the need to be constantly prepared to be dislodged from the people that bring continuity and chronology to your life. Ultimately, the mine has to achieve nothing less than securing the duration of a non-capitalist form of life through the influx of capital.

12.2 Capital, not Culture

It is, I would argue, possible to approach the resistance to mining operations in the way I have done to understand what motivates the support for the Kaunisvaara mine. There is doubtlessly an imagined totality of a similar kind at play in the formation of resistance to mining operations, as the one I have outlined in this dissertation. An imagined totality of a similar kind into which human actions are symbolically integrated as meaningful and valuable, and which run the risk of being unsettled by local mining operations. This is how we can understand the feelings expressed by members of the Sámi community threatened by the mining venture in for example Gállok/ Kallak in Jokkmokk municipality, a mining venture that poses an existential threat to a form of life that is inseparable from Sámi culture and ideas about what is valuable. When mining operations disrupt the formative elements of a Sámi RHA — for example in cases where a mine would preclude reindeer husbandry altogether, or obstruct it severely — it most likely also disrupts the symbolic, material and social media available for defining, producing and realizing certain values. From my vantage point, the two cases Pajala and Jokkmokk strike me as structurally similar. Both can be understood as

struggles to define what value is, what a meaningful life is, and to defend the form of life where these values can be realized against the threat of disintegration brought by extractive industry, or by the lack of access to means of subsistence. The implication of this perspective is that mining proponents and mining opponents struggle for the same thing — the continuation of a meaningful life with similar components. The landscape as a carrier of memories and histories connecting you both to the people with whom you share this place, and to the people who are no longer alive; a healthy environment where you can pick blueberries, hunt or swim in the river; a good life that is not split in half; the feeling of having roots that tie you to the land and the people around you. All of these are things my informants appreciate and value, and which, as the research cited in Chapter 2 shows, mining opponents indeed value, too. In fact, mining proponents and mining opponents seem to equally appreciate the joy of being part of a collective effort to create a place where the imaginary of a life not entirely subsumed under a capitalist definition of value can be brought into existence, and where you can count on your fellow beings to recognize and reciprocate the importance of your efforts to do so. It seems thus, that local opposition to mining in certain places, and local appreciation in others, may in fact be haunted by a very similar specter of community. When we consider the values of mining proponents and the values of mining opponents side by side, within the same *space of points of view*, the result at least does not seem to be a tragic clash between incompatible points of view, founded in antagonistic visions of the world, to paraphrase Bourdieu (et al. 1993: 3). Quite to the contrary, that which results when the views of mining proponents in Pajala are brought out to confront those of mining opponents in Jokkmokk, is something very reminiscent of values in common.

From the vantage point carved out in this dissertation, the conflict materializing between mining proponents and mining opponents therefore seems to have little to do with what people actually value and what form of life they want for themselves, their children and their community; it has more to do with the material possibilities of realizing their preferred form of life without the presence of a mine. In more general terms, whether or not someone is for or against local mining seems to be related to their dependency on wage labor for their chance of experiencing the joys of a meaningful life that is whole, and not split in the middle. On an even higher level of abstraction, we can say that local conflicts over mining operations

have little to do with conflicting opinions about what makes life meaningful and valuable, and more to do with people's relation to capital, more precisely to people's access to means of production or means of substance. Although wage work, potentially in the form of a mine, is a means unfit for the task of fulfilling many human hopes, dreams and expectations, blatantly so even, when humans dream of sustaining a form of life that does not revolve around the production of capital, it is for many of us the only means available.

12.3 From Value Conflict to Contradiction

I want to close this dissertation with a reflection on a question that has hitherto only been lurking in the background: will the local mining operations in Kaunisvaara contribute to the viability of the form of life my informants appreciate? Will mining, in other words, contribute to the realization of the hopes, dreams and expectations my informants see reflected in the Kaunisvaara mine?

There is no denying that wage work at home provides an escape from the alienation experienced by informants in places other than Pajala, either by narrowing the geographic gap between the places of production and reproduction, or by offering an opportunity for those who have been dispersed to return home. Kaunis Iron Logistic and one of its biggest subcontractors employed 175 people each in 2022, making them the largest private employers in the municipality (Regionfakta 2023). While the influx of people to the municipality has never come close to the 10,000 inhabitants that the municipality dreamed of during Northland's venture in Kaunisvaara, the population decline seems to have slowed (Jakobsson and Johansson 2020). Employment in the mine quite literally reunites and reattaches things that ought to belong together; the gap that splits life in half can be closed, children and family members who have moved away can return home to where they belong.

Yet, this perspective effectively directs our attention away from the fact that Kaunis Iron and Pajala's residents are driven by two contradictory interests. While Pajala's residents seek a form of life that is non-capitalist, Kaunis Iron, or any other mining company, is obliged to maximize profit. There is, I believe, something contradictory in the fact that what seems to be going on in Pajala is a struggle to secure the viability of a form of life that is non-capitalist through the welcoming of a mine, one of the most archetypical symbols of capitalist exploitation and destruction. It digs up uniqueness,

specificity, community, nature, and transforms these things into money — money which, in this case, mostly disappears from Pajala. I use the word contradiction here in Todd McGowan's sense: "contradiction occurs when a position follows its own logic and thereby finds itself at odds with itself" (McGowan 2019: 12). The position that eventually ends up at odds with itself if it follows its own logic, is the idea that Kaunis Iron and Pajala's inhabitants share a common goal. If we want to think of mining conflicts as conflicts over value, this is, I believe, the real kernel of that value conflict.

It is true that Kaunis Iron engages in local charity projects, sponsoring local sports clubs and buying local, but — and this is the crucial point − they do this only as long as the mine is profitable. Making money is the ultimate goal of all companies operating in a capitalist market; it is, in fact, part of the definition of what a company is. The day that it is no longer profitable, or the day when the deposit is empty, Kaunis Iron will close the mine. I am talking here not of the emotions or wishes of the company's managerial staff, some of whom also live in Pajala and probably share the same hopes I have devoted this dissertation to describing. I am talking about the structural conditions of capitalism, which are beyond what a single CEO or board of directors can change. The need for companies to maximize profit "is a supreme need that every capitalist must satisfy in order to survive in competition with other capitalists" (Turner 2008: 45). This is a direct consequence of the structure of capitalist relations of production. Those suspicious of my appeal to capitalist structure need only to think of what happened the last time a mining company in Pajala municipality ran out of money. Northland Resources' mining venture in Pajala left the company's investors with SEK 14 billion worth of debt and the municipality in a state of collective depression, a peak in the unemployment rate and acute economic distress (personal communication with municipal employee, 14 March 2019; Haikola and Anshelm 2019; Müller 2015). All this despite the friendliness and local engagement that the company had displayed over its short lifespan. The contradictory relationship between what is valuable to local residents and what is valuable to Kaunis Iron reaches its most concrete expression if we ponder what would have happened had the mineral deposit been found not under the mire outside Kaunisvaara, but under the village of Pajala. It is not unlikely that the entire village would have been torn up, in the very same way that Malmberget and Kiruna are, in order to secure further ore

extraction. This is, in fact, a fate the residents in Sahavaara might have to face, given Kaunis Iron's plans to expand.

Perhaps it is the awareness of this contradiction that is reflected in the ambiguity discussed in chapters 10 and 11. People know that even if the mine would fulfill the dream of bridging the gap between the place of production and that of reproduction and secure the viability of their community, the mine does, at the same time, impinge on other values. It "harms," in the words of some of my informants, both nature and society. For example, it impedes moose hunting for the hunting teams who previously hunted in the vicinity of the mine. The presence of the mine obstructs the development of local, nature-based tourism businesses, which many see as more socially and environmentally sustainable. Several of my informants worry about the consequences of a potential leakage from the mine seeping out into the creeks, lakes and rivers. Some worry about the heavy traffic and road safety. Others fear what would happen to their childhood home and childhood village of Sahavaara, now that Kaunis Iron's extended permit allows the company to exploit a second deposit west of the village. Some admit that it indeed feels like the mining company is exploiting their resources, but that Pajala municipality is in such an economically vulnerable position that they have no choice but to accept whatever deal Kaunis Iron is offering them. Under such circumstances it appears as though local support for mining, at least to some extent, has to do with people's willingness to compromise on their values in the face of economic necessity. That compromise, it seems to me, is one you have to work out within yourself. Recall for example Thorvald's answer when I asked him if he could understand his opponents who argued that the mine was potentially harmful to nature, and by extension also to Pajala as a community: "Of course I do, because I have that side within myself, too." It is also possible to question whether a truly successful mining project in Kaunisvaara, which would greatly increase the influx of people to Pajala, would allow for the actual continuation of a form of life to which trust and hospitality of visitation are fundamental.

I contend that an apt metaphor for the relation between the hopes in Pajala and the expectations on the part of the mining company is that of a transcendental illusion (to be compared with a coherent horizon of expectation, put forward by Haikola and Anshelm 2017), an ideological illusion in which two phenomena that are structurally irreconcilable are put

on the same level, perceivable only through a parallax view. I borrow the two concepts from Žižek, who describes them in the following passage:

> the illusion of being able to use the same language for phenomena which are mutually untranslatable and can be grasped only in a kind of parallax view, constantly shifting perspective between two points between which no synthesis or mediation is possible. Thus there is no rapport between the two levels, no shared space — although they are closely connected, even identical in a way, they are, as it were, on the opposed sides of a Moebius strip. (Žižek 2006: 4)

To see unity between that which is valuable to a mining company and that which is valuable to local residents, we have to constantly shift our perspective between these two points between which no synthesis or mediation is possible. This viewpoint implies that solutions to mining conflicts must be sought not through mediation of the conflicting values on the part of mining proponents and mining opponents, but begin with the recognition of the contradictory interests on the part of mining companies and residents in rural municipalities experiencing economic and demographic challenges. Recognizing the similar aspirations on the part of both mining proponents and opponents allows us to begin to imagine how those aspirations can be brought to fruition through means other than local mining operations. I doubt that "local mining operations" would be the answer if the question we would try to answer was: "How can we create the preconditions for a form of life in which the value of hospitality of visitation, trust and safety can be realized?" When we think of the wants on the part of mining companies and local communities as coherent with each other only because they are so on one level of analysis, we turn a blind eye to that which people really yearn for. As long as we do, this longing for a *possibility* — the specter of community that haunts a municipality in the rural north — remains concealed, but no less real.

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Popular science summary

This dissertation reports on a study of the reasons behind the local support for the opening of an iron ore mine in the village Kaunisvaara, Pajala municipality, Sweden. The aim of the dissertation is to bring clarity about why people accept and sometimes even want mines where they live. More precisely, I set out to answer the following question: What hopes, dreams and expectations do Pajala's mining proponents wish that the opening of the Kaunisvaara mine will realize? By answering this question, I seek to deepen our understanding of mining conflicts in Sweden's rural north in the twenty-first century.

A global increase in demand for metals and minerals paired with policies designed to attract mining investments have radically increased the number of applications for concession permits in Sweden since the turn of the millennium. The occurrence of mining related conflicts is expected to grow because of this development, which is why research about the reasons for, and possible solutions to, mining conflicts is important.

Contemporary research often focuses on how mining conflicts result from clashing values between mining proponents and mining opponents. Research links opposition to mining to valuation of clean environment, local culture and livelihoods. Local support for mining is instead often linked to a valuation of local economic and demographic growth. While acknowledging that values play a central role in mining conflicts, contemporary research however rarely admits that the values that opponents adhere to are fundamentally different from the values ascribed to mining proponents. While mining opponents see an intrinsic value in clean environment and local culture, mining proponents value demographic growth as a means to something else. However, the end to which economic growth resulting from local mining operations is hoped to be a means, is left unexplored in contemporary

research. By taking a more precisely defined notion of value as its starting point, this thesis offers a deeper understanding of the hopes, dreams and expectations underlying the explicitly stated economic rationales people give for supporting a mine.

The dissertation contributes with empirical and theoretical knowledge about mining conflicts at a time when the number of mining conflicts are expected to grow. Empirically, the dissertation adds to the literature on mining conflicts through an ethnographic account of support, rather than resistance to local mining operation. The dissertation argues that it is difficult to detect substantial differences between the values of mining proponents and mining opponents. Theoretically, it offers a starting point for rethinking mining conflicts, and other natural resource conflicts, not primarily as the product of actual, clashing values between different local groups, but as struggles over the very definition of what value is. In that struggle, the main line of conflict runs not between members of the local community, but between local communities and actors driven by a demand to maximize profit.

Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning

Föreliggande avhandling är en etnografisk studie av det lokala stödet för järnmalmsgruvan i Kaunisvaara, belägen i Pajala kommun i Norrbotten. Avhandlingens syfte är att belysa de bakomliggande motiven och orsakerna till att människor accepterar och många gånger till och med önskar eller vill ha gruvdrift där de bor. Syftet är också att bidra till en djupare förståelse av gruvkonflikter i Sverige. Frågan avhandlingen utforskar är följande: Vilka förhoppningar, drömmar och förväntningar hoppas Pajalas invånare att öppnandet av en gruva i Kaunisvaara ska realisera?

Undersökningen motiveras av den relativa bristen på fördjupade etnografiska studier av just lokalt stöd för gruvetableringar i Sverige. Kombinationen av ett ökande globalt behov av metaller och en nationell gruvpolitik som skapat gynnsamma förutsättningar för gruvbrytning i Sverige har lett till att investeringarna i svensk gruvindustri ökar. Parallellt med den utvecklingen spås även antalet konflikter kring gruvor att öka, vilket gör att behovet av en teoretisk förståelse av konflikternas bakomliggande orsaker och potentiella lösningar växer. Samhällsvetenskaplig forskning om gruvor har argumenterat för att gruvkonflikter ytterst bottnar i värde-konflikter. Gruvmotstånd associeras med att värdera natur, kultur och traditionella, småskaliga eller naturbaserade näringar, medan en positiv syn på gruvor associeras med att värdera tillväxt, ekonomisk och regional utveckling och arbetsställen. En sådan teoretisk förståelse av gruvrelaterade konflikter ger vid handen att det positiva mottagande som gruvan i Pajala mottog kan förklaras med hänvisning till att majoriteten av kommunens invånare värderar tillväxt och ekonomisk utveckling över natur, kultur och tradition.

I ljuset av att Pajala är en glesbefolkad kommun med svagt skatteunderlag, hög medelålder och snabb befolkningsminskning framstår den slutsatsen vid första anblick inte som orimlig. I den här avhandlingen

ifrågasätts den förklaringsmodellen dock genom att argumentera för att vi betona att önskan om tillväxt och ekonomisk utveckling är medel inte är mål i sig, utan medel för att kunna realisera det man verkligen värderar, men som förblir outforskat så länge det reduceras till ”ekonomisk utveckling.” När vi utgår från att de positiva ekonomiska effekterna av en gruvetablering är medel och inte mål öppnad möjligheten att undersöka det mål (förhoppningar, drömmar, förväntningar) som människor hoppas ska kunna bli verklighet genom den lokala ekonomiska tillväxt som en gruva har möjlighet att åstadkomma.

Avhandlingen visar att dessa förhoppningar, drömmar och förväntningar kan knytas till människors önskan att kunna bo kvar i Pajala eller slippa vecko- eller långdistanspendla för att arbeta på andra orter. Pajala och Tornedalen upplevs av mina informanter som en plats präglad av starka sociala nätverk, icke-kontraktuella sociala relationer och en hög grad av tillit som upplevs som grundad i Tornedalens historia och som därför inte skulle kunna upplevas om man skulle tvingas flytta från Pajala. Det lokala stödet för gruvan i Pajala kommun bör därför beskrivas som en önskan att med hjälp av lokal ekonomisk tillväxt och inflyttning kunna realisera en viss sorts gemenskap (ett visst sorts liv) där natur, tystnad, traditioner, jakt, fiske, bärplockning, språk (Meänkieli) och kultur värderas mycket högt.

Avhandlingen bidrar med både empirisk och teoretisk kunskap om gruvkonflikter i en tid när antalet gruvkonflikter förväntas öka till följd av ökad efterfrågan på metaller och mineraler. Empiriskt bidrar avhandlingen till forskning om gruvkonflikter genom att utforska och beskriva det lokala stödet för gruvkonflikter, snarare än motståndet mot lokal gruvverksamhet. Teoretiskt bidrar avhandlingen till att erbjuda en förståelse av gruvkonflikter samt potentiellt även andra naturresurskonflikter, inte som ett utslag av lokala gruvmotståndares och lokala gruvförespråkares motstridiga värderingar, utan som en kamp på ett annat plan som rör själva definitionen av vad som är värdefullt. En kamp som snarare utkämpas mellan lokala samhällen å ena sidan och aktörer som drivs av att maximera ekonomisk vinst å den andra sidan.

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This dissertation explores the reasons behind local support for the opening of an iron ore mine in the village Kaunisvaara, Pajala municipality, Sweden. The main aim of the dissertation is to deepen our understanding of mining conflicts in the rural north of Sweden in the twenty-first century. It seeks to answer the following question: What hopes, dreams and expectations do Pajala's mining proponents wish that the opening of the Kaunisvaara mine will realize?

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