



When Will the Waiting End?

a case study on experienced effects of the possibility of a mining project in South Greenland

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South Greenland

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Abstract

All around the world, extractive projects come paired with problems originating from power imbalances: limited participation of local communities in the decision-making process, unequal access to information, and the consequences of extractive projects are often experienced locally and not by the multinational companies inflicting these. The aim of this research is to gain insight into the experiences of a community in Greenland, around the possible advent of a large-scale extractive project, and how this project already affects people's lives today although it is not yet operationalized. Ethnographic research was conducted in Narsaq, a town of 1200 people, which faces outmigration and unemployment and has little other opportunities to turn the current demise of the town around. Taking into account Greenland's transitional phase in between Danish colony and (possible) independent country, emphasis is placed by many on the extractive sector, which is expected to bring relief to the current situation of social problems, economic deficit, and dependence on Danish subsidies. A theoretical exploration is made of the concepts of place-belongingness and politics of belonging, and the experiences associated with waiting in liminality- without a clear end date-, to analyse the effect the extractive project has today. Waiting is often researched in other contexts, but not much around extractive projects and in Narsaq it turned out the 10 year waiting period around the project put a hold to development, investment and resulted in a feeling of being stuck. Both those opposing and supporting the project experience the waiting period around the mine as frustrating, and would prefer someone to make an end to the town's state of limbo, independently from the fact whether the mine will become operational or not. These findings imply that effects experienced in the local context are already significant before extractive projects take off, and stress the need for continuous dialogue between mining companies, governments and communities to mitigate these negative effects.

Key words Greenland, extractive industries, mine, belonging, waiting, liminality

Cover photo There is still a lot of snow in the Greenlandic 'spring'. A view of Narsaq's main road, also showing half of the total number of cars in the town (27 April 2017, by author)

Acknowledgements

This thesis ends an important chapter in my life: finalizing my studies where after I go out to work in 'the real world'. I enjoyed studying in Wageningen very much, and ethnographic research is a fitting concluding project to my master International Development Studies.

Going to Greenland brought up many reactions with people around me: 'is it always dark there?' 'why would you go there?' 'is it freezing and snowing all year round?' And lastly, 'where is it exactly?' It is surprising how often Greenland is confused with Iceland...

Doing research by myself, although relatively close to home in kilometers as the crow flies compared to other places where I have lived abroad, was challenging due to the remoteness of the town I lived in and the complete change of scenery compared to Utrecht. While on the one hand at times a challenge, on the other hand, this experience of living in Greenland has taught me much about my own strengths, about making friends everywhere around the world, and about the incredible landscapes and nature we have and should cherish on our planet earth.

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All pictures throughout this work are from the author's own collection (2017) and aim at making the reader part of Narsaq/ Greenland while reading this thesis.

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Introduction

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Extractive projects and community involvement

All over the world, extractive industries can be found: economic activities that remove natural resources from the environment in order to sell it, such as mining, oil and gas extraction (Bebbington, 2010). Often, countries rich in resources are prone to promote foreign investment in their extractive sector, since they do not have the means to extract these resources themselves. This can lead to high dependence on foreign companies and less domestic control over the sector (Hilson & Haselip, 2004).

It is almost a rule that the further away extractive projects are from the center of a state, the poorer the implementation of the standards and the contribution of industry to community development is, and the influence that people have on the decision-making process (Stammler & Ivanova, 2016 p. 1235). Extractive activities often have significant social and environmental impacts which are mostly borne by local communities and not by multinational mining companies. Conflicts between communities and extractive companies and government authorities are frequent when power and information structures are unequally distributed and local communities' rights over their own development paths are limited. (Peterson St-Laurent & Le Billon, 2015 p. 591, Bebbington, 2010). Information on these projects is often provided when the companies arrive at the project site, and not beforehand. In addition, it is often done in a monologue rather than a dialogue, and in jargon that is possibly not understandable to everyone (Dylan, Smallboy & Lightman, 2013). It is not unusual for local communities to enter discussions over mining projects with limited knowledge, capacity, and resources. This puts these people in a position of inferiority in terms of both negotiation and participation power (Dylan et al., *ibid*).

To prevent people from ending up in this inferior position, stakeholder engagement is widely acknowledged for the success of large-scale projects. The development of extractive projects is often associated with long timespans around their development, and this often goes hand in hand with waiting, frustration, and passivity from the people living close to the project site (Johnstone & Hansen, 2017). Keeping stakeholders updated and engaged is thus important; nonetheless, this is difficult because different stakeholders on different levels of scale uphold different values and priorities. Therefore, open communication and information provision in both directions is key (Larson et al. 2010). Stammler & Ivanova (*ibid*) therefore argue for the creation of an environment where information can flow in two dimensions: horizontally among stakeholders on the ground, and vertically between the local, municipal and national levels of governance.

1.2 The Kvanefjeld extractive project

These processes of community involvement and information flows have been researched in the context of the Kvanefjeld extractive project. This research concerns a community living next to a potential extractive site and its responses to this project which is still in the negotiation process and not operationalized yet. The location of this case study, Narsaq, is a town of 1200 people in South Greenland,¹ which neighbors one of the largest Rare Earth Elements (REEs) deposits in the world, contained in the Kvanefjeld mountain complex. These elements are some

¹ Narsaq is Greenland's 8th largest settlement, the total population of the island is 56.171 (Statistics Greenland, 2017).

of the most sought-after minerals today and the demand is fuelled mostly by the electronics industry and in alternative energy solutions such as the electric car industry and other ‘green’ industries (Goodenough et al., 2017).² Due to ongoing outmigration, unemployment and little investments in Narsaq, it breathes ghost-town when walking through the streets lined with typical Danish colored houses (as seen on the picture on the front page). Extracting the REEs and uranium as a by-product could give Narsaq a new boost, while at the other hand the environment and people could be harmed. As one respondent explains, opinions are divided on what the mine will bring to the town:

*“Authorities say without a mine in Kvanefjeld, Narsaq will die,
but we say that with a mine in Kvanefjeld Narsaq will die”³*

Naturally, mining projects bring up differing opinions and emotions. Nuttall (2012) explains how in Greenland, public disquiet over lack of appropriate consultation and criticism over the absence of information about planned extractive projects exists. The demand for greater public engagement and participation in discussions and decision-making on the extractive industries is increasing.

Rumours and negotiations around the Kvanefjeld project have been going on for over 10 years. The project became more realistic when in 2013 the zero-tolerance policy on uranium mining was lifted by Greenland’s parliament. Without lifting this part of Greenland’s legislation, the Kvanefjeld project could never have become a reality, since the REEs cannot be mined while keeping the uranium in the ground. Uranium brings up strong reactions by many because it makes people think of ‘radioactivity, nuclear bombs and Chernobyl disasters’ (Sermitsiaq, 6 November 2008). Besides strong emotional reactions on the uranium part, the project also brings up many other questions: will the mine actually be operationalized after waiting for all these years? If so, will it bring many foreign workers to town, and in what ways will it impact the town and the environment? All these questions are already evident in Narsaq today: a feeling of limbo- of being in between and in the unknown of what the future will hold prevails, and is characterized by waiting, frustration and insecurity. In case of Narsaq, this holds for both those in favor of the project and those opposed, since this uncertainty makes it difficult to make future plans or investments.

To better understand people’s sentiments today, it is important to take Greenland’s colonial history into account. Greenland used to be a Danish colony and is still a part of the Kingdom of Denmark today. It is still very much dependent on Denmark in various ways, most notably because of a large grant Greenland receives every year, which amounts 40% of its GDP. The wish for independence from Denmark is large among its population, the indigenous Inuit. However, this can probably only be accomplished by developing the extractive industries sector and diversifying the economy. Greenland is expected to harbor a lot of natural resources (besides rare earth elements and uranium), and due to the melting of the Arctic ice, possibilities emerge to exploit and extract these resources (Mortensen, 2013). Because on Greenland neither the skills nor the number of workers necessary to exploit these projects are

² REEs are often mentioned as playing an important role in reducing (the effects of) ongoing climate change. Ironically, a part of the world that is experiencing many effects of climate change, the Arctic, is harbouring an abundance of these metals.

³ Respondent 11. All respondents have been anonymized for privacy reasons.

available, foreign investors are needed to extract these resources (Greenland Statistics, 2017, Bell, 2011).

These (foreign) investments necessary to achieve independence from Denmark, can have both positive and negative consequences for the local population of Greenland. Greenland's indigenous people are known for their connection to the land and traditional way of sustaining their livelihoods by fishing and hunting. Greenlandic society overall is unfortunately characterized by many problems: the highest suicide rate in the world, domestic violence, alcohol and substance abuse and a high level of unemployment (SLiCA, 2015 Mortensen, 2013). Moreover, climate change has an impact on Greenland as well and as former prime minister Hammond tended to say: "Greenland wants to be a winner of climate change", and not just wait for the negative consequences (Tegenlicht: Het Warme Noorden, 2014). It changes livelihood strategies: whereas some hunting possibilities will decline, it becomes more realistic that a larger variety of vegetables can be grown on the island, although this is not yet sustainable in the near future (van Raaij, 2015).

In sum, on the one hand, the mining business could increase employment opportunities, increase spending in local facilities and improve healthcare and infrastructure (Stepién et. al., 2014). On the other hand, the Greenlandic culture could be transformed due to foreign influences, there is a risk of environmental damage and therefore of damage to food supply, and when the mines are abandoned, the Greenlanders are left with the waste of the projects (Van Dam et. al, 2014). Regarding all these possible pros and cons to foreign mining companies coming to Greenland, it is the local people who are faced with all these changes.

1.3 Research aim

If the Kvanefjeld project will be operationalized, this will bring incredible changes to the town, which depending on who you ask, can be a good or a bad thing. Today however, it is still unclear whether this will (ever) happen and what this will look like exactly: people are still in the unknown what their future will hold. Hence, the goal of this research is to gain insights into how the population of Narsaq responds to the potential coming into being of a rare earth elements and uranium mine in their backyard. What does this mining project do to community dynamics? How does the project affect the town already today in terms of the consequences and effects of uncertainty and waiting for a decision on the mining project to be made by the Greenlandic government?

To investigate this, I use and theorize the following two concepts: 'belonging' and 'waiting'. Because the project is located so close to Narsaq, the sense to which people feel like they belong in the town and its surroundings may make up part of their opinions on the project. Surroundings can have an important meaning to people, and extractive projects tend to have considerable impacts on ways in which people experience place-belongingness (Köhne & Rasch, 2016). As described, Narsaq today is in limbo: in between and in the unknown, waiting for a decision to be taken on the future of the town. One of the important elements of waiting are the experiences and emotions that people associate with it. With waiting come 'feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, and vulnerability' (Sutton et al., 2011). I will explore how waiting and these experiences associated with it influence life in Narsaq today.

Combining all mentioned above, I aim to answer the following main research question in this thesis:

How does a small community in South Greenland experience the possible advent of a large-scale extractive project, and how does it affect people's lives today?

Hereby, I take the country's transitional context into account. Transitional is meant both from 'traditional' to 'modern', as well as from colony to independence. In addition, the Greenlandic context is often described in literature as consisting of two extremes: extremely beautiful landscapes and vast nature, and extreme societal and economic problems. In this thesis, I aim to provide a more nuanced image, which I gathered via qualitative fieldwork in Greenland. I lived in Greenland for 2,5 months, where I conducted semi-structured and informal interviews, and used participant observation in addition to a pre and post-research document analysis.

To answer the main research question, four sub-questions were formulated, not to be answered literally but rather to serve as analytical guidelines throughout the thesis. *'How has Greenland developed to become the self-governing territory it is today, and what role does the extractive sector play?'* This first contextual question is necessary to understand the current government policy towards extractive projects. Answering this question implies studying Greenland's colonial history, and in particular the last 50 years of top-down modernization. The second question, *'How is the Kvanefjeld project introduced to Narsaq, and how was information provided on the project?'* zooms in on the specific context of this thesis, and discusses population and social dynamics in the town over time and the place the project takes up within the town. Information provision on the project is studied by taking into account various sources, their credibility and accessibility, as well as the power dynamics surrounding information. The third question: *'How does the community respond to Kvanefjeld?'* seeks what various motivations people have to either support or oppose the project and how public opinion has changed over the years. Also, the civil society organizations founded around the project will be discussed. Answering the last question, *'What are the effects of Kvanefjeld on the community today?'* will show how the community experiences the project on a daily basis, taking into account the insecurities and power structures that come paired with waiting.

1.4 Relevance

Much research has been done on the Greenlandic wish for independence from Denmark, and on the role the extractive sector plays within this context in public opinion, politics, and government policy. The island is supposed to harbor a large diversity of resources, but only a small number of mining companies have obtained an exploitation license and actually operationalized their mines: the extractive sector is still relatively small. Little literature has been written on the impacts of these projects, and this research concerned mines far away from towns, or containing non-controversial elements like gold or rubies. The Kvanefjeld project however is located only 6 kilometers from Narsaq and involves the mining of uranium, thereby implying extensive consequences for the community. Since the zero-tolerance on uranium mining in Greenland was only lifted in 2013, this is the first project that (if it comes to be operationalized) will involve mining for uranium in Greenland. In addition, 'waiting' has been researched in multiple contexts (e.g. refugees seeking asylum, cancer patients for their test results), nevertheless, little research has been done in the context of negotiations around extractive projects. In this specific context, the long-term effects of waiting on Kvanefjeld to become operationalized, have not been investigated yet. Within this research gap, this thesis

adds to this new area of resource extraction in Greenland and gives a voice to people's opinions on the project and on uranium extraction. Besides scientific relevance, this thesis thus aims to give the community a voice, which as I explained before, is often a problem within extractive projects.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The following outline gives an indication of how this thesis is structured: the theoretical framework discusses the various dimensions of belonging and place-belongingness. Moreover, the concept of 'waiting' is theorized, especially the power relations associated with it. Following this theoretical part, the methodology chapter explains the data collection and analyzation process as well as the limitations of this research in order to provide transparency on the research process. The fourth chapter dives into the context, and provides information on Greenland's development towards a quasi-independent state and shows how important the extractive sector is within the context of Greenland's strive towards more independence. The general historical overview then continues into a more specific chapter in which Narsaq's evolvment is discussed, and the Kvanefjeld project in relation to the town, as well as the government's stance on the project. The results chapter 6 discusses in depth information provision and power distributions associated with it, followed by chapter 7 which elaborates on the various responses the community has (had) towards the project. Chapter 8 answers the main research question by linking the theoretical concepts to the empirical data, and explains the effects the extractive project has on the community today.



Photo 2: The winter fjord ice starts to melt slowly but surely at the Ilua fjord. 15 May 2017

Theoretical Framework

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework

The previous chapter introduced the research aim and research question and a short insight into the Greenlandic context. The framework in this chapter will provide more clarity on the theoretical foundations of this research.

First, I elaborate on the concepts on belonging and place-belongingness, discussing which factors contribute to people feeling attached to certain places or landscapes. Since extractive projects often have a large social and economic impact on people and their surroundings, it is important to study how people construct their feeling of belonging, because this influences how people experience and reflect on extractive projects. Second, waiting and the effects of experiencing waiting for an indefinite time 'in limbo' will be discussed. What are the consequences for people who do not know when their period of waiting will end? With extractive projects, waiting, frustration and passivity go often hand in hand, and this also affects, for instance, decision-making about future investments.

2.1 Belonging

Belonging is a concept difficult to define, and often used alongside or interchangeably with identity; in particular national or ethnic identity. However, belonging values physical proximity over common (national) identity (Lähdesmäki et al., 2016, Antonsich, 2010). In the contexts of extractive projects, I argue that place-belongingness and belonging are important concepts to consider, since these concepts more explicitly analyze the relationship between human experience and the material world (Lähdesmäki et al., *ibid*).

Antonsich (*ibid*) reviewed the usage of the term 'belonging' in the social sciences and found that it has often been treated as self-explanatory and that there is not one clear overarching definition that can be found. He concludes that it is undeniable that (place) belonging is a multidimensional concept which has various factors contributing to it.⁴ People can belong in many different ways and to many different objects. This can be through self-identification or identification by others. It is a dynamic process, rather than a fixed construct (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

2.1.1 Dimensions of belonging

First, I will continue to discuss various dimensions that contribute to (place) belongingness or 'feeling at home'. Later in this paragraph, I will discuss how belonging can be used as a tool: the politics of belonging.

The first factor of place-belongingness elaborated on is the *landscape factor*. Since extractive projects take place in landscapes which are inhabited by people, the different meanings people attach to their surroundings must be explored. The environment and natural resources can be regarded in terms of livelihood provision (or for extractive purposes), but also in many other different ways. An example can be found in water: "*human interactions with water bodies and aquatic ecosystems are a source of cultural inspiration and often have a religious foundation*" (Jackson, Finn & Scheepers, 2014, p. 100). Other elements of nature, like a mountain, forest, or even a tree by itself can be claimed to be sacred as well (Martinez-Alier, 2014). Escobar (2006) emphasizes how cultural and religious meanings assigned to nature can make up cultural identities and thereby increase feelings of belonging in a certain

⁴ Lähdesmäki et al. (2016) for instance came up with 5 different dimensions and meanings of the concept of belonging than Antonsich (2010) and Yuval-Davis (2006) did.

place. Hereby, nature and its resources are thus not expressed in monetary values, but in other languages of valuation: cultural, historical, and religious (Köhne & Rasch, 2017). Conflicts over natural resources and landscapes can easily arise because, in strive of economic gains, other values attached to landscapes and resources can be overlooked.

Hay (1988) argues that as a landscape becomes more familiar to a person, the unique qualities that make it distinctive (to an outsider) are noticed less. In Western discourse, landscapes are usually described as solid geology (a 'granitic landscape'), or as a landform (a 'tropical landscape'), or by its usage (a 'plantation landscape'), etc. according to Bender (2002). This is also explained by the quote below: we see the world via our own understanding and frames we have of it.

"Human beings cope with the phenomena they encounter by slotting them into the understanding of the world which they have already developed: nothing is perceived without being perceived 'as' something. . . . If there was no person, there would still be rocks, trees, mountains . . . but no one to recognize them as such or to call them by those names" (Thomas, 1996 p. 65-66).

Feelings of belonging through landscapes are thus not just constructed by the physical characteristics of the landscape, but also historical, economic, religious and emotional relations, such as through interactions via livelihood-related or other everyday practices that can give meaning to people's surroundings (Poe et al. 2014). This link between people and places is often assumed to be essential. Landscapes can be seen as part of the nature of a community; 'as a cultural construction' and 'a visual expression of place and region' (Olwig, 2009). Jansen & Löfving (2007, p. 4) state that: *"all human beings, understood collectively as cultural groups, belong to a certain place on earth and derive a primordial identity from that belonging."* Köhne & Rasch (2016) argue that because surroundings can have such important meaning to people, extractive projects tend to have considerable impacts on ways in which people experience place-belongingness.

The **geographical factor** of belonging is related to place. The term 'place' can also be used rather flexibly: places can be described as locations, a person's place in society, or one's feelings for a place such as a house or hometown. If a person resides in a place for many years, and particularly if the person is raised there, he or she can develop a feeling of being at home and secure (Hay, 1998). Riger & Lavrakas (1981) named these various descriptions the dimensions of place-attachment, or rootedness and bondedness, the former being associated with length of residence, while the latter arises from feeling part of a neighborhood for instance and links more to place-belongingness.

Related to the geographical factor is **belonging in remoteness**, which is apparent in the location of this research. It is argued that remoteness, its isolation and exoticness, builds up a separation from the mainstream, and a powerful sense of belonging to the (remote) region (Coates, 1994). Carson et al. (2011) describe how remote regions have many characteristics in common: sparsely populated, limited variety of economic activities, high proportions of indigenous people, relying on capital from the urban centers and losing particular groups of the population, like young people, to these centers. Although globalization and time-space compression developments (e.g. improved transport technologies) have challenged the idea of long distances and unreachable places, many remote settlements are still remote compared to other parts of the world which have become so much more intertwined (Bocco, 2016). Remote regions can be distinguished from other regions by landscapes, which are individualizing,

primary characteristics in the social construction of a remote region (Olwig and Jones, 2008). Although the circumpolar regions are known for their harsh, brutal and rigor landscapes- and not known for their sheltering capacity- these landscapes of remoteness have been inhabited for millennia (Bocco, 2016).

Antonsich (2010) conducted a literature review and highlights five factors that focus on individual feelings of place-belongingness, which I are concisely explained below. The first factor is the **autobiographical** one, which relates to a person's history- personal experiences and memories that attach a person to a given place. The place where a person is born or grown up often remains a central place in her/his life.

The **relational factor** refers to personal and social ties that enrich the life of an individual, such as relations with family and friends. Not all relationships matter in the same way, but they should take place through frequent physical interaction and must be long-lasting, positive, stable and significant in order to be able to generate a feeling of belonging. Occasional everyday encounters are not sufficient to do so (Baumeister and Leary, 1995).

Cultural factors include aspects that can create an 'us' versus 'them' demarcation. Language is an important denominator because it helps create and convey meaning, and a way of interpreting and defining situations. A shared language helps create *"the warm sensation that people understand not merely what you say, but also what you mean"* (Ignatieff, 1994, p. 7). Other elements adding to the cultural factor are cultural expressions, traditions, habits and cultural practices (e.g. related to food production and consumption): this all makes people feel part of a community and adds to feelings of belonging (Ameli & Merali, 2004).

Economic factors contribute to creating safe and stable material conditions. However, besides the material aspect, economic embeddedness also contributes to a person feeling like she/he has a stake in the future of the place of residence.

Lastly, **legal factors** such as citizenship and resident permits bring an official sense of belonging. The legal factor contributes to providing security: this formal structure of belonging is a precondition to participating in one's environment and helps to manage uncertainty that risks in the environment may generate (Antonsich, 2010, Ameli & Merali, 2004).

It is clear that there are multiple factors contributing to people feeling 'at home' or belonging to certain places. It is not necessary to experience all these dimensions to the same extent, but they should rather be considered as complementary to one another.

2.1.2 Politics of belonging

A distinction can be made between belonging or place-belongingness as discussed in the previous paragraph, and politics of belonging. Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that politics of belonging comprises political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways, thereby separating populations into 'us' and 'them'. These two opposite sides can also be defined as one side that claims belonging, and the other side that has the power of 'granting' belonging.

This implies a process of negotiation, but also of rejection and exclusion (Croucher, 2004). Politics of belonging includes thus the struggle around determining what is involved in belonging, in being a member of a community, and what roles and narrative of identity play a role in this (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 205). This community or collective can also be a collective

imaginary construct. Anderson's (1983) work on nationalism elaborates on how the nation is a construct: it is an imagined political community, because while many members will never know their fellow-members, they all have an image of their community in their minds, and feel like they belong together. Moreover, regardless of inequality that may be evident, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship between its members. This emotional dimension of belonging is crucial to the politics of belonging: people love their people and hate the enemy that potentially forms a threat to the national culture and tradition (Yuval-Davis, 2007, p. 564).

This form of belonging relates thus more to national belonging than personal feelings of being at home and can be used in conflicts over extractive projects as an important discursive tool to negotiate rights, and to base arguments on (Lähdesmäki et al., 2016).

2.3 Waiting

Besides belonging and embeddedness in the various dimensions of belonging, that shape people's opinions and feelings about extractive projects, the experiences that come together with waiting are another facet that is of importance when studying the effects of extractive projects.

Although waiting is a universal experience, it is argued by Sutton, Vigneswaran & Wels (2011) that there is an omission in the theorizing of the concept waiting. This might be because much (management and organizational) literature is written from a position of power, whereas waiting is usually experienced by the less-powerful in an organization or system. Schwartz (1975, p. 5) states that *"the distribution of waiting time coincides with the distribution of power"*. Waiting mirrors power relations: *"there are those who wait and those who are waited for."* In line with Schwartz, Auyero (2010) argues that waiting is regarded as a subordination of one's schedule to someone else's: therefore, to enforce waiting is to exert power, and to wait is to be powerless. One of the important elements of waiting are the experiences and emotions that people associate with it. Sutton et al. (2011) found that with waiting come *"feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, and vulnerability."*

Although waiting is a general everyday experience, it must be contextualized in order to understand its meaning (Sutton et al., *ibid*). Waiting is often described as experiencing time, and whereas time has been studied extensively in organizational sciences, waiting as a separate phenomenon which is so connected to it, is not (Sutton et al., *ibid*). According to Sabo (2014), there are two types of time that can be distinguished: disembodied time and embodied time. Disembodied time is time on the clock, straightforward mathematical and measured in numbers. Embodied time, however, refers to how an individual experiences time, and is linked to emotions such as hope, impatience, and possibly also fear and dread. On the other hand, Lahad (2012) argues that waiting can also be a time of anticipation, hope, and excitement. Gasparini (1995, p. 39) combines this and formulates experiencing waiting as *"waiting moves from representing a hope and a gratifying experience to a frustration, an illusion, and a form of indefinite distress."* Examples of different sorts of waiting and their related different forms of experiencing time are clear if one takes waiting in a traffic jam, which is a fundamentally different experience from for instance waiting for death to come after someone's long sickbed (Sutton et al., 2011).

Although waiting is often encompassed by boundaries such as beginning and end, there is also waiting defined by liminal space: a space which is neither here nor there, but *"betwixt*

and between” (Turner, 1969, p. 69). Liminality suggests a sense of being in between; standing in the old world on the threshold of a new world which has yet to arrive (Sabo, 2014). This concept has been developed first by Van Gennep (1960) in his ‘Rites of Passage’, who identified three stages as people evolve from one situation into another. The pre-liminal stage of separation, the liminal stage or transition and eventually the post-liminal stage of reincorporation. Sutton et al. (2011) describe liminal space as a transformative phase, like a coming-of-age initiation rite. Prolonged liminality suggests a strong relationship between waiting and uncertainty. As Auyero (2010) puts it: waiting is dependent on the possibilities of mastering the unknown. Crapanzo (1985) observed that waiting implies an orientation in time directed towards the future and away from the present, in expectation of the arrival or the non-arrival of the object of waiting. Lahad (2012) adds that waiting in liminal space marks ‘being stuck’, and having one’s life on hold. Other descriptions of experiencing liminality are reflected in metaphors such as hanging, stagnant, being left in the lurch, and feeling diminished as a person and having a sword of Damocles suspended over one’s head (Foote et al. 2002, Sibbett, 2004). Waiting in liminality can thus be experienced as being in between, and is a phase associated with uncertainty, insecurity, and feelings of powerlessness.

When waiting is researched, it is done in various contexts: for instance with regard to asylum seekers (see Conlon 2007, Den Boer 2015). Conlon (2007) studied woman seeking asylum in Ireland to identify ways in which people react to living in limbo. Other contexts are for example, the medical sector, in which patients are awaiting diagnosis (Timmermans & Buchbinder, 2010), or terminally ill patients and their families (Sabo, 2014) and their reactions to waiting are studied, and the spillover effects on personal identity and other areas of life. However, from all these different contexts, it is clear that waiting in liminal space is defined by a dependent position, uncertainty and a feeling of being stuck, accompanied by a sense of powerlessness. These effects and feelings are also evident in the context of this research in Narsaq.

2.4 Conclusion

All of this considered this research will focus on effects of a large mining project on a small community, in a context of a country searching for independence and a corresponding national identity. These effects need to be analyzed by looking into how various factors construct place-belongingness for people in Narsaq. In the context of extractive projects, waiting is an important concept to take into account. Waiting needs to be contextualized in order to understand its meaning. In Narsaq, the waiting situation is mostly characterized by power inequalities and the experience of waiting ‘measured’ in embodied time: the emotions that come associated with waiting. The situation around Kvanefjeld is one of liminality: there is no clear end date to the waiting period, which implies that people are stuck in limbo (further explained in chapter 5).



Photo 3: On the road between Sillisit and Qassiarsuk, in the sheep farm area. 19 June 2017

Methodology

Chapter 3. Methodology

In the previous chapter, I discussed the theoretical framework according to which I will analyze the data gathered to answer the main research question. In this methodology chapter, I will explain how the data was gathered: the research approach and a justification of choices made in the field and thereafter. Because an anthropologist influences the outcomes of the research to a large extent because of the way the data is gathered, it is important to explain the reasoning behind choices made in the field (Terpstra, 2015).

I will begin by explaining the research approach, arguing that ethnography was the most suitable approach to provide insights into effects of the Kvanefjeld project on Narsaq's community today. Then I move on to how access was negotiated and which data gathering methods were used and describe the limitations and challenges of this research. As Geertz (1973) argues in 'The Interpretation of Cultures': one should always consider that *"anthropological writings are themselves interpretations and second and third ones to boot."* Therefore, it is recommended in the social sciences that a researcher reflects on his own role in the field, which is addressed in the last part of this chapter.

3.1 Research Approach

This research can be placed within social constructivism, which holds that the world should be viewed as social (by people) and under construction: that it is ever changing. Social constructivism scholars do not accept any social features of life as given, but as constructions. We all construct our own realities via the lenses through which we look at the world and make sense of it. If we look at a concept like belonging, we make sense of this based on our own perceptions, grounded in our own beliefs and discourses (Steans, Pettiford, et al., 2010). This research focuses on opinions, argumentation and effects of a large-scale mining project near a small community. To gain insights in these constructs, a qualitative research seems most suitable since (social) constructs are hard to express in a quantitative manner.

As Maxwell (2004) explains, a qualitative research design is more a 'do-it-yourself' than an 'off-the-shelf' process compared to quantitative research, thereby providing opportunities for the researcher to shape and change the design. A qualitative research design is not static but rather interactive: any component of the design can be reconsidered or modified during the fieldwork in order to include new developments (Maxwell, *ibid*). Constant reflection on the data, the questions asked in interviews and on observations can cause the researcher to change the focus of the research. This happened to me as well: in the field, my original research question seemed not as relevant as I thought it would beforehand. The focus used to be more on indigenous identity, but it turned out life in Narsaq was not as traditional (in terms of it being a hunter-gatherer community) as I had expected. This exemplifies how important it is to actually go somewhere and emerge yourself in a social setting before you can try to make sense of people's opinions and meanings they attach to their arguments. Hence, this research implied an ethnographic approach. There are many definitions of ethnography, but Hammersley et al. come up with the following broad description:

"Ethnography usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry." (Hammersley et al. 2007 p. 3).

This in line with Geertz (1973) who formulated this as: *“anthropologists don’t study villages (tribes, towns, neighborhoods), they study in villages.”* I aimed at finding out what motivates people to have a certain opinion on the mining project and how it affects the community. Face to face conversations, informal interviews, participating and observing the setting turned out to be the best methods to approach this goal.



Photo 4: Visiting an abandoned settlement, overlooking the Bredefjord. 22 May 2017

Observing and experiencing the landscape also played an important role in this, because before experiencing Greenland’s outstretched, wild and remote nature, one cannot imagine how it feels standing on a mountain all alone and feeling like a tiny insignificant human on our big magnificent earth. In addition, nature still plays an important role in Greenlandic society today, and as discussed in the theoretical framework, can be an element contributing to place-belongingness.

Besides the fieldwork, I decided afterward to do additional document analysis, and to collect newspaper articles from KNR (Greenland’s National Broadcasting Company) and Sermitsiaq, Greenland’s two main sources of written information, on the Kvanefjeld project in Narsaq in order to deepen my data. Also, because information provision turned out to be an important argument people mentioned during conversations.

3.2 Data Gathering

I started this research by conducting a desk study in order to familiarize myself with Greenland’s history and the extraction of natural resources that have occurred until now. Studying literature on Greenlandic history and identity helped me to understand more profoundly on what a complicated point in its history the island is now, and which role the aim for independence plays.

In the Netherlands, I conducted two informal interviews with people who had been in Greenland for research purposes. One of them an academic, who has done extensive (field) research on traditional clothing in Eastern Greenland. She told me about the difficulty of learning and understanding the Greenlandic language, loneliness experienced as a foreigner and the importance of family to Greenlanders. The second one had been to Greenland numerous times to help negotiate indigenous rights in several international institutions, and who had been involved in negotiations in Narsaq on the Kvanefjeld mining project in the past. These first informal interviews provided me with insight into the Greenlandic (research) context and with several contacts and tips for the field. I also contacted an American student who had done fieldwork in Narsaq, and via her, I found housing and met my hosts in Narsaq.

The fieldwork for this thesis took place between 10 April and 20 June 2017, in Nuuk and in Narsaq. I spent 1 week in Nuuk, and 9 weeks in Narsaq and the surrounding areas. Being in Nuuk before coming to Narsaq provided me with the opportunity to hear people’s opinions on mining projects in the capital and development of Greenland in general. Moreover, it provided me with more insight in Greenland’s history and culture via among

others the museums that are there. It also gave me some time to acclimatize to the setting, both in terms of temperature (-15 degrees Celsius and snowstorms) and to the remoteness and small size of the city.

3.2.1 Negotiating Access and Sampling

The way in which you enter the field shapes how you are perceived and also in that sense the outcome of your research (Hammersley et. al, 2014). I did not do my research with- or for an organization and therefore my reputation was (I assume) quite neutral. I did find out that I was known in Narsaq because several people approached me on the streets because they had heard I was in town or recognized me from one of my messages on Facebook. Also, because Narsaq is such a small town, it is quite soon known when someone new, especially a foreigner, moves in.

I used the Facebook group 'Narsami Uran piiarneqassanngilaq'⁵ to find respondents for my research, by writing a short message on the purpose of the research and asking whether people would want to discuss their thoughts. This helped me find my first 4 respondents, who in turn helped me to find more respondents- and in this way, I snowballed around Narsaq. Many people in Greenland are very active on Facebook and thus this turned out to be an effective way to find people and make appointments or phone calls.

My host in Narsaq played an important role as well: he had been a 'fixer' for a journalist from the BBC⁶, whereby he hooked him up with people who could talk about the mine (in English). He provided me with the same contacts and continued to be of help during my stay (together with his wife), providing me with documents and more contacts. Also, people we ran into in Qaqortoq during one of their business meetings to which they took me along, led to people being interested in my research and led to snowballing of new contacts within the municipality. Other access points were the Museum and the community house, where I ran into respondents and attended a lecture. Additionally, sports is a very important part of my normal routine, and therefore I decided to use the gym as an entry point for my research and to enlarge my social circle as well. I joined the badminton class, the strength class, and was in the gym/ fitness 4 days a week in the evenings. While playing sports you don't need that much language to communicate, and it is a pleasant informal setting to start a conversation in and see people regularly.

3.2.2 Interviews

I mostly used face to face interviews, based on an interview topic list.⁷ The list was a guideline, and not a strict tool for conducting interviews: these were thus semi-structured. This also helped me to shift the focus of the research where necessary and to find out what people themselves valued most and were most eager to talk about. Themes most frequently addressed during interviews were (the lack of) information on the mining project, fear for environmental pollution and the current feeling in Narsaq that 'the town is dead' since many people have moved away in the last few years. The formal interviews I conducted were between 30 and 120 minutes long and most of these were recorded so that they could be transcribed literally afterward. I choose to record my interviews to be able to focus entirely on the conversation without focusing

⁵ This Facebook group is in existence since 2013 (when the policy on zero-tolerance for uranium was abolished and has 1734 members. Academic and newspaper articles in English, Danish and Greenlandic are shared, and many times reference is made to the Fukushima nuclear disaster and its consequences for people and nature. The page can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/atanaaq/>

⁶ The BBC documentary (2014) can be found here: <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-25421967>

⁷ The list is included in Annex C: Interview topic list.

on taking notes while listening, which could also be distracting to the interviewee. Most interviews were conducted at people's homes, which gave me an insight into Greenlanders' living situations, and provided me plenty opportunity to ask people about for instance their families using the pictures they had hanging on the wall. This way, people felt (hopefully) more at ease and did not have to travel to meet me.

The attitude of my respondents differed when looking at willingness to participate. Many researchers and journalists have been in Narsaq researching the mine and its impacts in one way or another over the last years, and most of them target the same people: those who speak English or are active in politics or in organizations either pro or contra Kvanefjeld. I also targeted many of these people for the same reasons, and some were initially not enthusiastic about participating in the research or participated with a bit of reluctance.

*"I have to do this and I have to do that and I have to read this and I have to answer this and I have to... Most of the times, I'm glad if someone like you call me or write me that they want to meet, and I really appreciate it, because you're interested to hear our opinion. But I have sometimes that, especially this winter, I was kind of tired. And I was thinking ooh I miss our quiet, peaceful life here in Narsaq. Not only for me, but for all of us."*⁸

More people expressed this same sentiment, mentioning how they are tired of people from the outside asking questions. Paradoxically, many people feel like the government is not asking them enough questions. However, when people found out I was staying in Narsaq for longer than just a week as some other researchers and journalists did, people started inviting me over more for social events and asked how the research was going and if they could help me with anything.

*"It's good that you're staying here for a longer time- we like that. You are not just leaving after 2 days and write things about us that are not true"*⁹

Only one targeted respondent openly denied participating, for the reason described above: he had been interviewed so many times already that he did not feel like doing it once more. His wife said over the telephone: *"but you know his opinion already, right?"* Other respondents, however, put in a great effort to make time for me, gave me documents and newspaper articles and seemed eager to tell their story.

In the end, I conducted 19 formal interviews with 24 people (4 couples) living in Greenland, of which 4 interviews were done over the telephone. It was intended to have a balanced division in gender and age in the respondent group, which was successfully done since respondents are between 25 and 60 years of age and the male/ female ratio is 13/11. The respondents are active in private companies, agriculture, education, healthcare, government, municipality, international organizations and as students. Most respondents are from Narsaq, but there are for instance also interviews included with

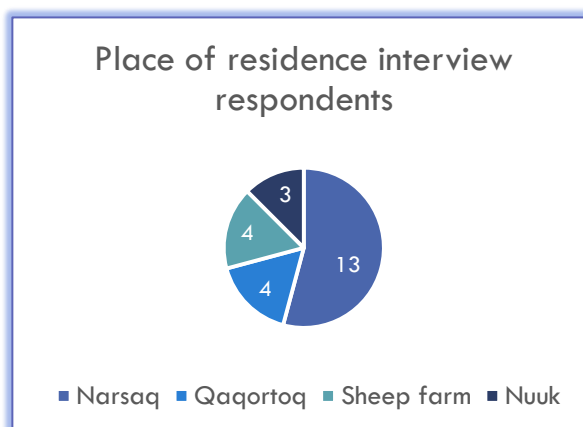


Figure 1: Place of residence interview respondents

⁸ Respondent 11

⁹ Respondents 18 & 26.

government representatives from the municipality in Qaqortoq, and with sheep farmers in the surroundings of Narsaq who are also possibly affected by the mine. Since there are (almost) no roads in South- Greenland and the only means of transport are boats and helicopters which are relatively expensive means of transport, I was unfortunately not able to visit more sheep farms or smaller settlements in the area, which is a limitation of the research in terms of the geographical scope.

3.2.3 Informal Conversations, Observation and Participation

Informal conversations were of much importance during my fieldwork. These provided, amongst others, background information on life in Narsaq and Greenland in general, and on how people spend their spare time. I spent many Friday and Saturday nights in one of Narsaq's two bars, Café Inugssuk¹⁰ since that was one of the few places where people gathered and which was always busy. At the bar, I met many different people- youngsters who came back to Narsaq after finishing their education in Nuuk or abroad, former politicians, civil servants, people visiting relatives in Narsaq, a theatre group, researchers, and even a tourist occasionally. I asked them about their plans for the future, whether they would continue living in Narsaq for instance after experiencing what living in a big city feels like, how the town had changed over time, and what their hopes for Greenland in the future are. After informal conversations on the streets, at the bar or in shops for instance, I used the Dictaphone app on my iPhone to dictate out loud everything I remembered about the place, the person, and the conversation. This because I learned over the course of the fieldwork that although I thought I remembered everything, when I sat down to type my notes out on my laptop, some information and details got lost.

I documented all the notes from informal conversations and observations in my field notes, kept a field diary from the first day onwards to be able to reflect on my own personal feelings over the fieldwork period and a planner to keep track of all my appointments and people and places I visited per day. Especially after the fieldwork period, these documents provided valuable insights because I was able to connect the knowledge gained after 2,5 months with my initial notes from the beginning of the fieldwork period.

Hammersley et al. (2014, p.19) argue: *“there is a sense in which all social research takes the form of participant observation: it involves participating in the social world, in whatever role, and reflecting on the products of that participation.”* Besides this academic interest of participating in Narsaq's community, I also had a personal interest: for people to get to know and see me, and to show my interest for the town and willingness to integrate and make an effort, especially since many other researchers had already visited the town and only stayed for a short time. As an illustration; I participated in a Greenlandic theatre piece (in which I had to sing Greenlandic songs and dance Greenlandic dances, and where I taught 200 Greenlanders how to sing the song ‘Father Jacob’ in Dutch. I also attended a graduation ceremony at the Culinary Institute, visited a kaffemik,¹¹ went to concerts and attended lectures.

¹⁰ This is the café where most of the younger people in Narsaq go to. It is owned by a Greenlandic/Icelandic couple, who also own the town's only hotel, and a beer brewery. The brewers and manager of the bar are Americans/ German, meaning that all bartenders speak a little bit of English at least and thus was the easiest place for me to go to.

¹¹ A kaffemik (translated from Greenlandic literally it means ‘via coffee’) is a social gathering thrown for a birthday, wedding, graduation, etc. The hosts provide all kinds of food; coffee and pies and cakes, and various fish and meat dishes. Guests stay for a little while, and then make room for other people coming in.



Photo 5: Participating in a Greenlandic theatre show in Narsaq's community house. 24 May 2017

I also tried to eat everything that people offered me, which in the beginning I found difficult since I am a vegetarian. However, in Greenland where the staple food is fish, shellfish, seal, muskox and whale and all vegetables are imported (and consequently expensive), this is not really an option and/or perceived as normal. I even ended up eating whale, which I at the end of my fieldwork period did not have that many problems with. I had the following talk with an American tourist I met in Qassiarsuk: When I say that I ate whale, she says *'I would never do that'*. *'They are endangered species and you should not kill and sell those'*. When I say that people still make a living out of it here and that there is a tight quota, she answers that *'they don't do that anymore, they just sell them commercially. You should not eat it'*. After living here for 2,5 months, you learn that it's not that black and white and I feel almost angry at her. I think you have to have lived here before you understand that (Field notes June 17, 2017¹²).

As this conversation illustrates, I felt quite at home in Greenland and protective of 'my Greenland' by the time I was about to leave at the end of June. However, I remained an outsider of the community, although people did talk friendly to me, said hi on the street and were quite talkative at places like the bar and the Community House. People knew where I lived and I heard from other people that the others had told them about me. When I was on my own, people sometimes approached me in Greenlandic, probably because of my dark hair and brown eyes. So, I reckon it was known that I was in Narsaq and that people knew that I was doing research. The community is not that small however that you get to know everyone within 2 months. At the end of my stay, several people said how *"they liked having me and that it was good that I experienced living here in Narsaq for a longer time"* (Field notes 16 June 2017).

However, this 'longer time' was not yet long enough: the time spent in the field is a clear limitation to the research. Spending two months in Narsaq was a too short time period to get a genuine understanding of what it means to live there. When I moved in April, the snow

¹² Respondent 39.

was melting and by the end of June, flowers were blooming and the place had turned green. Experiencing a winter full snow and ice, with the fjords freezing over and being isolated in Narsaq, must be an entirely different experience. Besides weather-wise, also in terms of becoming more accepted in the community, spending a long time here and learning more Greenlandic, would definitely increase the depth and scope of the research. After the summer of 2017, it is expected that the public consultation sessions that Greenland Minerals and Energy (the company behind the Kvanefjeld project) will organize in order to apply for an exploitation license, will start: also something that would have much-added value to this research.

I can conclude that these informal conversations and participant observation during my stay in Narsaq helped me to better understand some of the answers and arguments people made during the interviews, which is the central information used in this thesis. However, there are clear limitations in terms of language, and in length of the fieldwork.

3.2.4 Document analysis

As mentioned above, I complemented my fieldwork data with post-fieldwork desk research. I looked at the prevalence of Kvanefjeld in the two biggest (online) newspapers, KNR (Kalaallit Nunaata Radioa, Greenland's State-owned Broadcasting Corporation) and Sermitsiaq.¹³ Both KNR and Sermitsiaq publish their content in Greenlandic and Danish, so I used Google Translate to translate the Danish articles. In the graph below, the media attention per newspaper is displayed, whereby KNR N=125, Sermitsiaq N= 148. In order to put this attention into context, when I searched in KNR for Narsaq, N was 1476 of which 125 articles were about Kvanefjeld (11%).

Since I gained most insight into the local context during my fieldwork, the newspaper articles formed a good addition of data on the national context. These newspaper articles provided extra information especially on the discussion about uranium in Greenlandic politics and on civil society organizations both pro and contra the Kvanefjeld project that emerged over time.

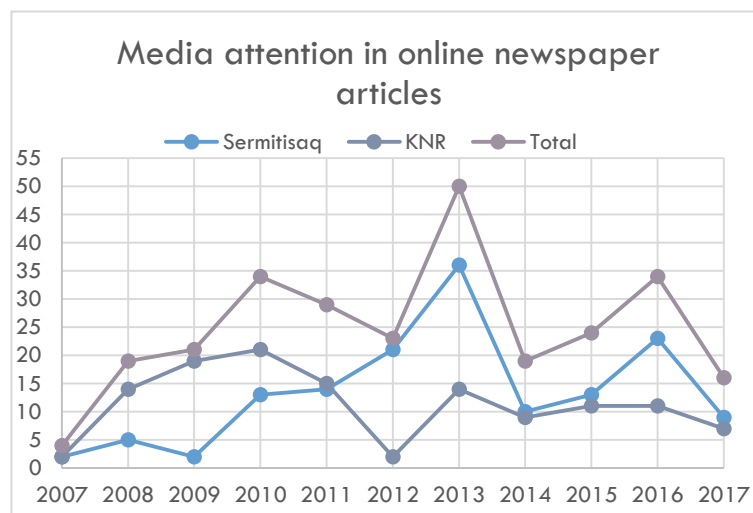


Figure 2: Media attention over time

¹³ KNR: www.knr.gl, Sermitsiaq: www.sermitsiaq.ag

3.3 Language

The main language spoken in Narsaq is Greenlandic, and although most people have learned Danish in school and are able to speak and write it, there are large differences in the level of comprehension. Only the native Danish inhabitants prefer to speak Danish as their first language. I had considered learning Greenlandic, but since it is a relatively difficult language to learn and it does not resemble any Western-European language in any way, I decided not to.¹⁴ One respondent said:

*'If you had stayed with a Greenlandic family, you would have learned Greenlandic and Greenlandic dishes by now'*¹⁵

Although I tried to pick up a few words here and there, in the end, I was still only able to say basic words,¹⁶ like thank you (qujanaq), you're welcome (illilu), and to pronounce the names of towns and settlements. It is highly appreciated when you speak Greenlandic as a foreigner (I kept on saying it's impossible to learn, but in the end, I wished I had put a greater effort in).

I had also considered learning Danish and started doing that in February 2017. Because of time constraints, I did not pull through. Being in the field, I found out that not being able to speak Danish was not that much of a disadvantage, for the following reasons. First, because many people have a very negative image of people who only speak Danish and not Greenlandic who live or come to live in Greenland. Especially people from the older generations, that were forced to speak solely Danish in the 1970s, rather not speak Danish anymore but only Greenlandic. The second reason is a consequence of the first: almost all Greenlandic people who spoke solely Danish that lived in Narsaq have left. Most Greenlanders I met in Narsaq that were fluent in Danish, were also good in English and therefore I spoke English with all my respondents. Some interviews were conducted with couples, of which one spoke English and the other not or only a little English, and the first would then act as a translator. Looking back at my time spent in Nuuk, Danish would have been handy if I had stayed longer in the capital. There I met many Danes and many mostly Danish speaking Greenlanders. However, the difference in linguistic knowledge between the capital and the rest of the country is large and in Narsaq Danish would have helped me a little bit but not as much as speaking Greenlandic would have.

Since I was not able to speak any Greenlandic, I was not able to talk to the older generation that prefers not to speak Danish and cannot speak English, without an interpreter. Because of monetary and time constraints, and because it was difficult to get in contact with these Greenlanders for me as an outsider, I choose not to use an interpreter, except for the couples I talked to who acted as their own translators, as mentioned above. However, with some people in Narsaq who were not that fluent in English and who I hung out with and visited regularly, I talked via Google Translate. This provided me with an insight in how evenings are spent in Greenlandic homes; culinary preferences (we cooked together) and family role patterns. I also spent an evening listening to Greenlanders tell each other stories of ghosts,

¹⁴ Greenlandic is a polysynthetic language: it uses prefixes and suffixes to a root subject; hence the words can become really long. An extreme example: Nalunaarasuartaatilioqatigiiffissualiulersaaleraluallaramingooq ('it is told that they – as ever – set out eagerly planning only to build a telegraph equipment plant')

¹⁵ Respondent 37.

¹⁶ My basic vocabulary consisted of qujanaq (thank you), illillu (you're welcome), aap (yes), naa (no), puisi (seal), nanoq (polar bear), immaqa (maybe), baaj (goodbye) and takuss (see you).

spirits and other supernatural happenings like *qivittoq*, people who were banished from communities and acquired supernatural powers out in the wild. As I heard the Greenlandic first and saw the lively gestures of the storytellers and people's reactions, I could feel what the story was about. Then one of my friends translated the stories to me, which gave great insights in how winter evenings are normally spent and in how rich the Greenlandic storytelling tradition is.¹⁷

I am very aware of the fact that language is a limitation in this research and that I could have had a broader respondent base and a deeper understanding of the situation. English is the third language for Greenlanders, and as one respondent said: "*I first translate to Danish in my head, and then to English.*"¹⁸ Also, many people were shy to speak English, because in Greenlandic culture it is normal to laugh when someone makes a spelling mistake (whether in Greenlandic or English) and therefore people felt insecure in their English. Also, expressing yourself in another language than your mother tongue always means that some nuance gets lost. However, many respondents also remarked at the end of the interview that they enjoyed practicing their English.

3.4 Reflections

As Hammersley, et al. (2014, p. 19) argue, many research approaches fail to consider that '*social researchers are part of the social world they study*'. Social researchers have their own background, their values and interests, and therefore social research cannot be seen independently from and unaffected by the researcher. Bourdieu (2003, p. 282) came up with the concept of participant objectivation: "*the objectivation of the subject of objectivation, of the analyzing subject- in short, of the researcher herself.*" Bourdieu argues in line with Hammersley et al. that when observing people, we should not forget the effects of our own position, our own prejudices and our own influence on our research subjects. He also warns for scholastic bias: since we are taught to see structures and systems, academics tend to see those everywhere, even though in practice this might be exaggerated.

In the first paragraphs, I elaborated on the ways the data for this thesis was gathered. I made sense of all interviews (both formal and informal), field notes, observations and newspaper articles by gathering all data was in Nvivo, a coding program in which I made various nodes as I went through all the data. Sometimes nodes were added or deleted, and in the end, I merged some when it turned out categories were overlapping. By coding data, I framed certain quotes into boxes, although this might not have been intended as such by the respondent. The language limitations as described above also come into play here, since some respondents were less able to express themselves clearly. During the fieldwork period, I kept a field diary to describe the activities I undertook and my thoughts related to these. I always tried to reflect on my own role and possible influence or steering in interviews, and on how I was faring in Narsaq in general.

I also wrote about the doubts I had- whether I would be able to find enough respondents. Wintrob (1969) describes this in his analysis of psychological anxieties suffered by anthropologists in the field as 'dysadaptation syndrome': incompetence, fear, anger,

¹⁷ In winter, women (from 17 year and older) come together in a group called 'Narsaq Ladies' and they have these ghost story evenings every once in a while. They told me how the winter, with little light and little possibilities to leave the town, can sometimes be quite boring, and that these evenings with all the women in town makes it a lot more fun; sharing and scaring.

¹⁸ Respondent 8.

frustration (Hamersley et. al. p 224). In the first weeks in Narsaq I was afraid of many things: was I going to collect all the data necessary for my thesis, would I be imposing on people, would people want to talk about the mine although many researchers had been here in the past years researching the same, etc. Especially approaching people and asking for their help for my research was something I found difficult. Besides the research related part, I also felt quite alone the first month I lived in Narsaq. However, the longer I stayed in Narsaq, the more I felt at home and as I found more respondents and made more friends, I started to enjoy the research much more.

Personally, I also felt very privileged to have the opportunity to travel the world and to come and leave Narsaq as I pleased and to have enjoyed such a high education and problem-free upbringing without much trouble. Moreover, as I learned more about the little education Danes get about Greenland¹⁹, I reflected upon the Netherlands' overseas territories: Aruba, Saint Martin (Sint Maarten) and Curacao have the same status as Greenland within the Kingdom of Denmark and I know only little of this history and development of these islands. They originate from the same colonialism that I felt frustrated with while in Greenland, and made me want to learn more about this part of our Kingdom.

3.5 Conclusion

In this thesis, I want to give a voice to the various opinions and experiences people in Narsaq have on and with the Kvanefjeld project, and how it affects them on an everyday basis. I therefore present in this thesis their experiences, supported by interviews with the mining company, government officials, civil society organizations and complemented by newspaper articles in Greenlandic news media. Because of limited time spent in Narsaq and not being able to speak Greenlandic, the research is limited in both scope and depth and does not represent everyone in Narsaq or everyone affected by the Kvanefjeld project. This thesis presents my sense-making of other people's sense-making, and therefore it is not an ultimate truth.

This chapter explained the research approach and methods, and justification for choices I made in the field. I have reflected upon my own personal experience and on the limitations of this research. The next chapter describes in a concise way the development of the Greenlandic governing and political system.

¹⁹ As I learned from one of my Danish respondents (no. 10) in Narsaq, Danes are not taught a lot about Greenland in schools; and he also did not know much about the island before he moved. He for instance thought there would be a road to Qaqartoq, and by coming here he found out about the non-existent infrastructure throughout Greenland. Also, when he talks with his parents in Denmark, although high educated, they think in prejudices about Greenland and ask him how many drunk people he sees on the streets.



Photo 6: Hvalsey Church, built by Norsemen in the early 14th century and abandoned in 1408. 1 June 2017

Towards a Semi-Independent Greenland

Chapter 4. Towards a Semi-Independent Greenland

In the previous chapter, I discussed the methodological approach used in this research. This chapter will dive into the Greenlandic context: to understand how people feel about extractive projects, and how these affect everyday lives, a concise historical overview is needed to place the discussions about the Kvanefjeld project in the right framework.

The wish for independence from Denmark forms a dominant paradigm in narratives by politicians, and in government decisions as well as for many Greenlanders in their opinions about Denmark, development and the way forward for Greenland. The Greenlandic Inuit identity and attachment to the land and a renewed sense of pride in traditions are used in these discussions pro-independence, which often contains arguments related to the top-down decision-making during the Danish colonization period with little influence from Greenlanders on their own development. This narrative is also used in policy making, whereby the focus is on particular sectors over others: the extractive industry is thought to play an important role in diversifying the economy away from solely relying on fisheries, and in this context, Kvanefjeld is thus an important national topic as well.

This chapter discusses Greenland's colonial history and its move to a semi-independent state today. The current state of the economy, the various socio-economic problems, climate change and Greenlandic identity will be further explored, since these all influence how people relate to the development of the extractive sector. Lastly, the focus of this topic will be on this sector and the rules and regulations around decision-making and public participation therein, since we have seen that that is often a source of frustration around extractive projects.

4.1 Inuit, Norsemen and Danes

Although Greenland lies near North America, the island has always had close ties with Europe and especially with Denmark. The indigenous people of Greenland, the Inuit, have inhabited the island since 2500 B.C. (Graugaard, 2009). Greenland became known as Kalaallit Nunaat: the land of the Greenlanders or land of the Inuit²⁰ (Graugaard, 2009). Norseman Erik the Red, banished from Iceland, arrived in South Greenland²¹ in 982 and until 1408 Norsemen and Inuit lived next to each other until the Norsemen disappeared in 1408 for unknown reasons (Kujataa, 2016).²² Greenlandic society until colonization in 1721 can be characterized as a hunter-gathering society: small mobile settlements along the coasts which sustained their livelihoods by fishing, hunting, and gathering plants, berries, and seaweed. Sharing the catch is a custom that is still practiced today (National Museum, Nuuk). Inuit society was governed by the principle of collective goods: everyone could use the resources from the land and the sea, and these belonged to none individually. Before colonization began, no Inuk questioned whether the land they lived on was theirs, and no ownership rights or governing structure was

²⁰ Inuit is plural and means 'people', whereas the singular is Inuk.

²¹ Erik the Red named the island Greenland in order to make it sound more appealing for more Icelanders to join him on his following trip to Greenland and start a settlement there. This worked, and 25 ships took off for Greenland in 985 (Kujataa, 2016).

²² This might have been caused by a decrease in temperatures, disease, or ships with supplies no longer arriving from Norway/ Denmark (Kujataa, 2016).

present. This principle of no ownership rights over land continues until today (National Museum, Nuuk). Influences from abroad were most of all because of European whalers who made enormous profits from the trade in whale oil, baleens, and ivory. As Breum (2015) notes: “whaling made Greenland the seventeenth century equivalent of an oil state.” These whalers had little to do with the local population, but this changed in the beginning of the 18th century.

Greenland became an important trade post for Denmark from 1721 onward, whereby the local population was converted to Lutheranism by Danish/Norwegian missionary Hans Egede (Gad, 2014). The traditional beliefs and practices of the Inuit, including the profession of Angakkoq (Greenlandic shamanism), traditional healing and tattooing, disappeared quickly because of this new religion. Since Inuit always have had a tradition of surviving and adapting, and the animist religion filled with taboos and rules was quite demanding, not all of them were forcibly converted but choose the new religion themselves (Lecture on Angakkoq).²³ Bible reading created the standardized (written) Greenlandic language, and (ironically) led to the creation of a national identity that had not existed before.

During colonization, Inuit were settled into colonies and trading stations. Colonization brought with it new social class distinctions: many people of ‘mixed-race’ (Greenlandic and Danish) ended up in the middle class and occupied the higher professions in society. The fur industry was organized in an export-oriented monopoly, and the Royal Greenland Trading Company (KGH) was in control of all trade to and from Greenland. With goods being imported from Denmark the Greenlandic diet and way of clothing changed considerably (National Museum, Nuuk). It was in the interest of Denmark to keep the Greenlanders ‘noble savages’ because the Danish trade monopoly was so dependent on the sale of fur (Graugaard, 2009).

In sum, Greenland was an isolated country not interacting with other countries, besides Denmark from the 18th century onwards. Greenlandic society then changed extensively via a top-down approach and Greenland’s relationship with natural resources changed: from nomadic societies without property rights and trade by barter, to a capitalist trade regime focused on outsiders.

4.2 The Second World War, modernization, and Danification

The Second World War marks another turning point in Greenlandic history. The island had been kept isolated to foreign influences for 200 years, but during the war, the United States opened several airbases on Greenland.²⁴ The influx of American troops meant rapid modernization for Greenland: the arrival of the first automobiles, the first large group of foreigners besides Danes, and the arrival of planes into the country (Guldager, 2015).

After the War, a decolonization movement came into practice, led by the United Nations. Iceland, also part of the Kingdom of Denmark, declared independence in 1944 and has for many an exemplary function for how Greenland should become independent since it is

²³ This lecture was held in the Narsaq Harbour Museum by Paninnguaq Jensen, who is a traditional tattoo artist by profession, on 4 May 2017.

²⁴ These bases were used for planes to land and refuel on their way to and from Europe, and hospitals were built for wounded soldiers. A total of 10.000 planes came through Narsarsuaq alone Greenland played thus quite an important role in the Second World War, unknown by many in Europe.

also an island with a small population relying mostly on fisheries.²⁵ Although the UN pressured for decolonization from Denmark, Greenland was integrated by Denmark as a formally equal part in 1953 and therefore international authorities were kept from interfering (Gad, 2014).

When Greenland was integrated into Denmark, a movement for the modernization of Greenland came into place: the G-50 & G-60 policy. Urbanization took place driven by Denmark rather than by Greenlandic voluntary logic or determined by the market (Dahl 2010, p.28). People who used to live in small settlements were now forced to move into big concrete buildings, in which more people lived than there had been before in their entire village. Moving to towns implied moving from a world of equals to a world of inequality, and from communal to a more individualistic life. Danes took up dominant positions in society and left the Greenlanders as onlookers and in inferior positions of their own development (Dahl, 2010, p.126, 129).



Photo 7: Concrete apartment buildings in Nuuk, built in the 1950s by the Danish G50/G60 policy. 13 April 2017

This time period is characterized by many events that are remembered by Greenlanders as large wrong-doings in their recent history. Some Greenlandic children were taken from their parents in Nuuk to be educated in Denmark to become 'model Greenlanders' that were supposed to be an example for the rest when they returned to Greenland (BBC, 2015).²⁶ Forced relocations from a larger scale that were of significant impact took place in Pituffik/ Thule, because of construction of an airbase, without any compensation offered. Additionally, Qullissat, a town of over a 1000 people, was completely closed by the Danish government in 1972 without consulting or informing its population when its coal mine was not deemed profitable anymore (Knudsen (eds.), 2016).

Although many people are now of the opinion that the intentions of the Danes to modernize Greenland were genuine, and that they through improving health care and education, tried to raise living standards in Greenland to the same level as Denmark, it is thought that a large part of Greenlandic identity and customs got lost throughout this period of Danification (Dahl, 2010, Terpstra, 2015).

²⁵ Almost all my respondents made a remark about Iceland and its exemplary function.

²⁶ These children were not orphans, but taken from their families and turned out to become a lost generation, because on their return they weren't able to speak Greenlandic and return into society anymore (BBC, 2015).

Recapitulating, we see that colonization was oppressive (although non-violent), and experienced as top-down and making Greenlanders onlookers of their own development. This was also the case with the rapid modernization after WW II. Now, a feeling of ‘we never want this again, we’ve been wronged enough’ is evident, and a victim paradigm is sometimes used in this context. Independence, for many, would finally bring an end to Greenland’s history of subordination and dependency on outsiders, and go back to the self-reliance Inuit have been known for.

4.3 Towards more independence

Three decades after Greenland became part of Denmark, a series of reforms were institutionalized towards more Greenlandic independence, although Greenland is still very much dependent on Denmark today.

The Greenlandic elite that studied in Denmark in the 1960s and 1970s spearheaded this anti-Danish movement (Graugaard, 2009). An important means in the formation of Greenlandic identity and awareness was the Greenlandic rock band Sumé; the first band who sang songs in Greenlandic about independence and the way Greenlanders were wronged in the past.²⁷ Another catalyzer for more independence was a referendum on Denmark’s entrance to the European Economic Community, something strongly opposed by Greenlanders because this would imply sharing fishing grounds with other countries. In 1972, most Greenlanders voted against entering the EEC, but Denmark voted to join and thus Greenland joined as well (Boersma and Foley 2014).²⁸ This period of fighting for Home Rule and more autonomy led to people being more aware and proud of their Greenlandicness. Emphasis was placed on the Inuit origin, culture, language and traditional practices (Nuttall, 1992).

The Home Rule Act of 1978 transferred legislative and executive powers to the Greenlandic Parliament. Foreign relations, mineral resources, and defense were still governed by Denmark (Greenland Home Rule Act, 1978). After 1979, a period of Greenlandization took place; where the focus was placed on expanding the use of Greenlandic as the most important language, replacing Danish workers with Greenlanders and supporting the Greenlandic cultural life. Also in politics, attention was placed on the particular cultural and remote characteristics of the country (Graugaard, 2009).

In 2008, a referendum was held in Greenland on the question of self-government resulting in a majority of 75% in favor (Boersma and Foley, 2014). The Act on Greenland Self-Government was passed by the Danish Parliament, and states explicitly that Greenlanders are a ‘people’ in international law: the expectation that Greenland will become an independent state is recognized (Garcés de los Fayos, 2014, Act 21 June 2009). Greenlandic became the official language.

²⁷ Before Sumé (translation: where?), the Greenlandic language didn’t even have words for ‘revolution’ and ‘oppression’. To illustrate how revolutionary the band was; the 1973 album Sumut (where to?) had a cover picture depicting a 19th century woodcut of an Inuit killing a Dane.

Everyone still knows the lyrics to their songs today, and in Narsaq their songs were covered by bands every weekend. Some say this is because there hasn’t been that much change in Greenland between the 1970s when Sumé started this movement, and today. For more information see: <http://www.thesoundofarevolution.com/>.

²⁸ 1982 Greenland voted to leave the EEC in a referendum, this went into effect in 1985, making Greenland the first country to leave the EEC/EU (Boersma and Foley, 2014).

An important part of the Act is the fixing of the amount of the annual block grant Greenland receives from Denmark at 3,682,3 million Danish Kroners (approximately 500 million euros), in relation to natural resource management (Statistics Greenland, 2017)²⁹ Although Greenland has exclusive governance on natural resources and their revenues, this is restricted to a certain amount since otherwise the block grant provided by Denmark will be reduced depending on the income from these resources (Mortensen, 2013). This subsidy accounts for roughly 40% of Greenland's GDP. The Act thus grants Greenland authority over its natural resources, and thereby introduces an entangled legal system within the Danish Realm – a system that is even further complicated by Denmark's membership (and Greenland's non-membership) in the European Union (Vestergaard, 2014). Besides natural resources, the Act gives Greenland self-governance in all areas of government except defense, foreign affairs, monetary policies and justice affairs.

In sum, Home Rule and Self-Governance give Greenland autonomy over many areas of government and feelings of Greenlandicness and Greenlandization (re)emerged. This includes the wish to extract Greenlandic resources without interference from Denmark, in order to sustain an independent Greenlandic economy. Contradictory, Greenland is very much dependent on Denmark because of the block grant; a situation that will most likely not change in the near future. Today, Greenland is thus still waiting in liminal space between being a Danish colony and a fully independent country, with no clear prospect of when the waiting will end.

4.4 Greenland today

Contemporary Greenlandic society is more and more characterized by increased differences between cities and settlements, low and high incomes and low and high education. This paragraph will shortly elaborate on Greenland's economy, challenges faced, Greenlandic identity, politics and the mining sector to further place Kvanefjeld and the situation in Narsaq today in context.

4.4.1 Economy

Greenland's economy is relatively small: the 2015 GDP totaled 2,22 billion USD (WorldBank). The main income comes from the Danish Block grant and the fishing industry which accounts for 87% of total exports (Kuokkanen, 2015). The largest Greenlandic companies, such as Royal Greenland (fisheries), AirGreenland, Great Greenland (tannery), are government owned and their roots go back to the Danish royal trade monopoly (Boersma & Foley, 2014). Most employment takes places in the public sector, followed by fishing, hunting & agriculture, and wholesale (Statistics Greenland, 2017).

Besides the fishing industry, tourism is an increasing business in the Arctic. In 1997 already tourism in Greenland was looked upon as a new, stable industry that could help the economy become less dependent on the shrimp and fish-exports Johnston & Viken, 1997). However, the harshness of the climate, the remoteness of the island and the lack of infrastructure (most towns and municipalities can only be reached by boat or plane) and the

²⁹ This block grant leads to mixed sentiments in Denmark; many Danes are of the opinion that it's pity/ charity money or a bottomless pit. The relationship between Denmark and Greenland is often described as a parent-child relation; see e.g. A. Grydehøj (2016): Navigating the binaries of island independence and dependence in Greenland: Decolonisation, political culture, and strategic services. *Political Geography* 55 (102-112).

fact that tourism is limited to one short season make the development of tourism more difficult than one would expect for a country with such outstanding nature (Garcés de los Fayos, 2014). However, it is still considered by many as an important sector or hope for the economy in the (near) future.

The Greenlandic government aims to fill the current budget deficit by attracting foreign investment in its extractive sector. Mineral exploration began in the 18th century and became more important during World War II, when cryolite was sold to the United States for the construction of airplanes (Boersma & Foley, 2014). Since Home Rule and more explicit during Self-Government, Greenland has been active in promoting itself abroad in order to attract foreign investment, mostly to decrease dependence on Denmark and increase the likelihood of an independent Greenland (Ackrén, 2016).

However, public opinion on the extraction of natural resources (by foreign companies) is deviating and the topic is fiercely debated in politics. Although the two largest political parties (Siumut and Inuit Ataqatigiit) oppose each other on many accounts, they do agree on the fact that this will decrease dependence on Denmark, which is viewed as desirable (Garcés de los Fayos, 2014).

4.4.2 Challenges

Besides a mono-economy that cannot sustain the island, Greenland today is unfortunately confronted with several more challenges, which are present throughout the country (and thus also in Narsaq). Unemployment in Greenland is relatively high (9.1%), and job opportunities are limited (SLiCA, Mortensen, 2013, Statistics Greenland, 2017). Greenland has the highest number of suicide victims in the world, and this is especially occurring more and more among indigenous youth (B. Poppel in SLiCA, 2015, Young et al., 2015). Alcohol and substance abuse are the most significant health challenges in Greenland nowadays, and the drinking pattern is dominated by binge drinking. Moreover, there are consequences faced by generations growing up with alcohol problems in their childhood, such as domestic violence and sexual abuse³⁰ (Larsen, Curtis & Bjerregaard, 2013). Additionally, overweight and the consumption of fast food is becoming more and more a problem.³¹

Education is also a challenge in Greenland; besides children struggling with learning a second language (especially when their parents are not bilingual either), the quality of education is low. In 2015, there were almost as many drop-outs as there were finishers in vocational, mid-range and to a somewhat lesser extent in higher education (Statistics Greenland, 2017). Without good primary education, it is impossible to keep up in high school and continue on to Greenland's university or to go to Denmark for education.³²

An additional challenge that Greenland is confronted with is the effects of climate change. Greenland and its minerals are seen by some as the savior of the world in terms of providing minerals that can be used for green and clean industries to combat climate change. However, today Greenland does not enjoy these benefits yet and is faced with the traditional ways of hunting becoming more difficult to sustain since the Arctic ice is melting, which results in less hunting possibilities.

³⁰ Some of my respondents also experienced these events unfortunately. See footnotes in chapter 5.

³¹ Respondent 14.

³² Education for Greenlanders is free in Denmark, and even their flights back and forth are paid for by the Danish government. Currently, around 20,000 Greenlanders are living in Denmark.

Polar bears and Inuit both hunt from the ice for seals, but alike they must begin looking for other prey. In many other areas, the ice is no longer reliable enough and therefore the sea cannot be reached to hunt for animals. The number of hunters on Greenland declines, and so does a number of sled dogs. According to van Raaij (2015), Greenland's traditional Inuit culture is in danger. This was also petitioned by Inuit to the Inter American Commission of Human Rights, seeking relief from a violation of their rights resulting from global warming (ICC 2005). Since the income from (traditional) hunting declines, other sectors to find employment in become more important, among which the extractive sector is one.

On the other hand, climate change also provides new opportunities: it becomes a little more realistic that there can be more vegetables grown on Greenland (especially in the South), thereby decreasing dependence on foreign import and more possibilities to feed livestock hay instead of expensively imported winter feed. Nowadays, experiments with growing vegetables in greenhouses are done in South Greenland, and quite successful too (van Raaij, 2015). However, this is not yet done at a level which could play an important part in Greenland's economy in the near future. Climate change thus contributes to pushing Greenland away from traditional means of sustaining livelihoods towards other sectors.

From these challenges, it becomes clear that Greenland today is in need of change, but for many, it is unsure how this change can be achieved; adding to the eminent feeling of waiting for independence and improvement.

4.4.3 Greenlandic identity: who is a Greenlander today?

In light of the wish for complete independence from Denmark, the Greenlandic identity debate plays an important role in Greenlandic society today. The argument that Greenland needs to obtain full independence sooner rather than later is mentioned and considered in almost all discussions around decision-making in politics and thus Greenlandic identity forms a large part of political discourse as well, also in the extractive sector. It has been made clear that Greenland has gone through many changes in a short time period. The country is in between traditional in the sense of hunting,³³ and modern in the sense that most people work in service provision, have a smartphone and almost all of Greenland that is inhabited has mobile network service. Today, many people and academics are discussing what it means to be a Greenlander in this transitional phase of development since it is clear that the traditional lifestyle of the Inuit is in the past.³⁴ Earlier, I explained how politics of belonging includes the struggle around determining who and what is involved in belonging, and in being a member of the community. This demarcation of 'us' (the Greenlanders) versus 'them' (the Danes) is often used by politicians and will be further exemplified below.

A debate that has resurfaced again in politics and in (social) media is about language (the cultural dimension of belonging): does one have to speak Greenlandic to be a Greenlander? Can someone be a Greenlander if he or she only speaks Danish? Since there are so many people of mixed descent who have grown up in the generation that was forced to speak Danish and who have studied in Denmark, many people (especially in Nuuk) have lost their ability to speak Greenlandic. Over time, there have been periods where either one or the

³³ Especially in North Greenland and East Greenland where sled dogs are kept, hunting is still a larger part of everyday livelihood provision. However, all over Greenland many men still hunt for seal or reindeer in the weekends.

³⁴ See for instance Graugaard (2009), Dahl (2017), Nuttall (2017).

other language was to be used, which affected language knowledge of specific generations (Terpstra, 2015). Between 1950 and 1994 Danish speaking pupils and Greenlandic speaking pupils even had separate education, with pupils sitting in separate classrooms (Terpstra, 2015).³⁵ But there is a contradiction: although speaking Greenlandic is associated with being Greenlandic, speaking Danish is often associated with a more successful life since it opens the door to higher education, studying abroad and more job opportunities (especially in the administration) (Graugaard 2009). A young woman in Nuuk put it this way:

*"I studied in Denmark but did not feel at home there. I felt like I had to be the very best at everything just to prove them wrong about my background.³⁶ I felt like it's never good enough and doubt myself because of that. I don't feel like being in an identity crisis, but it is definitely something that keeps you occupied."*³⁷

Like this woman, there are many people that feel Danish in Greenland and Greenlandic in Denmark, and thus feel like they don't belong anywhere.

Besides language, Graugaard (2009) mentions feeling attached to the land and living in Greenlandic nature as important aspects of being Greenlandic, illustrating the landscape factor of belonging. Something which complicates the matter even further is the large differences that exist within Greenland: from North to South, the distance measures 2670 kilometers³⁸ and since traveling is both difficult and expensive, people do not visit other places that are far away frequently. Language within the country also differs, so it can be that someone from the North meets someone from the South and that they are not able to communicate with each other. Also in terms of closeness to higher education or big cities, climate (the North is way colder than the South) and livelihood provision make many parts of Greenland differ from one another to a large extent. Today, there are more people from all over Greenland especially from the younger generations, who themselves want to decide whether they are a Greenlander (self-identification), instead of being put in a box by someone else- which is done by politicians using politics of belonging to create in-and outgroups. By some people, for instance, not being in favor of extracting resources is associated with being Danish, since during the colonial times the Danes wanted to keep Greenland pure.³⁹ This way, the politics of belong infiltrates the extractive discussion as well.

In addition, the differences throughout the country can also influence the opinions or frustrations people feel with extractive projects and not being heard. Why would people care about a project that is all the way on the other side of the country? In this sense, people living around project sites might feel less supported by their government and society since they are left alone in their protests for instance.

4.5 Politics in a young nation

We saw in the introduction that with extractive projects, participation is often a problem. Therefore, politics is another factor that should be taken into account. Electoral democracy is a relatively young tradition in Greenland: in the Danish colonial period (1721-1953), there was

³⁵ One of my informants (respondent 8) even called this segregation.

³⁶ Referring to the opinion many Danes have that Greenlanders are all alcoholics and unemployed. For more info see: <http://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase/275-greenlanders-in-denmark-a-realistic-perspective-of-a-varied-group>.

³⁷ Respondent 5.

³⁸ For a map, see Annex A: Maps.

³⁹ Respondent 3.

limited room for political participation. Only from 1979 onwards, a regional political system with elections was created cumulating in less than 50 years of politics today. Democracy increased further after Self-Government in 2009 (Ackrén, 2016). There are today 5 political parties in Greenland, of which Siumut (social democrats) and Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA, leftist) are the largest and oldest parties. Currently, there is a coalition agreement 2016-2018 between Siumut, IA and Partii Naleraq⁴⁰ (Statistics Greenland, 2017). Generally, IA (Inuit Ataqatigiit) wins most votes in Nuuk, where the educated elite lives, whereas Siumut wins most votes in the other regions and especially in the settlements⁴¹.

Since democracy is such a young institution in Greenland, and Greenland's university Ilisimatusarfik was founded in 1987,⁴² there is no longstanding tradition of highly educated politicians.⁴³ Nowadays, there are carpenters and fishermen in the government, inexperienced and unskilled, according to some respondents. Additionally, the payment in the public sector is high compared to other sectors, and I heard the complaint that these high wages might not always attract the right people for the job. Other people that work in the government that are more qualified in terms of political skills or experience are often Danes that come to Greenland for a limited time period and are 'less committed' to the faith of Greenland, according to some respondents. It was also mentioned to me how people feel that when you live further away from the capital Nuuk, the less you are being heard by the politicians in the capital.

"There are many people outside Nuuk not happy with the way Nuuk governs the country. Many politicians are from outside Nuuk, but it seems like they are forgetting that as soon as they go into politics in the capital." ⁴⁴

In addition, with Greenland being such an enormous country, local interests are also at stake in politics. The coastline is around 10,000 kilometers long and there is always a challenge to decide which funds should be spent where. Right now, most of the development is in Nuuk, which is like a sponge sucking all activity towards it. There are, however, different interests further away from the capital, and mistrust between regions emerges from this. It was mentioned by many respondents how politicians are just talking and never doing anything, and how people feel not heard by either local nor national governments. ⁴⁵

In sum, we have seen that with extractive projects, frustrations around participation in the decision-making process often come up. Since participation in Greenland, in general, is a new construct, people often feel not heard or feel like they cannot exert influence when they are more remote from the capital.

4.6 The Mining Sector

We have seen how mining is regarded by many in Greenland as the solution for the current economic deficit and the road towards independence. It takes an important role in public opinion, political campaigning, debates and the coalition agreement. The Greenlandic

⁴⁰ 13 out of 31 elected members in Greenland's parliament are women (Statistics Greenland, 2017).

⁴¹ Respondent 3.

⁴² See for more information on Greenland's only university: www.uni.gl

⁴³ "There have been phases in Greenland of certain professions that went into politics: the first wave were priests (central in society), then musicians (they have a large support base), and only now there are more and more academics going into politics" Respondent 3.

⁴⁴ Respondent 3.

⁴⁵ Respondent 22.

government took over the mineral resources sector when the Self-Government Act of 2009 was adopted and has since been active in gathering investors and promoting Greenland abroad (Ackrén, 2016). Policy and regulatory changes instituted by the government favor mining development, expecting that revenues will help finance expansion of Greenland's autonomy since there are little other growth sectors to be expected in the coming years (Bjørst, 2016). By many, it is viewed as an inevitable path that Greenland must follow, although there are differing opinions on how to go ahead. However, the current focus on the extractive industries, intended to move away from the mono-economy focused on fisheries, might trap Greenland in a duo-economy (fisheries and mining). This is also called Dutch disease;⁴⁶ a dependency on resources that are prone to price changes, meaning the entire economy can be harmed with one single price drop.

Greenland's mineral sector has not developed as fast as some had hoped. Before a company can start mining in Greenland, it is necessary to obtain a prospecting license, then an exploration license and finally an exploitation license may be granted. The Greenlandic government receives a fixed amount from each licensee, which can be defined as an area, production or profits tax (Statistics Greenland, 2017). Although the government policy is thus focused on actively developing the extractive sector in order to take a step towards more independence, it has been estimated that it would require a minimum of 24 large-scale and profitable mines in order to cover the current block grant from Denmark (Van Dam et al., 2014). The total number of mining licenses issued increased substantively from 39 in 2000 to 115 in 2013, to companies from e.g. Canada, Australia and the UK (Statistics Greenland, 2015, Ackrén, 2016). However, most of these licenses are prospecting permits or exploration permits, and to operationalize a mine, an exploitation permit is needed which can only be acquired after government approval of (among others) the economic and social impact assessments. Currently, there are 6 exploitation licenses granted, varying from gold to zinc and rubies (Govmin.gl).⁴⁷

Greenland is still viewed by foreign investors as having an uncertain political climate, taxation regime, lacking skilled labor and lacking mining infrastructure (Boersma & Foley, 2014), which is illustrated by the following comment from someone responsible for mining at the Municipality Kujalleq:

"The most advanced mining projects are in Canada, Australia, South Africa. They are ready to go, and these 3 countries are good old mining countries, that people know what they're dealing with.

*They are extremely competitive. Greenland is not, we have such a high-cost structure, it's so expensive."*⁴⁸

However, mining companies like Greenland Minerals and Energy, the mining company that operates in Narsaq, paints a more positive picture for the future: *"We have no doubt that Greenland will soon be a global hot spot for mineral exploration and development"* (website 2017).

Greenland's mining sector is thus still relatively small and nowhere near replacing Denmark's block grant, and it is uncertain whether it will increase substantively in the near

⁴⁶ For more on Dutch Disease see for instance this explanation in The Economist:

<https://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2014/11/economist-explains-2>.

⁴⁷ For an overview of all current licenses see: https://www.govmin.gl/images/list_of_licences_20170107.pdf.

⁴⁸ Respondent 29.

future due to the collapse of the international natural resource prices (after the economic crisis) for instance.

By various political leaders and parties, the extractive industries have been used in their political campaigns. Former prime minister Kuupik Kleist (2009-2013, Inuit Ataqatigiit) focused on the employment of Greenlanders and on company taxes to contribute to Greenland's wish to independence, while Aleqa Hammond (2013-2014, Siumut) wanted royalties in order to establish the best economic conditions as quickly as possible. Comparing these politicians, we see that for Kleist the 'resource' consisted of the workforce and the market value, thus the value of the resources was in getting them out of the ground. Hammond, however, values the resources as what was in the ground and aimed for the royalties of the sale of the resources (Knudsen, 2016, eds.). As explained before some people see opposition against the extractive industries as associated with being Danish since during the colonial times the Danes wanted to keep Greenland pure.⁴⁹ This way, the politics of belong infiltrates the extractive discussion as well. These differing views on what constitutes the value of resources also influences the regulatory framework and where the focus of the government is on, and also how communities living near mining sites are affected.

Some view the current policy by the government as too hasted, and as Hansen (2013) argues: while companies can move on if mistakes are made, a community may only have one chance for development and thus it is important to get it right. Inviting all these foreign companies to come and explore Greenland's resources also puts the government in a dependent position: in order not to harm Greenland's reputation as an island full of mining potential, saying no after a company has done years of exploration research might dissuade other possible investors.

Thus, although Greenland is rich in many minerals (e.g. zinc, lead, iron ore, coal, platinum, gold, nickel, etc. Statistics Greenland 2017), the position the Greenlandic government aspires to have on the global market is not yet realistic due to the high-cost structure. There are several issues identified by the Government (Naalakkersuisut website, 2017) that are necessary to make large-scale mining projects close to communities a success: "Recruiting Greenlandic labour, engaging Greenlandic enterprises, focusing on knowledge transfer (via education programmes) in order to ensure long-term capacity building of local competence within the mining industry, and the preservation of socio-cultural values and traditions." Since Self-Government, an increasing number of Greenlanders have been hired as workers and received education in the field of mining (Ackrén, 2016). Greenland encourages education in mining via the Greenland School of Minerals and Petroleum, which also offers courses in miners' English for instance.⁵⁰ In Narsaq there were also posters hanging advertising for these courses at the municipality building.

4.6.1 Rules and Regulations around mining

As mentioned above, until Self-Government in 2009, the extractive industries in Greenland were managed by Denmark (Ackrén 2016). The Mineral Resources Act (2010) (hereafter: the Act) was adopted in 2010. Compared to the previous version before self-government, the Act now includes that an environmental and social impact assessment must be prepared before permission to exploit minerals can be granted. In 2014 the Act was changed to include pre-

⁴⁹ Respondent 3.

⁵⁰ The school has locations in Nuuk and Sisimiut: <https://www.kti.gl/da/uddannelser/raastof>.

consultation and consultation for all potential extractive projects (EIA draft Kvanefjeld 2015). Nuttall (2016) argues that although he finds this development advisable, he calls for greater attention to the environmental and social impact assessments as lived-in worlds, rather than industries using these worlds. We have seen that landscapes have different meanings to different people and that landscapes make up an important dimension of belonging. This implies that companies need inside views of how people view and appreciate their surroundings, instead of taking the landscape as resources ready to be taken out of the ground.

We have seen that the procedures and processes around the extractive industries in Greenland have been criticized by various (local) stakeholders. Often, local people feel like they are not informed sufficiently about all the challenges and possible impacts the projects have (Ackrén, 2016, p.3). The Greenlandic Government, however, has [...] *“a declared aim of informing and involving the stakeholders in the planning of mining projects. It is our belief that good information is a precondition for involving stakeholders in the process”* (Naalakkersuisut Annual Report 2013), so the aspiration is clearly articulated there. However, public consultation and participation in mining projects should be viewed taking into account political participation. I have explained how Greenland has only a short history of democracy and therefore it might be the case that people are not sufficiently aware or used to address questions or complaints. This might partially explain the ‘expectant attitude’ that I observed, instead of being more vocal. Additionally, the information provision comparing the authorities and the municipal authorities and local citizens is often skewed: while the first have first-hand information and experts at hand, the latter are resource weak and often receive information in English instead of their mother tongue (Ackrén 2016). Information provision is thus an important aspect to guarantee successful relations between communities and mining companies, also in order for the former to feel taken seriously in the decision-making process.

An important change in the rules and regulations around mining in Greenland is the abandoning of zero-tolerance of uranium mining, which was instituted in 2013 by a single vote majority in parliament. This opened the door to projects which before could not have obtained an exploitation license since this was not allowed by the law. Among these projects is the Kvanefjeld project, which was already exploring before the law was abolished and its continuance was thus dependent on the removal of this law (World Nuclear News, 2016).

Although the legislation about mining is written by the Greenlandic government and Greenland has exclusive governance over its natural resources, not all of the extractive sector can be handled without some influence from Denmark. Denmark adheres a zero-tolerance towards nuclear power policy, but did and could not block the removal of the anti-uranium law in Greenland. Also because of the history of Danish-Greenlandic relations: *“we’ll be back in a very strange Danish role if we block such a Greenlandic desire”* (Danish foreign affairs spokesman in Sermitsiaq, 27 January 2013). However, the uranium that will be mined in Kvanefjeld and potentially in other mining sites, cannot be sold without permission from Denmark and without Denmark deciding who the uranium will be sold to. This because Denmark regards uranium as a matter of defense and foreign policy (because of the implied danger of the use of uranium in nuclear weapons, and Denmark follows a policy of zero-tolerance towards nuclear power) (World Nuclear News, 2016).

4.7 Conclusion

From this chapter, the importance of Greenlandic identity and belonging in Greenland, and of Greenlandic independence in people's everyday lives is clear, be it addressed in politics or among people themselves. Because Greenlanders for long have been onlookers of their own development, which was mostly implemented top-down, the will to do it differently in this era of self-governance is evident. However, today Greenland is still stuck in between being a colony and an independent nation, and there is no clear-cut end in sight for this period of waiting (one could argue that Greenland is waiting in liminality as well). Combined with the challenges the island faces, it is not strange that the hope that is placed in the extractive sector to replace the Danish block grant is so high. In line with this, it could also imply that it increases the number of people being supportive of large-scale extractive projects. However, on the other hand, it was shown how belonging through the landscape and the traditional Inuit way of life in connection with nature are valued as important parts of Greenlandic identity, indicating possible resistance against extractive industries.

Thereby, the young democratic and participatory tradition explains why there are so many frustrations related to decision-making processes: either the government is not deemed capable enough, people are not informed sufficiently or do not know how and when to exert their influence. In the following chapter, this will be exemplified around the Kvanefjeld case in Narsaq.



Photo 8: A view over Narsaq and the fjord filled with icebergs from Qaqqarsuaq mountain behind town. 27 May 2017

The Kvanefjeld Project

Chapter 5. The Kvanefjeld Project

In chapter 5 I will zoom in on Narsaq, to elaborate and illustrate how various dimensions of belonging, e.g. the landscape-, autobiographical-, relational-, cultural-, economic- and legal dimensions, can contribute to feelings of belonging (Antonsich, 2010, Köhne & Rasch, 2017). Not all dimensions need to be present to constitute a sense of belonging, and I will discuss the topics that were most prominent from the interviews.

The theme most prevalent when discussing Narsaq today; was ‘there is nothing to do here, the town is dead’. This adds to the town’s feeling of waiting for something: maybe for the town to completely shut down, or just for something to happen in general (investments, tourism, the mining project). Discussing this theme and the various dimensions of belonging will help illustrate the diverse opinions people have on the Kvanefjeld project (which will be discussed in chapter 7).

In addition, the Kvanefjeld project will be introduced, and in short, the possible implications for the town will be discussed. Then the political spectrum will be touched upon, to explain the debate on the extraction of uranium between the two biggest parties Siumut and Inuit Ataqatigiit and the current political deadlock on the project, as well as the deficit in public participation around the project as experienced by people. Lastly, the long time span of the project, in relation to the effects of waiting in liminal space will be discussed.

5.1 Setting the Scene: a day in Narsaq

While I was conducting an interview at Narsaq’s construction company about the pros and cons of the Kvanefjeld project in terms of extra work for the company, I and the interviewees heard gunshots. This is not a rare sound in Narsaq, and as it also sounds quite like an iceberg breaking into pieces, at first our attention was not caught by it. However, as their office overlooks the fjord, when we looked out of the window, we saw around 30 boats speeding off in one direction, and a minute later a fountain of water drops as a whale exhales out.

K: “It’s the first time I see it [the hunt] so near the city. It’s the first time!”

J: “Good view from the office!”

Maaiké: “I only saw a whale once, and now one in a hunt”

J⁵¹: “and now you will see a dead whale!” (laughing)

One of the interviewees⁵², a woman from Narsaq in her 50s, explained that these were probably all the hunters from town coming together to try and catch it. When I ask her whether she has ever participated in a hunt, she answers:

K: “Nooooo. I would never do that. You have to be a (struggling to find the word), fanger. You have to- we have a job in the office. And the men have jobs as catcher”

Maaiké: “Hunter”

⁵¹ Respondent 34.

⁵² Respondent 33.

K: "Hunter, yes! You have to be a hunter before you can catch a whale"

[...]

K: "It's their living- they have to, to survive."



Photo 9.1 and 9.2: Within minutes, the narwhale was cut up and divided among the hunters. 7 June 2017

While the narwhale was cut up, around 40 people from Narsaq, young and old, had come by boat or like us by car, to see the catch and to see whether they could buy some whale meat from the hunters. Especially raw whale skin with blubber, *mattak*, is considered a delicacy. Since this was only a small narwhale, the hunters divided the whale among themselves and no meat would end up in the supermarket or the fish market. This was the talk of the town for a few days, and since in Narsaq there are not that many whales caught every year, quite a special moment as well.

This is an example of how important nature is in everyday life, and in the construction of livelihoods in many places in Greenland. Living off the land or in this case off the sea is still prominently present in everyday life. Especially on the weekends, hunting for seal and reindeer or fishing is often done, predominantly by men. Additionally, gathering mussels and blackberries also form a large part of additional food supply besides what is bought from the supermarkets, as has always been done in Greenland traditionally. Often the meat is shared among families and friends, thereby making it a social event as well.

The landscape has thus a function of food and livelihood provision, but also a social and cultural meaning and exemplifies how people belong through natural resources and the landscape, and through social and cultural factors. The significance of nature is confirmed in many interviews as an important reason of why people enjoy living in Narsaq, and one of the things feared for if the mine would be opened. Also, people that favor the mining project stated often as one of their prerequisites, that the mining company should guarantee that the mine would not harm their natural surroundings in any way.

This introduction exemplifies multiple uses and values attached to the landscape around Narsaq. In Greenland in general, feeling attached to the land and living in nature are regarded as important aspects of being a Greenlander (Graugaard, 2009), and we have seen how its various meanings contribute to belonging.

5.2 Narsaq's development over time: from a quick boom to a slow death?

This paragraph will elaborate on Narsaq's development over time and explain the current challenges the town faces. The factors of belonging; e.g. autobiographical, economic, geographical, relational, remoteness, landscape and cultural, will be used to describe the factors through which people belong to the town in different ways (Antonsich, 2010).

Autobiographical factor

Narsaq used to be a trading post named Nordprøven, founded in 1830. It has always expanded because of business: it was founded as a trade station to make it possible for the hunters to come with their kayaks and wife boats (the big boats) to deliver seal and whale blubber, dried fish and to trade with other people here.⁵³

One of the interviewees recalls how her grandparents⁵⁴ used to live in the traditional Greenlandic turf houses, without running water and electricity.

"I can't imagine living like that, and it's only not so long ago!"



Photo 10: A traditional Greenlandic turf house, now part of the Narsaq harbor museum. 27 April 2017

Her grandparents moved to Narsaq when the shrimp processing plant was built, which attracted many people from the settlements around Narsaq to move to town. It was a boost for the region back in the 1950s, providing at least 50 jobs. As mentioned in paragraph 4.2 The Second World War, modernization, and Danification the industrialization in the fisheries sector was a top-down approach implemented by the Danish government. Near Narsaq I visited an abandoned settlement and saw the consequences myself: it had been depopulated because supplies were no longer sent. This caused people to move to Narsaq and the town to expand.⁵⁵

⁵³ Respondent 22.

⁵⁴⁵⁴ Respondent 8.

⁵⁵ Excerpt from Field notes 22 May 2017: Visited an abandoned settlement with Paul and Monika. Abandoned since 1953 when the shrimp factory opened and there were no longer supplies sent to the settlement. There were about 200 people living there, and you can still see the houses that used to be there. Nothing besides stones, metal and some crosses to signal graves are left behind. People used to be buried under piles of rocks (Inuit custom), and you could still see skulls. The last time Paul and Monika were there they met older women who had

Many interviewees reflected on their youth when the town used to be lively compared to how it is today:

“When I used to play outside as a kid, I remember that everyone was smiling and that I would play outside with other kids on the street. They would get money from people and at the end of the day you would have a fist full, and never have to give it back”⁵⁶

“When we were kids here, almost everybody is working and everybody was happy. It has changed.”⁵⁷

Economic factor

Besides the autobiographical dimension, these quotes also illustrate belonging through economic embeddedness. Jobs not only function as a source of income, but also a source of well-being in terms of individual happiness, and in addition, they give the town a lively feeling. However, as the respondents above indicate, this has changed in Narsaq today. When first the cod disappeared, and later the shrimps, the factory closed and the town quickly shrank. Although the factory is now re-opened as a slaughterhouse for the lambs from the surrounding sheep farms, it now only employs around 20 people year-round and 100 during the slaughter period (Neqi, 2017). The time the factory operated is remembered by many as the heyday of the town.

There are little new investments in the town, and one of the few new investments that are done are done by one couple that owns most of the enterprises in town: the hotel, the bar, and the brewery. This couple plays an important role in town and feels some responsibility to stay, as one of them comments: *“People are always saying I don’t know where we would have been if you hadn’t come back. Don’t leave, stay here!!”⁵⁸* There is another new company that has a large fish trawler, but besides that business is having a hard time in Narsaq and people are waiting for new investments to come, while there is little to attract business with. However, one respondent wondered:

“why don’t all the 20-year olds that hang around here do something? None wants to start a business: people don’t want to stay in one place and move a lot. Also, people want to start big businesses here, and then don’t do it because they don’t have the funds for it. Instead of just starting with a brush and a bucket of paint, they want to buy a car and a shop and everything.”⁵⁹

Unemployment is thus undeniably present in Narsaq: the percentage of unemployed permanent residents between 18 and 64 years old was 15% in the Kommune Kujalleq in 2015 (Statistics Greenland).⁶⁰ Many people comment on how the number of jobs has been decreasing over the years, but also another feeling is prevalent: *“The people in Narsaq that don’t have proper jobs, don’t have them because they can’t keep them.”⁶¹* Most of the people that are able to get jobs elsewhere have already left, leaving only the ones that can’t keep them behind. In Greenland, people receive social benefits from the government when

lived there, and they explained what which buildings were used for and so for them the settlement really came to life. It must be so strange for these women to see the place totally abandoned now.

⁵⁶ Respondent 8.

⁵⁷ Respondent 21.

⁵⁸ Respondents 18, 19.

⁵⁹ Respondent 6.

⁶⁰ In comparison, the rate in the Netherlands is around 6% on average.

⁶¹ Respondent 32.

unemployed so people don't end up on the streets, which could make it less urgent to look for one.

Geographical factor

In Narsaq, a sense of rivalry with the neighboring larger town Qaqortoq is present. Another development that contributed to the current state of the town was a national government reform resulting in 4 large municipalities, instead of multiple smaller ones. Narsaq used to be the seat of Narsaq municipality, but when the Kommune Kujalleq was formed, the main office was moved to the neighboring town Qaqortoq, which caused another decrease in employment in Narsaq as well as service provision. Additionally, it caused feelings of resentment between Narsaq and Qaqortoq, because people in Narsaq feel neglected by the municipality in the neighboring town, and feel like all the money is spent there.

*"In about 2007 or 2009 they closed the factory, the shrimp factory, and then they decided, the government decided that we have to be a big Kommune. And Narsaq is really fast...how do we say it. The people have to move from here because the jobs are moving out from here."*⁶²

This quote reflects what many respondents remarked: how the town is shrinking and how it used to be better in the old days, with fewer people doing nothing outside on the streets, and less crime.⁶³ And although the population had been decreasing for years, after the closing of the factory and the move of the municipality to neighboring Qaqortoq, Narsaq sees its population go down each year by almost 10%.⁶⁴

There are also effects of the town shrinking and the municipality moving in terms of service provision. Narsaq's hospital has been downsized to no longer include an anesthetic, meaning that emergency surgery can no longer be done. In an isolated town where almost everyone owns a gun⁶⁵ and goes out hunting on the weekend, this can lead to dangerous and even life-threatening situations. This also holds for pregnancies going wrong, or C-sections. In case of emergency, people need to be flown out by helicopter to Qaqortoq, which can be challenging due to the weather circumstances especially during winter.⁶⁶ In terms of mental care, there are no shrinks in Narsaq, which is a problem that is also evident in other settlements and in smaller towns. A respondent reflected how the town could use at least 2 shrinks to treat all the people currently in need of psychological help, but that the one shrink that was in town was asked to move to Qaqortoq. An additional problem is the language barrier in this sector: most doctors, psychologists, and shrinks are Danes, and since some people are not too fluent in Danish, this complicates the situation and heightens the barrier to go and receive healthcare in the first place.

Relational factor

The relational factor of belonging refers to personal and social ties that enrich the life of an individual, such as relations with family and friends. In a town that is shrinking, one could argue that the relational factor of belonging in Narsaq diminishes and thereby the threshold to move away lowers as well. On the other hand, it could be that this factor of belonging becomes

⁶² Respondent 11.

⁶³ Respondents 21 & 27.

⁶⁴ See appendix 3 for a graph of population change in Narsaq from 1978 to 2016.

⁶⁵ There are even guns for sale in the supermarket.

⁶⁶ Respondent 6.

more important for people that still live in Narsaq: you value the people that are still there even more.

A visible example of the abandonment of the town are the many houses with wooden boards nailed over the windows. Especially when the weather is bad and there is none out on the streets, these houses can give the town a ghost-town feel. As one respondent put it: *“You can see that the houses and the people are worn out.”*⁶⁷ Since there are many houses for sale in Narsaq or abandoned by people who moved away but cannot sell their house, one would think that buying a house would be fairly easy. The prices for houses are extremely low now,⁶⁸ but it is still difficult to buy a house in Narsaq. The bank does not give people a loan to buy a house because they expect that people are not able to pay the loan back given the current business climate in South Greenland.⁶⁹

K⁷⁰: “The bank doesn’t give you a loan if you want to buy a house in Narsaq. It’s difficult, because it’s a dying city”

J⁷¹: “The problem is if you buy a house today for 100.000 DKK, tomorrow you can sell it for 90.000. It will only go down.”



Photo 11: Boarded-up houses are not a rare sight. 27 April 2017

The housing market is thus stuck in a vicious circle which does not encourage development or investment in Narsaq. The ghost-town feel that the boarded-up houses create, does not improve the already eminent feeling of low-spiritedness. The abandonment of the town has social effects, that illustrate the relational factor of belonging: apartments blocks became

⁶⁷ Respondent 31.

⁶⁸ You can buy a small 2 floor house for 4000€, but then it’s not connected to the sewage yet. There are quite some houses in Narsaq (and the rest of Greenland) that are not connected to the sewage. There are chemical toilets that are collected by the municipality. There used to be a ‘laundry room’ where everyone in town could do they laundry and take a shower, but these no longer exist because the large apartment block in which these were located is closed. Nowadays some people collect their water from water points, and do their laundry at the laundrette in one of the supermarkets.

⁶⁹ These developments are not only limited to Narsaq, as two respondents remark.

“and you know Nanortalik? It’s the same like here. People has moved from Nanortalik to Qaqortoq or to everywhere.” Respondent 21, & 18; *“but it’s all the small towns, on the coast, its similar. By the sea, nice view, but the difference is to have some places where you can get a job. And it’s only the towns who are under development.”*

⁷⁰ Respondent 33.

⁷¹ Respondent 34.

empty, friends or family moved, and if then more acquaintances move out, people might feel less of an urge to stay in Narsaq themselves.

You can also see that it [the number of people moving] will be maybe even more this year.

Because when someone starts to move away, then you're losing your friends, and you cannot imagine something is going to happen in this town, it's just going to die. And then people start to move faster.⁷²

Associated with the relational element of belonging is rootedness. Because Narsaq boomed only in the 1950s, there have been 2 generations living in Narsaq since then. Feelings of rootedness, which encompass ancestry and time lived in a place, might thus be less strong compared to places where people have a long history of residence. Moving away from Narsaq might in this respect thus not be such an exceptional phenomenon, as illustrated by the quote below:

"Narsaq has traditionally been a town based on jobs and expansion. Now it's shrinking in job options and the business options are shrinking, and people are leaving. They don't have this long historic lifespan of the town saying we're going to stay here because my grandfather was here. They might just have been here for 2 generations."⁷³

However, others do relate to the town because their family lives there and their children grew up here, or as a safety zone for instance. One respondent grew up in Narsaq and although she is an adult now, she always goes back to the place where her parents still live if her life is 'messed up a little.'⁷⁴ Another respondent said, when I asked her what her favorite place in Greenland is, after thinking about it for a little while:

"It's here because Narsaq is home. But it's quite depressing. Especially after you've lived in a bigger town, in Nuuk or in Qaqortoq, where there are movie theatres, cafés and you can go out for dinner to a restaurant. And then you come back here, and there's nothing."⁷⁵

So although Narsaq is home, it is also lacking things that people value after having lived in a larger town. Many people leave Narsaq for Nuuk or Qaqortoq in search for job opportunities, but also for education. A new primary school (Folkeskole) was opened in Narsaq after 25 years of campaigning for it. The new school has improved the children's motivation, but the students will leave Narsaq after primary school since Narsaq has no higher education to offer them (Walsh, 2017). After Folkeskole (until the age of 16), if people want to obtain additional education, it means leaving Narsaq to go to high school in for instance Qaqortoq, and later on, if people want to study they go to Nuuk or what many students do, to Denmark. Greenlanders can study for free in Denmark and many do so because the variety of fields of study is much larger than what is offered in Greenland. However, the prerequisite is being able to speak Danish really well and not all Greenlanders do.

Hence, education is thus also a cause of people moving away from town: some parents move to be close to their children because the pupils otherwise must go to boarding school. Without secondary education, the only options are becoming a painter, a hunter or a carpenter. One girl I met just finished 3 years of high school in Qaqortoq, said:

⁷² Respondent 18.

⁷³ Respondent 22.

⁷⁴ Respondent 17.

⁷⁵ Respondent 8.

*"I find Narsaq really boring after Qaqortoq, and I can't wait to move to Denmark in the summer. All my friends are in Qaqortoq still and there is much more to do there than there is here."*⁷⁶

Belonging through remoteness- or not?

Belonging through remoteness is especially evident when looking at sheep farmers. Their farms are spread out over Narsaq's surroundings and many can only be reached by boat, which is difficult when there is a lot of ice in the fjords in the winter or in the summer because of the glaciers. Several farms are thus completely cut off from the rest of the world during winter, and they need to buy a lot of supplies before winter starts. When I asked a farmers family whether they never felt lonely or bored with just the 5 of them living there, they said they felt this was the best place on earth: their green fields looking over a fjord filled with icebergs, their sheep, horses and dogs, and their outdoor life. For them, this remote place was the best on earth and they would not change it for the world for a larger city. Other Greenlanders would often ask me what I found of Narsaq (very remote and small), and reply how they would never want to live in a city as big as mine.⁷⁷

*"In Greenland, it's so small that you know all the people on the streets, and in every town you know someone or is family, and you feel never alone. In your city, with so many people around, where you know nobody and nobody knows you, that would make me very sad."*⁷⁸

This illustrates how belonging through remoteness is in Greenland another factor that constructs belonging.

However, not all respondents felt that way and remarked how exactly the remoteness was a challenge when living in Narsaq. The 'there is nothing to do here in Narsaq' statement came up more often when I was talking with youngsters than with older people. Something to keep in mind is that there are no roads that connect Narsaq to the next city, but people travel via boat or helicopter to the nearest towns. This makes traveling expensive, and also difficult. The town is remote and isolated in the sense that people easily go for a coffee in the big(ger) city that is 45 kilometers away (by boat), especially in winter. One could argue that this could contribute to belonging; that people belong through the remote location of the town. However, especially for the younger people, the remoteness is a reason why they want to move away, as illustrated by the following quote:

*"I think one of the reasons many people move away from town is because nothing new is happening, they want to try something else. Some younger ones they've moved to Nuuk, and some older ones maybe to Qaqortoq and some other towns on the coast."*⁷⁹

When I asked young people in the bar, in the gym, or other friends what they did in their spare time it was mostly sleeping, be at home, watch movies, or take a walk outside with someone, go to the gym or play soccer. At night, most said they go out and drink beer. Alcoholism is still a problem in Narsaq today although the situation has improved extensively over the years. There are fewer people sitting outside drinking beer, and more 'social drinking' takes place in the bars, partly because of the brewery in town that is active in making people appreciative of good quality beers. When social welfare or wages are paid at the end of the month, however, there are a lot of people buying alcohol in the supermarkets

⁷⁶ Respondent 28.

⁷⁷ In Utrecht there are 6 times more people than there are in Greenland in total, and 280 times more than in Narsaq.

⁷⁸ Respondents 11, 35 & 40.

⁷⁹ Respondent 18.

and also the bars are more full. Alcohol-related problems are still the second highest reported disturbances to the police, after domestic abuse.^{80,81,82}

Older people often play bingo, and many retired men play billiard at the Community House every day. And besides this, there also is not much else to do in Narsaq. There is no cinema or theatre, there are (almost) no lectures where you can go to, there is one restaurant but that is only open regularly in summer, there is no place where you can grab a coffee, etc. I complained about this as well, but in the end, I started to appreciate the tranquil lifestyle in Narsaq. Others also commented that they appreciated the comfort zone feeling of the town, that you know all the people and you know the entire town and the shortcuts. Another argument which I personally also experienced is that:

*“It can be really relaxing that here you don’t have to. Like, oh is there a new bar open? Oh a new restaurant, a new store. It’s always something that you have to go and check out and see. But here, you just relax.”*⁸³

Belonging through the landscape

As already touched upon in the introduction of this chapter and the sheep farmers described before, the landscape and nature around Narsaq also play an important role in people’s lives and feelings of belonging in Narsaq. People mentioned living off the land as a central part of their spare time: going out on a boat and fish, hunt for seal in the weekend, and pick blueberries and blackberries in the fall. Sheep farmers are proud of the landscape they are farming in. Belonging through the landscape is an important element of feeling at home in Narsaq. As one respondent remarked: “We feel a lot about the land. We have to take care of it

⁸⁰ Personal communication Narsaq’s policeman.

⁸¹ Excerpt fieldnotes 29 April 2017: Saturday in the bar is worse than Friday is, because so many people party all night on Friday, keep drinking at an afterparty and continue Saturday during the day. People are thus continuously wasted for 24 hours (!). Respondent 9 says that it’s not only the young people that do that, but also the adults. Respondent 19, also has the problem with cooks not showing up for work in the tourist season because they are still wasted. Still apparently the problem with alcoholism has become better over the years, especially for the older people. Excerpt fieldnotes 10 June 2017: Saturday is an anti-climax compared to Friday night in Narsaq; there are more older people that are completely wasted. It is a strange sight to see people in their 50s and 60s dancing like crazy, and passing out on the couch and on the table at 00:00. Saturday night here gives me a really sad feeling; although the band is playing, none seems to listen and not many people that are sitting at the tables talk to each other but just stare into their air. It is a sad thought that people my parents’ age are sitting here completely wasted and that they probably do this four nights a week.

⁸² As mentioned before, although domestic violence and child abuse are not visible to outsiders (mostly), 2 of my respondents were violently abused, and 3 others that I know of. Moreover, various people in Narsaq I talked to had adopted or were temporarily taking care of a child that was not well taken care of by its own parents. Additionally, various young people I talked to, told me about previous parts of their lives in which they had been heavily drinking, but which they had now stopped doing. Moreover, 4 people I met in Narsaq had been depressed at some point in their (young) life. In May, a 16-year-old boy in Narsaq committed suicide. While this alone was really shocking and mournful to me, what made it even more sad was that a lot of people said: ‘there was another one’, or ‘it’s starting again’, ‘it comes in waves, when one does it more follow’. There have been summers in Narsaq in which 5 youngsters committed suicide, some say that this is because they see no future in this town. I ask whether it almost becomes normal here, when there’s so many suicides in such a small town. She says although there are many people that do it, when a young person does it ‘we are still in shock’. One of my interviewees (no. 17) mentioned how out of her graduating year in high school, 6 out of 30 students have killed themselves.

⁸³ Respondent 18

because it is taking care of us."⁸⁴ Many people appreciate the views you have from almost all over town over the fjords on the one side, and the valley and the mountains on the other side. Some commented that they will miss the view if they have to move, but not the town.

Cultural factor

Related to belonging through the landscape is the cultural factor through which belonging is constructed: South Greenland has a particular identity related to sheep farming, which has been practiced first by the Norsemen that arrived in the 13th century. Farming has been re-introduced in the 1940s, and many sheep farms have been in families for generations. Also, the logo of the municipality is, for instance, a ram in Greenland's red and white colors. This profession is mentioned by many as an important source of income in South Greenland, but also because of its long and rich history of Arctic farming, which is practiced on the same fields the Norsemen used. Because of this long history of agricultural traditions, the area has recently been rewarded UNESCO World Heritage status (Kujataa, 2016). Many respondents were related to a farming family in one way or another and expressed their pride in the profession, and advised me to visit the area to see the lambs roam freely throughout the mountains.

In sum, Narsaq today is characterized by many people that have moved away from the town, unemployment is present and there are few new investments. Considering the various dimensions of belonging to Narsaq, the autobiographical dimension is illustrated by the many respondents reflecting on how the town was different and more pleasant in the past, thereby also indicating that the economic dimension of belonging in Narsaq does not only concern providing for the family but also implicates a personal source of wellbeing and happiness. The landscape is also an example of having multiple meanings in this sense: it is valued in terms of livelihood provision and it also has a social and cultural function. The move of the Kommune from Narsaq to Qaqortoq caused both fewer job opportunities as well as less service provision and feelings of resentment towards the neighboring town and the municipality government.

The steady decline in population makes many in Narsaq afraid that a 'point of no return', or 'tipping point' will be reached in the near future. When friends or family members move, and more houses are boarded up, the relational dimension of belonging in Narsaq diminishes and thereby the threshold to move away lowers as well. Especially for the younger generation(s), Narsaq does not offer much hope for a bright future. People wonder what will happen if there are not enough pupils to start 2 classes in school, or when one of the supermarkets closes because there are not enough customers to sustain the two supermarkets that are in town now. The same goes for transport: what if the number of inhabitants declines to such small numbers that the government decides to no longer run the helicopter service or the ferry no longer stops in Narsaq. This uncertainty about whether the 'tipping point' will be reached and how this will affect the town, comes in conjunction with a sense of 'only time can tell' and illustrates the implications of waiting in liminality. As far as I noticed, not many people still felt they themselves held agency to change something positively in the town, but rather accepted and took on a passive wait-and-see attitude, thereby indicating a position of powerlessness. 'Waiting for something to happen' thus shapes how people belong to the place in different ways, and might even constitute an element of belonging in itself.

⁸⁴ Respondent 11.

5.3 Kvanefjeld

It is in this ambiance of decline in waiting that the Kvanefjeld Multi-Element project is envisioned to be operated. The company that aims at extracting the minerals is Greenland Minerals and Energy LTD, an Australian-domiciled but Greenland-focused exploration and development company which has been invited by the Greenlandic government to come explore the Illimaussaq intrusive complex. There have been Danish exploration missions coming to Narsaq for decades, and it was known for a long time that there was uranium to be found (GGG.g).

As mentioned before, GME has been in and around Narsaq since 2007 but has only been doing core drillings and baseline research for the feasibility studies and the environmental and social impact assessments. In 2011, GME handed in their feasibility study permit to the Greenlandic government, and currently holds an exploration license. The company needs an exploitation license from the Greenlandic government before the actual drilling can begin. Rare earth elements (REEs) are the main object of extraction for the Kvanefjeld project. These rare earths are a group of specialty metals with unique physical, chemical, and light-emitting properties. REEs include 17 elements, of which many can be used to produce rechargeable batteries for electrical products, for instance in hybrid cars (GGG Faktablad). Although the name suggests these elements are rare, they are not.

Kvanefjeld is one of the largest deposits of REEs in the world and is thus advocated by GME and others as an opportunity for Greenland to play an important role in the development of clean and green technologies (GGG Faktablad). The processing will take place outside Greenland. Uranium is mined as a by-product because it is not possible to selectively mine and process the REEs and keep the uranium separated (GGG Faktablad). Over the years the Kvanefjeld project has become more known as a uranium mine in the media, while this thus isn't technically true.⁸⁵

The figure below displays a map of the Kvanefjeld project, according to which the main elements of the mine will be explained. In the far-left corner, there is Narsaq, and 6 kilometers down in the valley and up a mountain plateau, Kvanefjeld is located. The mine would be an open pit mine up in the mountains, from which the ore will be extracted. It will produce intermediary products of which the final processing will take place outside Greenland, but a processing plant will make the elements ready for shipment. The project would need a new port to ship supplies into Narsaq and the REEs and uranium out of Greenland. This port would be constructed in a bay next to where now the town's dump is located, and of course, need the necessary roads for the trucks going back and forth through the valley. Possibly, there will be an extra settlement created for the Fly In Fly Out (FIFO) workers that will be employed in the mine, a little bit outside Narsaq.

⁸⁵ Besides REEs and uranium there can be around 200 other strange minerals found in the Illimaussaq intrusion, of which 30 to 40 are unique in the world. Some of these elements are poisonous, like fluorine and thorium (respondent 29).

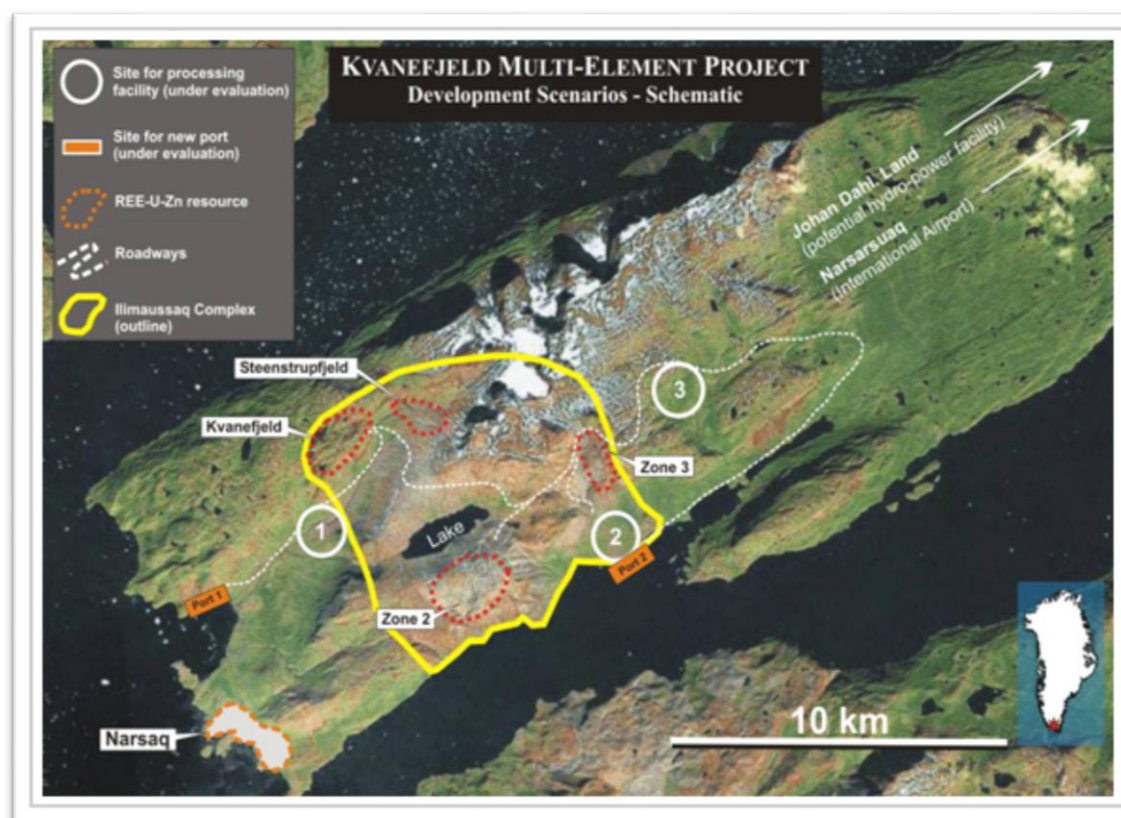


Figure 3: An overview of the Kvanefjeld project (GME's website, www.ggg.gl)

Also indicated on the map is a lake, which is called Taseq. Under this lake, the tailings (the waste from the extraction and first processing of REEs and especially uranium) will be kept locked away in perpetuity. This lake would need an impermeable dike that will hold the tailings in place, but up to now it is not clear who will maintain and pay for the maintenance of the dike: GME says it is the Greenlandic government's responsibility, while the Greenlandic government says it is GME's. Additionally, the climate in which will be mined is harsh: although this is South Greenland, there are still strong winds from the icecap and harsh winter conditions (respondent 29, GGG.gl, GGG Faktablad).

5.4 The Political Arena

In politics, the project has received much attention, and the two largest political parties, Siumut and Inuit Ataqatigiit, have also organized several town hall meetings in Narsaq to inform and persuade people of their standpoints on Kvanefjeld. Attention sparked around the lifting of the ban on uranium mining in 2013. As can be seen in Figure 2: Media attention over time² on page 20, attention in the media peaked running up to and in 2013, partly because of the many debates that were held between the two largest political parties. According to some respondents, political parties and politicians hold a high position in society and are very powerful. *"People are very devoted to their party. Even if in our opinion a very bad thing is going to happen, we don't see it, because our party is supporting it."*⁸⁶ Hence, political preference is an important influence of opinion on the project.

Leading up to the 2013 vote in Parliament, various meetings were held in Narsaq, much politically motivated. Inuit Ataqatigiit, which clearly opposes all uranium-related mining,

⁸⁶ Respondent 38.

organized lectures in Narsaq about the risks that come together with uranium mining. IA's main arguments are about the unknown consequences of uranium mining for the Greenlandic economy, administration, public health, environment and foreign policy (KNR, 3 October 2013). Siumut, which proposed the lifting of the ban on uranium mining in the first place, mostly for employment opportunities and the possibility to attract more foreign investment in the natural resources sector, organized meetings from this standpoint. Eventually, the ban on the mining of uranium was lifted in 2013 by a single vote majority and 2 abstentions, clearly making it a much-debated issue.

The debate on yes or no to uranium took and takes on quite a fierce tone in the media: Siumut accused Inuit Ataqatigiit of organizing a scare campaign opposing all development in South Greenland (Sermitsiaq, 29 March 2016), whereas vice versa Siumut is accused of personal enrichment (some politicians had family members on the boards of mining companies (Sermitsiaq, 16 October 2010)) and of only focusing on short-term development. One of the latest politically motivated meetings in Narsaq was in 2016 for instance, when the IA annual summer meeting was held, including a uranium seminar open to anyone interested. The meeting included experts from Canada and Australia, countries often highlighted as good examples of uranium mining, with which IA hoped to contribute to more diverse knowledge. However, all foreign participants had in common that they are uranium-mining opponents, making the information skewed towards one side which of course led to critique from Siumut (KNR, 17 May 2016).

Today, IA and Siumut are governing together with Partii Naleraq until 2018. Since the uranium issue was such a deal breaker for the parties, they have agreed to disagree on the issue, meaning the Greenlandic political scene is in deadlock on uranium nowadays. The following excerpt is derived from the coalition agreement (2016-2018) between Siumut, Inuit Ataqatigiit, and Partii Naleraq:

“In that it is key for Inuit Ataqatigiit and Partii Naleraq that existing business is not harmed and that they accordingly maintain their zero-tolerance policy towards any uranium mining; and in that Siumut, conversely, is open to the extraction of uranium deposits to the extent that it can be documented that this is achievable without harm to health and the environment,

the Coalition Parties agree to address this issue when it eventually becomes relevant to consider new applications concerning the potential extraction of uranium and other radioactive deposits. The Coalition has reached this agreement because there are many issues in Greenland that require joint action and cooperation and because the parties do not wish individual issues to inhibit cooperation.” (own emphasis in bold added)

GME now holds an exploration license for Kvanefjeld, and the next step would be to apply for an exploitation license which would start the actual operating of the mine. However, no decision by the current government can be taken on this license because of the current deadlock, and thus the people of Narsaq probably have to wait for at least another year before a decision on the project will be made. The next elections will take place in November 2018, and hence Kvanefjeld and uranium mining will probably be high on the political agenda once again.

5.5 Democratic Deficit

Although the project is thus extensively debated in the political arena, there is a feeling eminent among the Greenlandic population that their voice is not heard by the government,

their political party, and the mining company, or taken into account sufficiently in the extractive sector and the Kvanefjeld project. This is also called a democratic deficit, which is defined as “distortions in the flow of influence from citizens to government” (Encyclopedia Britannica).

This distortion was first mentioned around the Kvanefjeld project when the decision to abolish the zero-tolerance of uranium in Greenland was discussed. People throughout the entire country are quoted in both newspapers KNR and Sermitsiaq to state how strange it is that this decision to change the policy is made by only 31 people, without consulting or sufficiently informing the population. Protests and calls for referendum were made by both sides; since this decision is going to affect the future of the entire country for years to come. The side in favor of uranium mining does not want to let the contra-side stand in the way of what they think is the way forward for Greenland and vice versa. Uranium is not just found in Kvanefjeld near Narsaq, but also another rare earth project (Tanbreez,⁸⁷ in the direction of Qaqortoq), and potentially in more sites in North Greenland.

“It was very, very bad because the government didn’t even ask the people what they think about removing zero-tolerance. They just did it with 1 vote majority. At least I think they should have asked the people before they took the decision. And I felt that we were not- that they did something just without caring what people are thinking. Not even seeing, or making research of what people are thinking. Then maybe we could have a majority to say no.”⁸⁸

This quote illustrates how many of my respondents reacted when I asked them about the annulling of the uranium law. Besides lack of influence on the decision to remove the uranium ban, people felt also lack of influence on Kvanefjeld itself- especially since the Greenlandic government had repeatedly promised a referendum in South Greenland on the project, but later withdrew its own proposal (Sermitisiaq, 16 December 2015). Researchers from Nuuk’s university that were conducting research in Narsaq and Qaqortoq on extractive projects, found that many residents felt that their needs and futures were being ignored by powerful ‘outside’ actors and that decisions are taken from above (KNR 8 April 2016, Johnstone & Hansen, 2017). As Tejsner (2014) argues, public participation should be encouraged not only in the early stages of any proposed mining project but also when it comes to planning for the future sustainability of the community. Additionally, these sentiments are not limited to the Kvanefjeld project alone: all over Greenland, extractive exploration is carried out, and Nuttall (2012, p. 31) argues that: “arguments put forward by citizens’ groups crystallize around a central demand that decision-making for large-scale projects should be an effective and formal dialogue and engagement between project proponents and the public, making for legitimate citizen engagement in analysis and agenda-setting.” Additionally, Nuttall (ibid) argues that while the existing consultation processes in Greenland are not illegitimate, the current procedures do not go far enough in attempting to ensure a process of deliberative democracy. This adds to the already eminent feeling in Narsaq of powerlessness and expectant waiting for something to be decided from above.

The focus on the extractive sector also causes concerns that the government is held in a hold by the foreign mining companies and that there is not much that can be done about this anymore. For instance about GME, someone from Narsaq wondered at the information meeting that there has been such a large amount of money invested in the project, and if it’s a

⁸⁷ For more information on the Tanbreez rare earth project, see <http://tanbreez.com/en/>.

⁸⁸ Respondent 37.

no-go, he was thinking, what would happen to the government or to Greenland?. Could they be sued for returning this? Another attendant of the GME information meeting in Narsaq (9 May 2017) said:

“I was just remembering Kupik,⁸⁹ the former premier of Greenland, saying that whenever you have issued a license there is basically no turning back. Unless it cannot be done in the way the regulations are asking you to do.”

In general, I noticed how many people I interviewed felt like they are not being heard sufficiently. For instance, the sheep farmers, (see also paragraph 7.4.2 Fisheries and agriculture) who wrote letters to the government explaining their concerns and demanding answers to their questions, at first did not receive any response and later were only told that everything will be fine. One of them explained that even the sheep farmers association made a statement against the storage of tailings in the lake near Narsaq, *“but I don’t think that it’s being taken seriously.”⁹⁰* Additionally, the anti-uranium organization also posed questions to the government but never received answers either.

One of the sheep farms closest to Narsaq, found out by itself (not via government communication), that parts of their grazing area had been awarded via concessions as exploration area to GME. These permits were awarded without any public consultation, and also without any information. The farmer stated that *“the authorities, in this case, showed a fundamental lack of respect for democracy and civil rights”* (Sermitisiaq, 30 June 2015). To prevent these possible land disputes, the Inuit Circumpolar Council⁹¹ tries to bring FPIC- Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples to the attention of both the Greenlandic people and the government. FPIC allows indigenous peoples to give or withhold to a project that may affect them, or their territories consent can be withdrawn at any stage (FAO- FPIC). ICC states that the problem in Greenland is that most of the people working the administration are not aware of indigenous rights, or common rights to land.⁹² Nuttall (2012) adds that FPIC needs to be recognized as a fundamental principle to build relations between companies and local communities. ICC tries to inform people throughout the country on their rights and teaches lectures at schools to make students more aware of the principle as well, but so far there has not yet been made an appeal to the FPIC principle.

Besides the national government that is often complained about, in Narsaq there is a feeling that since the Kommune moved from Narsaq to Qaqortoq, Narsaq lost a lot of voice, power, and influence (now people have to travel 45 minutes by boat back and forth to ask a question, instead of just walking into an office) and that decisions are taken over their heads. Also in terms of unequal development between the two towns: in Qaqortoq roads are repaired and in Narsaq not, Qaqortoq will get a new airport, etc. *“They get all the money”*).

Hence, so far the approach to the Kvanefjeld project and GME’s licensing has been preliminary top-down: the government decides and so far the people in Narsaq and the surrounding towns have not had much to say about it. This is distinctive for the extractive sector in Greenland, and for many Greenlanders the history of the forced depopulation of the mining

⁸⁹ Kupik Kleist, premier 2009-2013, Inuit Ataqatigiit

⁹⁰ Respondent 35.

⁹¹ An international NGO representing Inuit from Canada, Greenland, Alaska and Chukotka (Russia): <http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com>.

⁹² Respondent 12.

town Qullisat is still fresh in memory. Although this was done by the Danish government and one would think that since more self-governance has been established, the participatory processes would have improved. Unfortunately, this is often still not the case. Although during the information meetings organized by GME in 2011, selected stakeholders could provide input as to which of the two scenarios were more suitable for the town, after that nothing much has happened in which people living in Narsaq can exert influence. The public consultation period that will probably commence in the fall of 2017 might bring a change to the current democratic deficit around the project.

5.6 Waiting for Kvanefjeld

So far, we have seen that the project has had a long time span since its beginning and that there is no clear date at which a decision on the project will be taken. Waiting and the consequences thereof are eminent in Narsaq, and it knows no clear-cut end date: the town is waiting in liminality and with it come feelings of uncertainty, insecurity, and powerlessness (Foote et al., 2002, Sibbett, 2004). The talks around and about Kvanefjeld have been going on for over 10 years now: this extensive time period had affected Narsaq considerably, as some sort of Damocles' sword hanging over people's heads, which is felt stronger by some than others. Although measured in years, this can also be seen embodied time: how the individual experiences time- linked to emotions as hope, frustration, illusion, and resignation (Sabo, 2014, Gasparini, 1995).

In line with mixed emotions, respondents also displayed a variation of opinions on whether the mine would be opened in the end. Answers varied from: *"it's not economically and environmentally viable so no they will not open it"*, *"We can't stop it from happening, saying yes or not to the mine is not relevant anymore and it's just waiting for it to start"*, *"they simply cannot do it because of all the risks associated to it"* to *"we are almost sure they will open it"*.⁹³

This long timespan was also emphasized by GME's CEO John Mair, but then from the point of view of the company: (info meeting 9 May 2017, Narsaq):

"The danger is if it gets too caught up in politics, and investors lose confidence, stakeholders loose companies, and the opportunity goes. And people don't often recognize the opportunity until its actually gone. And that's the challenge; that people can re-engage with the opportunity and build confidence so the project can be successful. I would stop doing this, I would not still be involved if I didn't believe there was a positive end result. We wouldn't still be here as a company, we would be lunatics. Shareholders invest because fundamentally its viewed as a very strong project. It's really about implementing it."

This quote illustrates GME's optimism about the continuance of the project. As I talked to the CEO after the meeting, he said he was confident that the deadlock in politics would soon be broken and that the pro-uranium side would eventually come out as winners. However, since Inuit Ataqatigiit is still the second largest party in the country, it is not evident that this will happen during the next elections in 2018. Until then, probably no decision about the project's exploitation status will be made, and Narsaq continues to be in limbo.

Being in this transformative phase, waiting for the next phase, accumulates today in a feeling of being stuck, which is apparent for many people in Narsaq and its surroundings. As discussed in the theoretical framework, waiting is usually experienced by the powerless and goes

⁹³ Respondents 29, 32, 14 & 37.

accompanied with ‘feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, and vulnerability,’ which can be observed in Narsaq as well (Sutton et al. 2011). Since the negotiations around Kvanefjeld have been going on since 2007, the thought of this happening is in the back of people’s mind and affects many decisions that are to be made. This affects competing industries, like the sheep farmers, but also complementary industries; those who could profit from the project taking off, and also everyday life in general. For instance, people don’t know whether they should re-do their roofs, or a long-term investment like their gardens if they don’t know if they want to live there in 3 years. Also in terms of business, uncertainty is one of the hardest things; how can you convince others to invest in your business for the long-term? ⁹⁴

Some even go as far as suggesting that this is a strategy used by the government or by GME in order to get rid of the opposition because people are going to be tired of being against the project. The most vocal people have left Narsaq already, and it is clear that the civil society organizations are not active and depending on a few people. ⁹⁵

Another interviewee explains how she is fed up with this feeling of being stuck:

“Just pay people off and get on with it. they try to persuade the public describing techniques that have never been used before, anywhere in the world. The Greenlandic weather is really tough, and the föhn wind is really strong. Can’t they just recognize that this is problematic and pay people off and let people live a happy life?” ⁹⁶

During the GME information meeting I attended, the ‘we are stuck’ feeling was addressed by someone from Narsaq to GME’s CEO John Mair, who answered that he understands the questions and deems it important ones. Upon coming back to Narsaq, he became a lot more aware of the realities of this situation, and *“that there are people that are impacted in a sense by this already. I don’t have an answer for it.”*

This quote indicates a mismatch between the sentiments in Narsaq and to which extent these are picked up by the company affecting this feeling of being stuck indirectly.

The fact that the political situation is still as divided as it was in 2013 when the ban on the mining of uranium was lifted, does not improve this feeling either.

A respondent sighed and said: *“now they’re discussing it again, but there will not be any solution. They will be stuck at that point where they have been for years.”* ⁹⁷

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I sketched how ‘waiting’ structures and at the same time is the result of numerous developments in Narsaq. Various dimensions contributing to belonging to the town were discussed, whereby the short history of the existence of the town and the limited economic and educational opportunities were important reasons for the current out-migration. The theme ‘the town is dead’ was one of the most occurring comments and the fear of Narsaq reaching a ‘point of no return’ in its current decline is evident. This uncertainty about whether this point will be reached and how this will affect the town comes in conjunction with a sense of ‘only time can tell’ and illustrates the implications of waiting in liminality. The Kvanefjeld project could be one option to provide employment, investments, and infrastructure and to turn the town’s

⁹⁴ Respondent 19.

⁹⁵ Respondents 11, 32.

⁹⁶ Respondent 32.

⁹⁷ Respondent 35.

current decay around. In the political arena, the two major parties Siumut and Inuit Ataqatigiit have been actively campaigning pro and contra Kvanefjeld because of their standpoints on uranium. However, the parties have decided to agree to disagree on the subject, and therefore no decisions will be made by the current government about a potential exploitation license for GME in Kvanefjeld. A feeling of lack of having a say (democratic deficit) in the decision-making process of licensing, and around Kvanefjeld, in general, is evident. This is exemplified further by the abandonment on the zero-tolerance of uranium policy and because a repeatedly promised referendum did not take place.

All of the above combined, results in a passive wait-and-see attitude, thereby indicating a position of powerlessness for people in Narsaq.

In addition, I would like to emphasize that sense of place-belongingness is only one aspect of an explanation why people settle in a particular place: other reasons may remain hidden for outsiders, e.g. living for free in a house owned by your family versus having to pay your own rent. Hence, the shared narratives in this chapter form part of the picture but do not paint it in full.



Photo 11: Driving the boat past enormous icebergs on the way from Qaqortoq to Narsaq. 31 May 2017

Information & the Distribution of Power

Chapter 6. Information & the Distribution of Power

The last chapter showed how Narsaq has developed over time, and how various factors contribute to belonging to the town. Because of the current out-migration and little investment in the town, waiting for something to happen in Narsaq, and the insecurity and passivity that come together with it, are evident. This insecurity is also partly caused by the information provision process and the many ambiguities around the project.

Information provision is often a problem around extractive projects. It is usually unequally distributed between mining companies and the government on the one hand, and local communities on the other hand. Information also is a tool of power: those who have information can choose to share it with others, or to withhold it.

We saw how the “the distribution of waiting time coincides with the distribution of power” (Schwartz, 1975, p. 5). Hence, this chapter will explore the additional factor of knowledge to the distribution of power: it will show how (in)access to information leads to unequal power distributions and add to the feelings of insecurity and passivity in the town.

6.1 Knowledge construction

‘We don’t know’ is one of the most often occurring quotes from the fieldwork data. It is applicable to not knowing if the mine will be open, to information provision about the project’s impacts on the town and people’s everyday lives, and to what the future for Narsaq as a town will be, regardless of whether the mine will come. Hence, this first paragraph will explore who provides what information around the Kvanefjeld project. This mostly concerns the mining company GME, the Greenlandic government, political parties and additional sources on the internet which discuss uranium mining.

6.1.1 Greenland Minerals and Energy

Narsaq has been informed by mining company GME since its coming to town in 2007 via open days, town hall meetings, stakeholder workshops and focus group meetings. Information about the project can also be found on GME’s website.^{98,99} The company has offices in Nuuk and Narsaq where people also can stop by to ask questions, in Nuuk both in Danish and Greenlandic and in Narsaq only in Danish. As Narsaq’s office manager explains: *“I’m always here, and when people are afraid or have questions or just want to check out who is sitting in this office. I want to have an open door for everyone.”* He is a Dane who has been living in Narsaq for years, and thus a familiar face in town.

The open days organized by GME comprised exhibitions with information banners, video presentations and the opportunity to ask questions. In 2010 one was held in GME’s industrial hall for instance, where several hundred people from Narsaq and Qaqortoq got answers on how this mine works from geologists and engineers (Sermitsiaq, 2010). In 2011 open days were again held in Narsaq, Nanortalik, and Qaqortoq, updating people with the latest

⁹⁸ Much information on the website is in English, which makes sense because the company is in Australian and needs to be accessible for foreign investors. However, there is less information in Greenlandic and Danish available, such as the quarterly updates. On GME’s website, reports from the stakeholder workshops are also published, as well as fact sheets and quarterly updates in English; see http://www.ggg.gl/docs/Projects/grl_final_uk.pdf

⁹⁹ Besides information meetings, GME has also since commencing operations in Greenland in mid-2007, sponsored local sporting and community events, and additionally purchased computers for local schools and an internet café (GGG.gl).

information, and explaining the plans for Kvanefjeld until 2013 (Sermitsiaq, 2011). Also, the process of the environmental and social impact assessments was clarified. Many people visited, and newspaper Sermitsiaq (2011) stated: *"Three well-attended public meetings in Nanortalik, Qaqortoq, and Narsaq show that the people of South Greenland are interested in the development of the mining project on Kuannersuit (Kvanefjeld) at Narsaq."*



Figure 4: Community Open Day in Narsaq, August 2010 (Source: ToR SIA GME)

In 2011, the stakeholder workshops commenced, organized to inform selected stakeholders about the project and answer questions, inform about the Environmental and Social Impact Assessments processes and to engage the stakeholders early to receive input on areas of special interest of the stakeholders which should be included in the EIA/ SIA processes (Grontmij, 2011). Meetings were held in Narsaq, Qaqortoq and twice in Nuuk. Stakeholders could provide input on the two potential scenarios the project was exploring, ask questions and provide input on areas they regarded of high importance.¹⁰⁰ After the stakeholder meetings, the terms of reference for the social impact assessment was published, after which the assessment was conducted. The final report, however, is still unfinished today, which is a point of citizen's discontent.

Since then, there have been little town hall meetings in Narsaq but the focus was placed on meetings with a core group, who were supposed to spread the word further. However, attendance has gone down over the years both because there was little news, and also because the meetings have been going on for such a long time.¹⁰¹ Most of the meetings are in English when someone from GME visits from Australia, or in Danish. It might be that some of the people attending do not understand everything to the extent that they are able to ask questions. There are some people who are not Greenlandic but American/ German, that are vocal and always ask questions, while others remain silent. I attended one of these meetings in the beginning of May, illustrated by this excerpt combined from field notes and field diary (9 May 2017):

¹⁰⁰ http://www.ggg.gl/docs/Projects/grl_final_uk.pdf

¹⁰¹ Field notes

I ran a bit late and the meeting had already started when I entered the office above GME's large shed at the edge of town. I hear explanation in Greenlandic. Afraid that the entire meeting would be in Greenlandic and Danish, I feel relieve when I am introduced to the Australian CEO of GME. However, since he is quite talkative and the story fairly technical, I feel my attention slide and my eyes wonder around the room. Australian and Greenlandic flags are hanging on the walls and there is a black cat growling at a dog someone brought, that is lying under the table.

Across the table I see some faces that seem familiar, but I am still not really good at telling Greenlanders apart or remembering names. It seems to me that many people are looking around with blank faces, not clear whether they understand or feel something about what is talked about, but this could also be a cultural difference. Many people are looking at their mobile phones as well. I remember thinking that if this is the way all these meetings took place, it is not strange that many people do not feel well informed.

The attendance at this meeting was not high (9 people from Narsaq, of which 7 Greenlanders), but when I asked other people I knew why they did not attend, they said they did not know that there was a meeting in the first place. The explanation provided by GME's CEO John Mair was in English and was translated into Greenlandic. Sometimes the explanation provided in English or in Greenlandic was much shorter or vice versa, which made me question whether the exact same information was provided in either language.¹⁰² For me, the English extractive industries jargon was quite difficult to understand, and after the meeting, I wondered how much I had learned or remembered.

Currently, GME is finalizing the Economic and Social Impact Assessment reports, after which the hearing period will kick off in which people can ask questions and make comments on the drafts, after which these will be finalized and handed o the Greenlandic government. This will mean there will be town hall meetings involving the entire town again, which has not been happening since 2015.



Photo 12: Listening to a speaker at the GME information meeting; on the right Australian CEO John Mair. 9 May 2017

¹⁰² This is also because Greenlandic has not developed as a language since it was written down for the first time by Hans Egede's missionaries in the 19th century. Many 'modern' words are thus either nonexistent or adopted from Danish or created. Much of the technical jargon used thus needs to be explained rather than literally translated.

6.1.2 The Greenlandic Government

The Greenlandic government and its Bureau for Minerals and Petroleum aim to involve the public, stating that: *'a successful mineral resource project requires good information to the public. Development of a mining project should be based on a constructive interaction between the mining company and the public- and not run as two parallel processes'* (BMP, website). Hence besides GME, the Greenlandic government has also provided information to South Greenland about the project. Most of these meetings were centered around uranium because that was the topic that caused most discussion both with the public and in politics. Being opposed or in favor of the lifting of the ban on the mining of uranium automatically made people opposed or in favor of Kvanefjeld.

In 2008 already, when the Kvanefjeld project was just in the picture, then minister of natural resources and industry Kim Kielsen (Siumut)¹⁰³ said he was skeptical of a uranium mine, but would like to explore it as a by-product of other minerals. He stressed that uranium mining could only happen if the population supports this idea. Therefore, he organized a number of public meetings in Sisimiut, Narsaq, and Qaqortoq, to discuss the idea of uranium mines (KNR, 20 June 2008). His successor Ove Karl Berthelsen (IA) stated in 2009 at a public meeting in Narsaq's town hall, that the Greenland Government considers it important that the local people be consulted on such an important topic as exploration and exploitation of uranium-bearing minerals. During that public meeting, there were many speakers both for and against opening uranium mines in Greenland, organized by the Bureau for Minerals and Petroleum in order to have a balanced debate. Berthelsen added that he wanted to continue these meetings in many parts of the country in 2009 and 2010, and hoped for good debates with the public all over Greenland (KNR, 3 September 2009).

In 2013, the ban on the mining of uranium was lifted by the Greenlandic government, which went accompanied by many meetings organized by political parties (see paragraph 5.4 The Political Arena). In 2014 and 2015, the government aimed at informing people about uranium without the involvement of political parties and campaigns, in order to explain the exploration and exploitation of uranium and the consequences thereof. The speakers were 'experienced scientists with many years of experience in their respective specialist fields: geology, environmental protection, mining and citizen involvement.' Their tone of voice was mostly positive, stating that the risks associated with the project were manageable. The suggestion by someone from Narsaq to have a referendum on the project was rejected by the experts because it was deemed a political issue rather than one of citizen involvement. The outcome of the expert information meetings was broadcasted all over Greenland via radio and television, thereby informing the rest of the country as well (KNR, 27 January 2015). The last 2 years, the government has not organized meetings in Narsaq and surroundings.

In sum, the information provided by GME and the Greenlandic government comprised numerous meetings in the beginning of the project, and around the abolishment of the zero-tolerance of uranium law. At the meetings, both people from GME and independent experts were present, but the meetings were often in English or Danish; thereby excluding some Greenlanders from easily understandable information. Attendance has decreased significantly, but also the frequency of meetings organized by GME and by the Greenlandic government has steeply declined. This could also be due to the current situation of awaiting the final report

¹⁰³ Kielsen is Greenland's current prime-minister.

of the impact assessments which cause the project to be a status quo for now, which will be further discussed later on. Waiting for information thereby puts the people in Narsaq in a dependent and powerless position.

6.2 Responses to Information Provision

This paragraph will discuss people's opinions on (lack of) information provision that is so prominent in responses to asking around in Narsaq about the project. A specific part of information – publication of the economic and social impact assessments will be discussed in more detail. The responses to the information provided will be linked to the political system in Greenland, education levels, and the young democracy. I will illustrate how (in)access to information leads to unequal power relations around the project.

6.2.1 Access to information

The quote below illustrates how the current information mismatch between local people and experts is not particular for Kvanefjeld, but has been occurring regarding extractive projects over time in Greenland.

“All the local people here on this issue they always say that ‘we don’t know, we don’t know, and we don’t know’. But on the other hand, we have a lot of experts coming to these meetings, they always say ‘we know, we know, we know, we know’.

So we have these we don’t knows, and we knows, but if you take a flashback to 1978, when we got Home Rule government, the same questions were up and running. Then the Danish government was looking at the uranium mine, [...] so people were asked by Danish national TV that came to Greenland, the same questions that people ask today. The locals said; ‘we don’t know, we don’t know, we don’t know’. And they asked the experts from GEUS and KGU ¹⁰⁴ and others: ‘we know, we know, we know’.

The melody is exactly the same as in 1978, and that’s a bit scary, that we haven’t really moved. Somebody does not do his job properly.” ¹⁰⁵

This indicates how since the beginning of Home Rule, the extractive industries have been facing the same problem that continues until today. Although in general, this is eminent with extractive projects according to Nuttall (2012), it is discouraging to see that according to this government employee, little has improved in Greenland since the 1970s in terms of access to information for people affected by the projects.

Access to information can be approached in two ways. First, physical access: being able to attend the meetings at the designated place in person. Second, access to information in the sense of it being available, and if it is available in a language or jargon that is understandable to the person receiving it.

Physical access to information has been a challenge for some people in this case, especially for the sheep farmers from the farms surrounding Narsaq. Since there are no roads from the farms to Narsaq, the farmers have to come by boat. For the farmers, it was hard to reach these meetings because these were for instance organized on a Friday night in the winter in Narsaq, which they either can’t reach because of weather circumstances, or they cannot leave their farms overnight to go by boat back and forth to Narsaq. One of the farming families I talked

¹⁰⁴ GEUS: Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland (www.geus.dk), KGU was a consultancy firm at the time.

¹⁰⁵ Respondent 29.

to lived quite remote and said that none had ever visited them with information although their business would be heavily impacted if the mine would come.¹⁰⁶

For people living in Narsaq, Qaqortoq, and Nanortalik, physical access was not a problem since most meetings were held in their respective town halls. However, availability of information is something that almost all respondents remarked upon. GME has held various town hall and community meetings. However, the number of meetings has decreased over the years, and also the attendance of these meetings.¹⁰⁷ The language in which the meetings are held is mostly Danish or English, and some respondents remarked on the difficulties this provides:

*“I was once attending a meeting where they were talking about what they wanted to do with the mining [...] The guy who was explaining what they were going to make, he explained that in English, and they had a Danish translator who translated into Greenlandic. What he explained was so different from what the original was. And that annoyed me much, that I had to witness how misinformed people were. I told them that’s not what he said and I had to translate what he said into how it was supposed to be understood.”*¹⁰⁸

Another example was provided by a respondent who attended an expert meeting in 2015, where the experts all spoke in Danish (very fast), and although it was translated into Greenlandic, some of the jargon could not be translated. It was thus very hard to understand for most people, and some of the Danish was spoken with a thick accent making it even less understandable. She said:

*“Maybe it was the government showing: see we did it! We informed everyone! Or maybe they did it in Danish on purpose.”*¹⁰⁹

A respondent from Qaqortoq¹¹⁰ agrees that the information is hard to understand: he experiences it as one-way communication and remarks that it’s almost only the Danish part of the town that comes to meetings, which is not a good situation according to him. These respondents’ remarks illustrate how the language barrier can lead to misinformation or misunderstandings. Beside language in the literal sense of the word, use of jargon thus also complicates information provision. When I attended an information meeting organized by GME, I had quite some difficulties understanding the mining/ engineering jargon as well.

If one is to look further than the information provided by the government or by GME, to alternative sources of information for instance on the internet, access can be difficult as well. First of all, not all people in Greenland are connected to the internet, also because it is quite expensive. Secondly, almost all information online is in Danish or in English (also GME’s website for instance), and if people are not fluent in either language, the sources which you can access are limited to only GME and the Greenlandic Government.

¹⁰⁶ Respondents 35 & 36.

¹⁰⁷ Respondent 21: there used to be many people but the last years it’s going down, the people in the meetings for the GME.

¹⁰⁸ Respondent 17.

¹⁰⁹ Respondent 32.

¹¹⁰ Respondent 29.

As one respondent explains: “Me, I browse the internet, read articles, know about uranium. Some people don’t have internet and don’t know all of this. Then a man comes by and says the mine is good, and so they say the mine is good.”¹¹¹

This was also touched upon by GME’s official in Narsaq, who explained how during the field season work, people were much happier with the project because it employed many people and people could see tangible examples of how GME works. But after GME laid off everybody and entered a new phase where there was no need for a big workforce, this became a challenge, as illustrated by his quote below:

“If people don’t have that much outlook on the world, and live here and don’t have access to that much media information, you look at what’s happening. Are the guys working for GME happy, are they healthy, is it in good order? Do they pay taxes, buy their kids nice clothes, get a new car, fix the house? Things like that, people can see the possibilities. But we cannot deliver that right now because of the process of the social and environmental impact assessments.”

Hence, if people are only fluent in Greenlandic, the only information one can access is Greenlandic radio and television (1 channel), the Greenlandic government and GME during information sessions in which a translator is present. This limits access to information significantly.

6.2.2 Civil Society Organizations

It is clear that access to information around extractive projects in general, and illustrated by examples in the last paragraph in Narsaq specifically, is often problematic. Several people found that the information provided was not enough, or biased and not credible. Multiple civil society organizations have been founded around the Kvanefjeld project, and a major part of their agendas relates to information provision. In the figure below, an overview is provided of the various players and their views: the left side of the figure displays those opposing the project, and moving to the right the organizations more in favor are pictured.

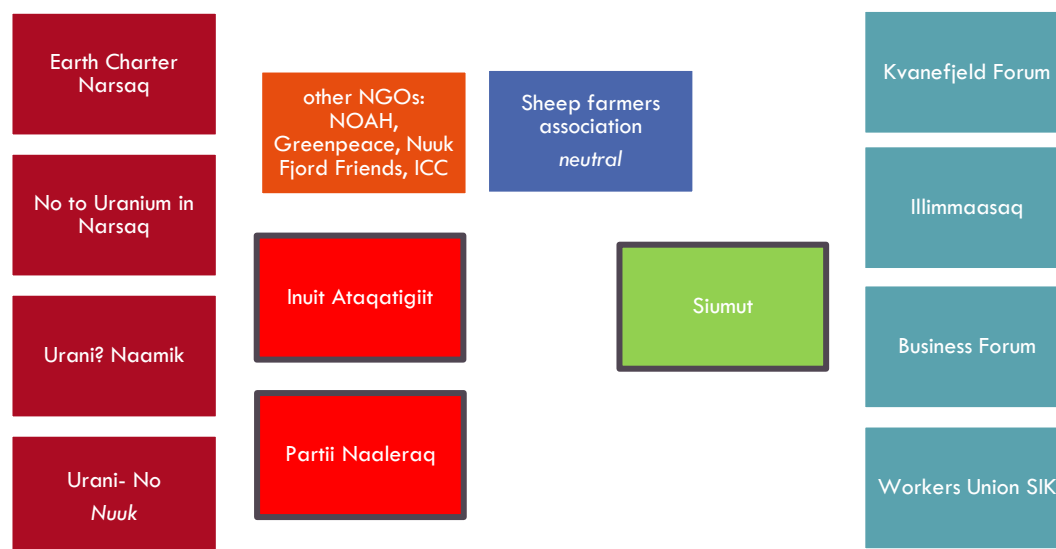


Figure 5: Schematic overview of civil society organizations and political parties

¹¹¹ Respondent 11.

Some organizations focused specifically on information around the uranium part, others more on the general effects on the town. Multiple respondents¹¹² remarked how in the beginning of the project, there were many organizations active in Narsaq, organizing meetings and protests. However, over the years this has declined until today when little is happening in terms of public expression via protests or in newspapers.

Some respondents are of the opinion that foreign, mostly Danish NGO's are and have been scaring people in Greenland, and pursuing their own (international) agenda's via the little Greenlandic organizations. According to one respondent¹¹³, the Greenlandic organizations literally echo European and Danish NGO's. *"They mix their arguments with the colonial ghost and the White Man's disease coming in and exploiting the poor and innocent Inuit which are being manipulated by the big money. It's a kind of Marxist narrative."* These foreign organizations have their own agenda's that they want to pursue: for example, they do not want uranium at all in the world, and thus are against uranium in Greenland not regarding other factors, like that it could potentially be positive for the development of Greenland.¹¹⁴

One of the first initiatives in Narsaq was by Earth Charter Narsaq in 2008.¹¹⁵ The organizers were uneasy about the rumors that uranium would be extracted, and called for unbiased information on the effects of uranium mining. Both because they thought the current information provided was insufficient and biased and because they did not feel like their concerns were taken seriously by politicians in (KNR, 17 November 2008). The meeting was to be held in A21, the community culture house, but the meeting was blocked by the municipality, stating that: *"the meeting was advertised as a protest meeting and that has nothing to do with culture."* This led to angry reactions, among which by the Inuit Circumpolar Council *"it is disturbing that citizens in Narsaq are prevented to meet in a public-owned facility. The constitutional freedom of assembly has been violated"* (KNR, 19 November 2008). Additionally, it was stated in KNR (18 November 2008) that *"we have limited opportunities to be gathered together and hold meetings, and now that there is finally some who stand up and want to give their opinion, they refuse them a place to be."* After much debate, the organization was allowed by the Kommune to hold a meeting in the A21-building the following March (25 March 2009). This debacle showed how the public participation process took off on a rough start since this initial meeting wasn't meant as a protest but rather to inform people. However, public opinion on the project was still relatively skewed towards the supporting side at the time, and maybe that was why an information meeting on uranium and its consequences was conceived as threatening to the then dominant pro-mining paradigm. In addition, it adds to the earlier described democratic deficit.

In 2009 (KNR, 29 January) the first anti-uranium association in Narsaq was founded: 'No to Uranium in Narsaq' by the people that organized the first meetings in the A21 building. The main concern the association wanted to address was the lack of answers the Greenlandic government could provide on their questions about uranium. Therefore, the association wanted to provide the necessary answers themselves, among others by looking at experiences with

¹¹² Respondent 6 & 14.

¹¹³ Respondent 22.

¹¹⁴ Respondent 25.

¹¹⁵ Earth Charter is an international declaration with local initiatives all over the world. In 2008, the Greenland branch of the charter organized a conference on climate change and sustainability in Narsaq, after which the local chapter in Narsaq was initiated. see www.earthcharter.org.

uranium mining abroad. The organization was not opposing all forms of mineral exploitation, as long as its further away from towns and not harmful for people and the environment (KNR, 4 August 2010).

As a reaction and ‘counterweight’ to the ‘No to Uranium’ organization, a new organization was founded in 2010: the Kvanefjeld Forum. This organization was aimed at both opponents and supporters of the project and wanted to be a consulting party in connection with mineral projects in the surroundings of Narsaq. The organization is pro exploration of uranium if it can be proven that there is no danger for nature and people. At their first meeting, 40 people showed up, indicating interest in voicing a different opinion than the dominant anti-Kvanefjeld one. The organization’s agenda was to contribute to making the debate for or against uranium more objective and well documented (KNR, 13 July 2010). Thereby, we see that both ‘No to Uranium’ and the ‘Kvanefjeld Forum’ wanted, in fact, the same: more objective information on the project, although their motivations for wanting objective information are different. Whereas one thinks it will make clear that uranium mining comes with many hazards and cannot be good for Narsaq and its surroundings, the other thinks objective information will downplay this ‘scaring paradigm’ and make clear that the project can bring much-needed employment and investments to Narsaq, provided that the project will not harm the environment.

However, while the Kvanefjeld Forum was open to all, predominantly supporters of mineral extraction attended the meeting (KNR, *ibid*). Two weeks later, the organization changed its name to ‘Ilmmaasaq’ and was officially supporting mineral extraction in Narsaq, as long as it is not harmful to public health and the environment. Additionally, a point of importance was the usage of as much local labor as possible (KNR, 24 July 2010). The organization was critical of the government’s uranium policy, because without uranium the REEs cannot be mined. In 2010 GME’s equity trade was stopped because the government upheld the ban on uranium and the market value of shares plummeted. The organization worried that this would lead to shareholders disappearing from the Kvanefjeld project and protested against this government position (KNR, 3 August 2010).

The removal of the zero-tolerance on the mining of uranium marked the foundation of the most recent organization in Narsaq: ‘Urani? Naamik’ (Uranium? No Thanks). Demonstrations were organized about 4 or 5 times in Narsaq and in Qaqortoq. In the beginning, the organization was very active, but over the years this has decreased since they feel like they are holding sermons for their own parish and they do not feel like they are achieving much. Now the work mostly rests on the shoulders of the chairwoman, who has resorted to sending questions to the government, which so far does not answer, but she keeps sending questions anyways to bring their cause to their attention. Since the organization is only one person now, the pressure on her shoulders is high. She is busy with work, family and additionally the organization. As she says: *“I have to be myself sometimes too.”*¹¹⁶ Other respondents also remarked on her efforts and stated that more people should help her since that would give the organization a stronger voice as well rather than only one person standing up at meetings.¹¹⁷

One of the most recent demonstrations that was organized in Narsaq was by a group called the ‘Working Group on resistance against the plans of the exploitation of mineral

¹¹⁶ Respondent 11.

¹¹⁷ Respondent 35.

resources of uranium and its use of uranium from Kuannersuit'. This organization organized demonstrations in more towns around the country. Their main argument held that citizens had received insufficient information about the plans, and required a referendum on the issue (KNR, 10 March 2016).

Besides the civil society organizations founded around Kvanefjeld, there is another influential group of people around Narsaq: the sheep farmers. There are 38 sheep farms in South-West Greenland today and they are regarded by many as an important and strong group, made up of families who have been in the business for a long time and because they are the largest industry in Southern Greenland besides fisheries. The sheep farmers organization forms a powerful alliance but remains neutral towards Kvanefjeld because not all farmers are opposed to the project.

However, there have been individual groups of farmers that have held a petition and wrote an open letter to the government that was published in the newspapers, demanding more information on the potential negative consequences of the mining project for the environment. Another point of critique was made by farmers from Ipiutaq, one of the farms closest to Kvanefjeld. They found out in 2011 that GME had received concessions for using parts of their grazing lands, without any consultation. In Greenland, there are no individual land rights but everyone receives a concession to use the land their farm or house is on. To the farmers, it seemed that the government valued GME higher than sheep farming.¹¹⁸

In 2015, sheep farmers called out to the government that they would like someone to come and submit information and allow them to get answers to their questions. In North Greenland, an outreach campaign was held for another extractive project, and the sheep farmers were annoyed that such a campaign had not come to south Greenland. *"Will it be harmful or not? We wish that this will be done in a direct dialogue with our members so they can get answers to their questions"* said their representative. Together with 5 organizations, a group of 30 farmers from Narsaq and Qassiarsuk then sent an open letter to the government, where they express their concern for the consequences that can come when an open pit mine in Kvanefjeld will be operationalized (KNR, 27 January 2015). The sheep farmers I spoke to all referred to this letter and petition they sent to the government, to which they received little response.

Today it is quiet in Narsaq and around the country. In Nuuk, the Urani- No movement collapsed and decreased to include only 1 person; the same that happened in Narsaq with Urani? Naamik. Also, the organization pro-Kvanefjeld is not active today, and its spokesperson did not want to talk to me since he was tired of discussing the same points over and over again. Partly because nothing is happening around Kvanefjeld at the moment and everyone is waiting for the environmental and social impact reports to be published, and because the situation has been going on for such a long time that putting an effort in protesting also becomes demanding.¹¹⁹ Sometimes, the political parties still organize something, and one of my respondents said about this: *"we most of all demonstrate to show that we are still alive. But I don't really believe in it anymore."*¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Respondent 32.

¹¹⁹ Respondent 13.

¹²⁰ Respondent 32.

In sum, the organizations that were founded had/have one goal in common, and that was a demand for more (independent) information. Others felt like they were not being heard when asking questions the normal way and therefore resorted to informing themselves and eventually actively protesting. However, today the organizations are not active, because they are relying on individuals and not on collectives, and because the situation has been dragging on for a long time. Additionally, at the moment not much is happening around Kvanefjeld, so there is not much to publish or demonstrate about.

6.2.3 Credibility of information

Limited access and availability of information also opens the way for questions about the credibility of the existing information. According to a respondent, it is a challenge for Greenlanders to get used to critically assess where your information comes from, whether it is credible and if the bringer of information might be pursuing own objectives. He says that people who come from Europe, are more used to make up a balance between various opinions and to form your own opinion out of all the information, whereas in Greenland this is still a challenge also because of the little information available.¹²¹

Some people that are opposing the project do not believe in the information that GME provides because they think it is too one-sided:

“If I want to sell something I don’t want to tell them how bad it will be (laughing). And I think that they will not tell us anything bad about the mine.”¹²²

This quote illustrates that although information might be available, it is by some regarded as untrustworthy or they are not interested in it because they already have a clear picture in mind of what the information will look like, regardless of whether this is true. Another respondent remarks about credibility regarding the government and GME:

“The government says: the environment, what about it? And GME also says: it’s no problem, we will take care of everything and nature will not be harmed. The self-government sends in ‘neutral experts’ (you can hear her sarcasm) to investigate, and they all say we will be fine. And people believe that.”¹²³

From this quote, it is clear how in the opinion of this respondent, the Greenlandic government holds a position of power because they send in the experts that are supposed to be the neutral carriers of credible information, which many Greenlanders will believe. However, in her opinion, these experts were not neutral and downplayed the risks of the project and misinformed the people of South Greenland. The experts this respondent refers to were five representatives from research institutions in Denmark visiting South Greenland in 2015. The aim was to report on uranium mining in general and Kvanefjeld in particular. Several civil society organizations were of the opinion that although these experts were neutral, they systematically downplayed and ignored the environmental consequences of uranium. Additionally, the trustworthiness of GEUS, the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland was questioned due to its close ties to the government and its knowledge of the Greenlandic governance’ aim to open up the country’s natural resources to foreign companies (Sermitsiaq, 2015). Another example is a GME information campaign- the company distributed 26,000 dvds with information about Kvanefjeld. Inuit Circumpolar Council member Olsvig questioned the quality

¹²¹ Respondent 22.

¹²² Respondent 11.

¹²³ Respondent 32.

of information, because according to her “it will only create doubts regarding whether all sides of the matter will be clarified. The DVD’s seemed like an advertising campaign for the company, and how good they are to help Greenland” (KNR, 15 March 2011).

The current situation of the people in and around Narsaq is well illustrated by the following quote:

*“Politicians and GME on one side and NGOs on the other side are arguing, and people are standing in the middle. What can I believe here? One side is scaring my pants off telling horror stories about we are all going to die and we are going to have disfigured children because of radioactive dust. The other side says no it’s not a problem at all and we are all going to be prosperous and rich- it’s not a problem at all.”*¹²⁴

In sum, there is not much information available to the Greenlandic people, and the information that is available might be hard to access in terms of distance, language, jargon, and content. People with higher education (and a better understanding of English besides Danish) can easier understand the meetings in their original languages, and also access additional information online. This exemplifies how information can cause power inequalities within the community between people with higher education and people without, or without access to the internet for instance.

6.2.4 Economic and Social Impact Assessments

A specific part of information about the Kvanefjeld project that raises many questions and frustrations with the public information process and the credibility thereof are the economic and social impact assessment (ESIA) reports. These ESIA reports describe what the definite project plan looks like, what the impacts and risks for people and nature will be, and how these are expected to be mitigated. An ESIA report is required by the Greenlandic government in order to apply for an exploitation license. The ESIA reports are thus a piece of information that many people in Narsaq are looking forward to reading, since it will provide more clarity about the project than anything they have received so far, especially on the impacts on the town. In addition, publication of these reports will mark the start of a public hearing period, whereby new meetings between the community and GME will be organized to discuss the findings of the reports and potential disagreements. However, although the research around the ESIA reports started in 2011, the final reports are still not published. These reports have a long history of people waiting for the publication and drafts getting leaked, and until today leave the population with an information deficit and in a powerless position.

Because the research has been going on for many years, these reports have caused much discussion and many people are eager to read them: those supporting to see evidence the mine will not cause harm to the environment, and those opposing to see whether all their concerns have been addressed and based on what evidence. The publication of these reports will mark a new stage in Kvanefjeld’s development because it will kick off the public hearing period necessary to obtain an exploitation license, and is thus a long-expected event. This paragraph will discuss the developments around the publishing of the ESIA, which is also part of people’s access to information on the project. There are several sides to the ESIA story:

For GME, the main problem is in their opinion that there has been a large group in Narsaq getting more concerned because of that period of waiting for the assessments to be

¹²⁴ Respondent 11.

finished. They explain that it takes time because all the partners and the Greenlandic government need to be satisfied with all what GME plans on doing. GME has to give a scientific answer and does this by bringing in external consultants that know about the designs and have more knowledge than the company itself holds in-house. GME states how sometimes the dialogue on the ESIA can be difficult between the company, stakeholders and the local population: “We can only say so much- we don’t have all the answers until it’s published.”¹²⁵

For those supporting the project, they often state that they are waiting for the information, and since there are so many experts involved, they are trusting that the project will not harm people or the environment. “If the report says it is good enough to the people and the environment, I will say yes.”¹²⁶ This quote illustrates what was earlier described: that people in Greenland often tend not to question information provided by authorities and not take alternatives into account. For those opposing Kvanefjeld, the fact that the impact assessments have not yet been published is a source of concern, and also a confirmation of suspicions that something is off.

“Something is wrong when they don’t publish that I think. I think they are going to hide something for the people living around it.”¹²⁷

One of my respondents wrote to the government to ask whether she could see an available draft, after having asked many questions and not receiving any answers. In 2016, the Danish Broadcasting Cooperation gained access to a draft of the ESIA under Greenland’s Act on Transparency of Public Administration. The Greenlandic newspaper Sermitsiaq later also applied, but GME intervened and the Greenlandic Environmental Agency for Mineral Resource Activities decided not to give access to the public. According to 6 NGO’s in a press release on this procedure,¹²⁸

“This confirms the necessity of Greenland adopting the Aarhus Convention¹²⁹ in order to give the public better access to environmental information. The lack of transparency makes public participation very difficult, especially in regard to oil and mining projects. Considering the immense interest in the Kvanefjeld mining project, we have decided to make the EIA draft report available to the public.”

¹²⁵ GME during the information meeting in Narsaq.

¹²⁶ Respondent 21.

¹²⁷ Respondent 31.

¹²⁸ The six organizations are Noah (Danish), Avataq, No to uranium, Nuuk Fjord Friends, The Danish Ecological Council, and Renewable Energy (Danish). For the press release see: https://noah.dk/sites/default/files/2017-03/2017-03-10%20Press%20release%20concerning%20EIA%20draft%20report%20Kvanefjeld_0.pdf

¹²⁹ The Aarhus convention is a United Nations convention on Access to Information Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (adopted 25 June 1998, into force in 2001). The European Union and thus Denmark has signed and ratified the convention, and Denmark declared upon signature that: Both the Faroe Islands and Greenland are self-governing under Home Rule Acts, which implies *inter alia* that environmental affairs in general and the areas covered by the Convention are governed by the right of self-determination. In both the Faroe and the Greenland Home Rule Governments there is great political interest in promoting the fundamental ideas and principles embodied in the Convention to the extent possible. [...] The convention is prepared with a view to European countries with relatively large populations and corresponding administrative and social structures, it is not a matter of course that the Convention is in all respects suitable for the scarcely populated and far less diverse societies of the Faroe Islands and of Greenland. Thus, full implementation of the Convention in these areas may imply needless and inadequate bureaucratization. For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/aarhus/> and https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=XXVII-13&chapter=27&clang=_en#1.

These six organizations have chosen to publish a leaked draft version in order to spark a public debate on the project (Sermitsiaq, 10 March 2017). When I asked one of my respondents who was involved in this publication, what she thought GME would think about it, she said:

"I think GME is very angry with us, but I think it is correct to do it. The report is made for us in my mind because it is ours. Why can't we see it?" ¹³⁰

When I asked GME about the leaked report, the response was one of disappointment because according to its local manager, they are trying their best to adhere to all the rules and regulations the Greenlandic government installed over the years, and that is why it takes so long. He is frustrated with the (foreign) NGO's mingling in the situation, because:

"they [the NGOs] are totally different than what's good for Greenland to do. We are trying to have that discussion with family and friends and also the local citizens saying well you need to understand that NGO has an agenda of its own. So, the challenge is for Greenlanders locally how to gain knowledge enough until you have the environmental impact assessment. In the meantime, the NGOs have a feast, but we haven't heard that much stuff based on that leak. Frankly, we don't think they have that much to come for. It's more political."

The publication of the draft assessment and a very critical analysis of the project by consultant Jan Willem Storm van Leeuwen (2014)¹³¹ led to an extensive discussion, on which a long article in Sermitsiaq was printed (10 March 2017) including both the critique and GME's responses. GME holds for instance that people have to wait for the final version of the report, because *'premature discussion and debate before the public hearing will undermine the integrity of the licensing process in Greenland'*, according to CEO John Mair. Moreover, the report had to be enlarged because of additional demands from the Greenlandic government, in order to make it as comprehensive as possible, and thus Greenlanders have nothing to worry about since their own regulatory system takes good care of them.

Many parties call for the publishing of the reports since the longer it takes, the more people have the feeling something is being covered up (KNR, 21 March 2017).

6.3 Conclusion

The way information 1) represents power relations and 2) illustrates the effects of waiting is made clear in this chapter. The power dynamics concerned with the availability of information are clear in terms of accessing information. This is mostly illustrated by the ESIA struggles and the language barrier around information meetings, which implies that many people do not have information or do not understand the information provided. The Greenlandic government holds a position of power since it is supposed to provide neutral information to the people about extractive projects. This information is regarded by many as an important source, besides the 'colored' information provided by political parties and GME itself. However, the credibility of the experts sent by the government and some governmental institutions is questioned. This brings the public in an even less powerful position since one would expect the government to provide neutral information in the best interest of the citizens. There is an imbalance in accessing information between the higher and lower educated Greenlanders, whereby the latter is more likely to (blindly) follow the information provided by the

¹³⁰ Respondent 11.

¹³¹ For the entire report, see: [https://noah.dk/sites/default/files/2017-03/J.W.%20](https://noah.dk/sites/default/files/2017-03/J.W.%20Storm%20van%20Leeuwen%20paper%20on%20%20Kvanefjeld%20EIA%20draft%202017-1-22_0.pdf)

[Storm%20van%20Leeuwen%20paper%20on%20%20Kvanefjeld%20EIA%20draft%202017-1-22_0.pdf](https://noah.dk/sites/default/files/2017-03/J.W.%20Storm%20van%20Leeuwen%20paper%20on%20%20Kvanefjeld%20EIA%20draft%202017-1-22_0.pdf)

government, political parties, and GME. Civil society organizations formed around Kvanefjeld organized their own meetings to fill this gap of information.

Waiting for more information is one of the things that frustrates people the most over the course of the coming into being of the Kvanefjeld project. Lack of information also adds to fear people have for the environment, health and the effects on the town and adds to the insecurity that is already eminent around the town's future, with or without the mine. The long wait for the ESIA reports being published added to the eminent feeling of waiting that has come to characterize Kvanefjeld for the people in Narsaq. The inaccessibility of information thus results in unequal power distributions, leaving the Greenlandic population and Narsaq in particular on the less powerful and dependent side of the bargain. Combined with this lack of information comes a feeling of not being included in the decision-making process around the extractive industries: the democratic deficit. Taking Greenland's history of extractive projects whereby the local population was not or little involved in the development into account, there has been a strict top-down approach in the past.¹³²

¹³² For instance, on a boarded up building in Narsaq 'mini Qullissat' was written, in reference to the forcibly closed mining town in northern Greenland.



Photo 13: A typical colored sunset over Narsaq. 12 June 2017

The Community & the Kvanefjeld Project

Chapter 7. The Community & the Kvanefjeld project

From the previous chapters it is clear how a feeling of waiting in the town comes together with insecurity about the future. This holds for both those in favor of the project and those opposed since uncertainty makes it difficult to make future plans or investments. Information plays an important role in the project and comes together with unequal power relations.

First, I explain how public opinion about the project developed over time. Then, I address additional topics that came to the fore as of importance for people; public opinion, fears, employment, and other sectors that could be affected by the project, or could sustain south Greenland if the project would not come into being (tourism, agriculture, and fisheries). These subchapters are linked to the various dimensions of belonging to Narsaq.

7.1 Public Opinion

This paragraph will discuss the development of public opinion in Narsaq on the project over time. Opinions and expressions thereof became more prominent when the removal of the ban on uranium mining became more realistic leading up to 2013. Looking at opinion polls, or at how people think others think about the project, there are vast differences over time. When I asked people in Narsaq during fieldwork, responses differed greatly: some thought the town was divided 50/50, people from the organization against the mine thought more people were against because they had held more demonstrations than the organization supporting the project, a friend that moved to Narsaq 8 months ago had so far only spoken to people that are against the project, and another woman said she thought more and more people had become in favour of the project, since South Greenland is in need of development, more every year.

In the beginning of the timespan of the project, in 2009 and 2010, public opinion was skewed towards supporting the project. An article in KNR (12 February 2009) elaborated on how the Business Forum in Qaqortoq had collected 250 signatures in favor of uranium mining, and that the president of the organization stated he is not of the impression that there is much resistance in southern Greenland against uranium mining.¹³³ In 2010, an opinion poll conducted in southern Greenland showed that 80% of people in Narsaq, Qaqortoq, and Nanortalik are in favor of the project (KNR, 15 June 2010).¹³⁴

However, when the vote on the lifting of the ban of uranium came closer, the amount of people in Narsaq opposing the mine increased. When Sermitsiaq visited the town in 2013 (3 October) a report described Narsaq as depicting a mixed image of high hopes for a mining future but mostly great fear. The report described how people were concerned about the environment, the health of their children, the harmful effects of the radioactive irradiation and the fear that Narsaq would evolve into a Klondyke with lots of quick money and wild drinking. On the other hand, the report described that people fear the city will end up an open-air museum if nothing happens. *"But almost everyone agrees on one thing: opposition to a uranium*

¹³³ There were no signatures collected against the project at that time.

¹³⁴ This poll was conducted by GME, and the question asked was: "This question is about plans for mining in Kvanefjeld near Narsaq in South Greenland. If the mine is established, it will on the one hand mean income to the community and many jobs, while on the other hand it cannot be avoided, that at the same time uranium comes as a byproduct. Based on what you've heard about the plans of the various media, are you for or against the establishment of such a mine? " Since the poll was conducted by GME and the question asked a bit guiding/ one-sided, the debates were questioned by people opposing the project (Sermitsiaq, 15 June 2010).

mine grows in the city. Day by day - as the decision draws closer - there are more and more nay-sayers."

By 2015 (KNR 9 March), the zero-tolerance of uranium policy had been lifted and opinions in Narsaq were again divided on the topic. A qualitative research by researchers from Aalborg and Copenhagen Universities showed the population to be in a major division between those that think the project will be beneficial, and those that see the potential of the mine but are concerned about the environmental risks and ownership by a foreign company. This is also shown on a national level: in 2016 the second largest protest in Greenland's history took place in Nuuk, whereby around 500 people were demonstrating in front of the parliament, both pro and contra the mining of uranium (KNR, 8 April 2016). This shows how uranium mining is still a controversial topic in Greenland, about which much is unclear and discussion continues.

The last update on public opinion in the newspapers was earlier this year: the municipal elections in April 2017 lead to a win for Siumut in South Greenland's municipality, and according to former IA-president Motzfeldt the fact that Siumut got more than half of the votes in Narsaq suggests that there is plenty local support for the mining project. However, others contest this connection between voting results and opinions about the mine, since for instance, IA had the greatest increase in votes in the town compared to the last elections while Narsaq is a town that traditionally votes for Siumut (KNR, 14 April 2017). Moreover, some respondents remarked how there is a tradition to vote for your family, that is- you vote what your family has voted since forever. It is such a small country, that you know many people who you vote for personally, or via connections and you know what they stand for.¹³⁵ Therefore, the connection between Siumut winning the elections and opinions about the mine seems not very strong (KNR, 14 April 2017). In addition, specifically for Qaqortoq, a respondent recalls how the opinions in Qaqortoq change sometimes, mostly because of all the young people that make up a large percentage of the population in town. Qaqortoq is home to one of the country's largest high schools (Campus Kujalleq), which around 300 students attend. She was of the opinion that young people can be influenced easily by their teachers, 'who color their minds with uranium.'

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Summarizing, over the years public opinion has shifted from predominantly in favor at the beginning of the project, to increasing opposition when the vote on the lifting of zero-tolerance of uranium drew near. Nowadays, opinions are still divided, and it seems the balance of those pro and those against the project is not clearly tipped to one side. This could be both because nothing is happening at the moment, and because there is still much unclear about what the future will hold for the project and how it will affect Narsaq (as explained in the previous chapter on information provision).

Differing opinions turned out to affect social relations between people in Narsaq in different ways. Beforehand I had heard how the town was completely divided and families were split up (ICC), but during fieldwork, this turned out to be more nuanced. For instance, the

¹³⁵ Respondents 7, 32 & 38.

¹³⁶ Respondent 31.

chairwoman of the anti-uranium organization in Narsaq experienced that people stopped saying hello to her on the streets, and she stopped saying hi to them too:

“because we couldn’t understand each other. But now it’s getting better. [...] But I know that some people are against me.

[...] So sad that they don’t tell me, they just show it, by stop saying hi, and not asking questions. I wish someone would ask me questions; why are you against? Then I would tell them and we would have to talk. But they don’t ask. And I don’t ask them either” (laughing) ¹³⁷

Another respondent said that if I had noticed that the respondent mentioned above seemed frightened, that that is because this is such a small community and they do not allow people to have an opinion against the main public interest. Another contact from outside the community but who had conducted research in Narsaq in 2015, said that the population is split 50/50 and that it led to a kind of civil war (although he added that the latter might be a strong choice of words): he said that it splits up families and causes mistrust. ¹³⁸

This quote above illustrates how the reputation of having a strong opinion and voicing it, can lead to social consequences in this small town. However, other informants do not have experiences like this at all but mention the opposite. A Kommune foreman in favor of Kvanefjeld¹³⁹, for instance, remarked that he understands where people against the project are coming from, and respects their opinions. He hoped that they would respect his opinion, too. Some of his friends were in favor, and others against, but this never lead to any problems or arguments. Others simply chose to not talk about the topic with people who they know have a different opinion, because they know they will never agree on it.¹⁴⁰ During the research, it became clear that in a small town such as Narsaq it was known who thought what about the project. Over time, the clear division within the community into opposing sides has decreased; maybe also because the frequency of protests lessened and the discussion has been going on for so long, that people by now accept who thinks what. *“People are just waiting and they just...try to agree. Try to be normal.”* ¹⁴¹

Although people’s opinions might be known and understood, the project still causes some ill will and envy between people in Narsaq and division within the community, for instance on the topic of compensation. An example is that of a farm that is closest to Narsaq which will have to move if the mine will be operationalized. The farmer that lives there, Frederiksen, is the husband of the current minister for foreign affairs, agriculture, and independence.¹⁴² It is known by many that this specific farm will receive compensation from GME (or from the Greenlandic government), although nobody knows the exact details of the deal.¹⁴³ The minister’s husband is one of the few farmers that are in favor of the project. Other farmers find this hard to understand, and mention ignorance and money as his motivations. Some people think Frederiksen is just taking good care of himself and that he has every right

¹³⁷ Respondent 11.

¹³⁸ Respondent 12.

¹³⁹ Respondent 21.

¹⁴⁰ Respondent 32.

¹⁴¹ Respondent 11.

¹⁴² Since the country is so small, many ministers hold multiple portfolios. I wondered if there would not be a conflict of interest in holding these portfolio’s among which agriculture, while you are also the owner of a big farm, but the country is so small that many people know or are related to politicians in one way or another and apparently it does not constitute a conflict of interest (field notes)

¹⁴³ Respondent 7.

to do so, others- especially sheep farmers are angered by the situation. They wonder why only that farm receives compensation and not all farms. Possible compensation is thus a topic that does cause partition within the community and is caused by a lack of information.

In sum, public opinion shifted mostly around uranium, not about the large-scale mining project. The town was divided in the past but today it is known what everyone thinks since the long waiting period made people more indifferent today than at the hey day of uranium protests. One would think that people are either supporting or opposing, but the next paragraphs will explain that it is not as black and white but rather a grey area in between.

7.2 Fear

We know that access to (trustworthy) information is a source of frustration for many people around the project, and with extractive projects in general. Waiting for a long time for the ESIA reports to come out, and other uncertainties about the project due to limited information do not decrease the fears people have about the project but rather add to them. Fear has multiple facets: environmental contamination, the effects of uranium, foreign workers taking over the town, that Narsaq would change unrecognizably from today or fear that the mine will not come into being at all. This paragraph will elaborate on the various reasons behind fear for Kvanefjeld and its possible consequences for people, the town, and its surroundings. The dimensions of belonging will be considered when elaborating on the various fears that exist in Narsaq.

7.2.1 Environmental Risks & Uranium

Belonging through nature and landscapes forms an important aspect of being a Greenlander. Greenland has a reputation of unspoiled nature, and its remoteness, pureness and close connection to it is still an important part of Greenlandic identity today. Although many Greenlanders are not necessarily against mining in general, it has to be done in an environmentally responsive manner. Reasoning against the project has thus often to do with Greenland losing its image of pure nature without pollution, especially if the country becomes associated with uranium.¹⁴⁴ Also, the fact that Kvanefjeld is an open-pit mine would affect South Greenland considerably: *“If you Google ‘open-pit mine,’ all you see is destruction. It would be like killing the spirit of South Greenland”* (Oneal, 10 February 2017).

As can be derived from the discussions between political parties, in newspapers and between civil society organizations, uranium brought up many emotions. This could be because uranium is usually associated with radioactivity, and people often referred to the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011. As belonging through landscapes comprises such an important part of being a Greenlander, it is logical that most mentioned fears around uranium are related to pollution of the environment. This because the mine is designed to be an open pit mine and the Arctic climate is harsh with little rain around the year, dry summers, and much wind. As one respondent said:

*“I hope that you will be here when the storm comes. We are used to having storms, really big storms. Because then you have to see, oohh the mine is so crazy.”*¹⁴⁵

The mine is supposed to work all year round, so additionally, there is the problem with snow that will melt and take (uranium) dust with it, and contaminate the groundwater and Narsaq's

¹⁴⁴ Respondent 37.

¹⁴⁵ Respondent 11.

drink water supply.¹⁴⁶ Other respondents mention worry that if the mine opens, they can no longer open their windows and let their children play outside, because of the dust that will spread.¹⁴⁷

For the farmers, it is also fear of losing their business: they are afraid that none will buy their meat anymore because the sheep have been grazing close to the mine where the dust could possibly have spread because of the winds. People have already said this in the anti-uranium Facebook group, and this is thus a big concern for the sheep farmers. Hunters who hunt for reindeer that graze around Narsaq are also scared they cannot sell their meat anymore because of polluted grazing fields.¹⁴⁸ Besides uranium, there are more elements that are a point of concern, such as fluorine and thorium. The Kommune's mining expert explains that there were tests done in Kvanefjeld in the 1980s which researched wastewater, and showed how all fish and small animals living in the water had died from the fluorine content. Some fishermen are hence concerned the waters will be polluted, and images of deformed fish found at the Fukushima nuclear plant were frequently posted in the anti-uranium Facebook group. Besides the landscape factor of belonging, also the cultural and economic ones are of importance here: sheep farming, hunting, and fishing comprise important livelihood provision activities for as long as people can remember. Besides dropping out of business; an important part of cultural heritage of the area would be lost as well.

Especially the tailings, which are the waste that is left when processing rare earth elements and uranium are an extra concern. These tailings are to be kept for all eternity on the bottom of a lake. However, it is not clear who is responsible for the maintenance of the dam that seals this lake- is it the Greenlandic government who has to pay for it, or GME? Multiple respondents think the Greenlandic government will not be able to do this, both in terms of knowledge and costs. This lack of clarity causes concern for the next generations of Greenlanders in terms of pollution, but also in terms of the national economy according to some respondents:

*"We will not be here but the next generation and the next generation of the Greenlanders, I think they will be affected. Also maybe it can be a big economic responsibility to keep it contained, to avoid the pollution. I think it will cost a lot of money in the end to keep it there."*¹⁴⁹

Thus while for many uranium is a no-go area, others feel that it can be done responsibly and that it is necessary to develop Greenland further. Other mines (that extracted gold and coal e.g.) have been operated in Greenland before and have not caused environmental disasters. Regarding uranium, it concerns not only Kvanefjeld but other sites around the country also contain uranium as a by-product and these mines together could play an important role in sustaining independence from Denmark. The dangers concerned with it are estimated lower, and as the president of Greenland's workers' union SIK states: *"there are risks at all jobs. All jobs are dangerous, that's the case with mines. We cannot be so picky in South Greenland"* (Sermitsiaq, 29 October 2016). SIK is in favor of mining uranium because it will mean work for its members. They agree with GME that the radioactive content of the ore from Kvanefjeld is so low, that it will not be a risk for people and the environment (Sermitsiaq, 6

¹⁴⁶ Respondent 31.

¹⁴⁷ Respondents 18 & 19.

¹⁴⁸ Field notes and respondent 35.

¹⁴⁹ Respondent 37.

November 2008). People supporting uranium extraction mention examples from Canada and Australia where it has been mined for many years, and Kvanefjeld contains a smaller percentage of uranium per ore than most mines (Semitsiaq, 19 September 2013). Additionally, there is an economic goal at stake here as well: *“If everyone else can sell uranium, we might as well also do it. There is a good economy”* according to former deputy chairman of the Greenlandic Government (Semitsiaq, 27 January 2013). The information provided by GME and the Greenlandic government on the low risks of uranium mining is accepted by people supporting the project although many mention the prerequisite of the environment and people's health not being in danger.

We see here how the politics of belonging are of used by both sides of the story: on the one hand, the image of Greenland as unspoiled and pure is used to argue against the project, whereas on the other hand the argument that uranium is necessary for a Greenland for independent Greenlanders is used. Landscapes and surroundings play an important role for both sides, while for those supporting the project it is more a subordinate element to economic benefits.

Information again plays a key role here. Never mind whether people's opinions on the project are based on fears or internet facts, they were grounded on a base of information, or stem from emotions. The pictures of deformed fish posted in the anti-uranium Facebook group are an example hereof: people browsed the internet for uranium and fish and found these images, and some are now convinced that this will undeniably happen to Narsaq. Fear in combination with little information, or education, can lead quickly to escalating stories. There was a rumor about a Dane from Lebanon whom I met in Qaqortoq, who works for the municipality, and people thought he was appointed by the mayor because of his contacts in the Middle East. He would sell the uranium to people there, and he and the mayor would become really rich.¹⁵⁰ This illustrates how quickly stories that are untrue can spread in an absence of independent information.

7.2.2 There will be no benefits for Greenland

Another fear is that there will be no benefits for Greenland, or for Narsaq. On the one hand, because the mine could leave the (South) Greenlanders with the mess: they would have to clean up if there comes any pollution, and to keep an eye on the tailings in the lake; which will have to be done interminable. A respondent remarked how *“none would put a mine with dangerous things like uranium near the big cities, but mostly where indigenous peoples live”*.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, it is feared that there will be no benefits for Greenland at all if the project does not take off in the first place. Kvanefjeld is one of the few projects that is, if it receives government approval, ready for take-off. Many other projects are still far away from this phase.

The argument that the company will take all the benefits and leave Greenland with the waste was often mentioned. Additionally, there are concerns that the income from the mine will go to the central government in Nuuk, who will receive the royalties paid on the minerals, and that Narsaq will have to deal with all the negative externalities alone without reaping the benefits. This is mentioned by both people in favor and against Kvanefjeld. Another point is that probably many foreign workers will be employed, who might take over the town, and

¹⁵⁰ Field notes.

¹⁵¹ Respondent 37.

that foreigners do not have the same feeling for the landscape as Greenlanders do: *“The Chinese don’t care about our environment and the people around it, they don’t get it like we do”*

GME states that the rules and regulations in Greenland are so strict, that there is no possibility foreign companies can cheat on paying taxes, royalties or income taxes specifically. Their spokesperson in Narsaq is of the opinion that it is the responsibility of the government to explain this to the Greenlanders: that the government invited GME to exploit Kvanefjeld, and is on top of making sure that this will happen with benefits for Greenland.

“They need to explain what the Australians are doing here. Are they coming here, running away with our health, leaving big holes in the ground and going back south?! No!”

But the government is not doing that sufficiently, whereby once again the key importance of information provision comes to the fore.

It can be concluded that there are many fears related to the Kvanefjeld project and it being so close to Narsaq. Various dimensions of belonging, especially to the landscape, came to the fore discussing fears. The limited information available adds to these fears and can lead to stories and opinions that are not factually true but fed by people’s expectations, emotions, and fears. For both sides, it is clear that credible and unbiased information provided by an impartial institution will probably reduce fears considerably. For now, it is waiting on the social and environmental impact assessments to see whether people’s fears are addressed, explained and mitigated sufficiently.

7.3 (Un) Employment

Belonging through economic place attachment turned out to be of importance in Narsaq: when people had jobs they could sustain their families and the town breathed a happier vibe, which is reminisced by many and thus in a sense also adds to the autobiographical dimension of belonging to the town. However, when unemployment increased over the years, more people moved away and the town breathes now a sense of waiting and passivity. There have not been much additional employment opportunities in South Greenland since the closure of the shrimp factory in 2010. The creation of employment is thus an important argument for people in favor of the project and for GME to promote the project with and was beside (fear of) environmental contamination and uranium the most oft-recurring argument in my interview data.

Especially at the beginning of the negotiations, the project sparked a lot of excitement about the employment opportunities for Narsaq, but the projections of jobs created by the project have decreased a lot since the first estimates. For example: *“it has been so long when they started the project, so now our people don’t care about the project anymore.”*¹⁵²

GME hired some of the people from Narsaq who were fired when the shrimp factory closed and offered these unemployed workers education and a job at GME (Sermitsiaq, 9 July 2010). There have been around 20 people employed by the company during the exploration and drilling work, some of whom did a traineeship to become foreman (including 2 of my respondents). If the mine opens, these foremen can direct other Greenlanders. However, the people that had been employed by GME in the traineeships, have been laid off until further notice. But because it takes much longer than expected for the mine to open, some are

¹⁵² Respondent 21.

wondering whether they will stay in town and wait for that to happen, or move from Narsaq as well. Nowadays, GME only employs 1 person in Narsaq; its location manager Ib Laursen, and some additional staff in Nuuk.

The expected number of people employed by GME mentioned in newspapers varies greatly over time; from 2000 people of which 600 from South Greenland and an additional 800 secondary jobs at subcontractors mentioned in 2010 (KNR, 13 March), to a low of 150 jobs for local workers (Sermitsiaq, 25 March 2013). As one respondent said:

*“When they talked about it at first, they talked about 700 Greenlanders can work. Now it's down to 2 or 300. If the mine is going to be real- maybe it will be 50.”*¹⁵³

Also, there are questions about the sustainability of the jobs: are the Greenlandic workers only needed in the construction phase? And what will happen if the mine closes, since it only has an envisioned lifespan of 30 years?¹⁵⁴ These changing numbers frustrated both those supporting and opposing the project. Those opposing are of the opinion that it adds to GME's ‘empty promises’, while people in favor of the project are waiting in uncertainty whether and when they will be employed again.

7.3.1 Workforce

Belonging through economic attachment is an important reason for people to stay in a place. Unemployment is high in Narsaq and many people moved away looking for new employment opportunities. In South Greenland today however it is questioned who will comprise GME's workforce if it can create all those jobs. One of the interviewees thought out loud how Royal Greenland (the fish factory), had to find foreign workers because no Greenlanders wanted to work in the factory in North Greenland. Eventually, 30 Chinese people will come to Greenland and they will work in that factory. Laughing, she adds:

*“so it doesn't make sense! Who wants to work in a mine with uranium, when people don't even want to work in a fish factory?”*¹⁵⁵

The same argument holds for a gold mine in Southern Greenland, where there were also little Greenlanders to be found that wanted to work in the mine.¹⁵⁶ In Narsaq, there has been talking of strict work schedules: 24-hour shifts for 5 weeks, little time to spend outside the place and little time to spend with your family, this plan got the nickname ‘the prison’. As discussed, hunting and fishing is an important part of the weekend normally, both in terms of traditions and socially, but also in terms of additional food provision. People are not able to do that anymore or to teach the younger generation how to hunt if the work schedule is that strict.¹⁵⁷

Besides the nature of the work, many question if the majority of the unemployed people that live in Narsaq today are able to do the job. One side of this coin is education because many of the unemployed in Narsaq don't have a high(er) education, and to work at GME people have to speak English and have had an education.¹⁵⁸ The other side is that due to

¹⁵³ Respondent 35.

¹⁵⁴ Respondent 38.

¹⁵⁵ Respondent 7.

¹⁵⁶ Respondent 14.

¹⁵⁷ Respondent 6.

¹⁵⁸ Respondent 31.

the social problems all around Greenland, some people are not able to work, or to keep their jobs.¹⁵⁹ As one respondent put it bluntly, [if you want to work at GME]:

“you shouldn’t be drinking so much, and you shouldn’t smoke hashes, and people who don’t have working places in Narsaq are people who drink and smoke”¹⁶⁰

This then would imply a foreign workforce, which brings up many emotions and fears with people. It is always ‘The Chinese’ that are mentioned, although currently, people from the Philippines make up the largest foreign nationality holding permits in Greenland (Statistics Greenland, 2017). Many are concerned that if the mine starts, a lot of foreigners will move to Narsaq and work up here. One respondent mentions that she is afraid these foreigners don’t care about the environment or the people around it. They are just here for a short time period, and then they will go and don’t care anymore about what they leave behind.¹⁶¹ A representative from an NGO¹⁶² brings up past influxes of foreign workers (e.g. Thule and Narsarsuaq airbases), and from the 1970s on how industrialization brought more Danes, that all these people from outside have an influence on society. He mentions how economically, differences exist because they, for instance, will be better paid because they are on foreign contracts and thus have a lot of money and little spare time in which they can spend it. He also mentions how baby booms tend to emerge around these large-scale projects, whereby the parents usually split up again if the project is finished. Right now, there are several thousand people in Greenland that don’t know their fathers: they were kids from imported laborers—mostly Danes in the 1970s. he fears that this will happen in Narsaq as well.¹⁶³ This foreign workforce does not only affect employment, but this also brings many fears with it.

According to GME, it will be cheaper for the company not to use foreign labor via the fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) principle, because then they must pay for all the transatlantic flights. GME has explored the option of FIFO from Greenlandic settlements and proposed to people living in small settlements (not only in the South but all the way up north to Disko Bay) why not work 2 weeks in the mine, and 2 weeks back home with family, so people can live the settlement lifestyle at home and earn some additional income. Some fishermen on the east coast are already familiar with this principle, they go off on the big shrimp trawlers for a couple of months and then they come back home. *“A lot of people in Greenland need to understand that you can work in the mining industry or the off-shore oil industry, combined with your own lifestyle. This way, the project can improve life in the settlements where some are really struggling to get by”* says GME.

Again, information provision comes to the fore: I never heard these arguments regarding involving Greenlanders from the settlements from people I talked to in Narsaq, who were only familiar with FIFO workers from outside the country. In newspapers, mostly the possibilities for jobs for people in South Greenland were mentioned by politicians, whereas people I talked to in Narsaq were more concerned with their town being taken over by Chinese people.

¹⁵⁹ Respondent 11.

¹⁶⁰ Respondent 31.

¹⁶¹ Respondent 11.

¹⁶² Respondent 12.

¹⁶³ Respondent 12.

7.3.2 Cascade effect of employment and investment

If the mine comes, employment possibilities will not only be limited to people working at GME. According to some, there will be a cascade effect into other businesses as well. GME explains this cascade effect in KNR (10 August 2011) saying there will be a need for transport logistics, people must eat, wash their clothes, have their cars repaired and their houses must be built. A local hotel owner is uncertain about their personal future in Narsaq, but business-wise it will be good because there will be more to do in the hotel and the bar since there will be many foreigners visiting.¹⁶⁴

However, at an interview with the local construction company, this cascade effect was described as much less significant for their employment possibilities. They related how when GME started exploration drilling, only oil was bought from the company. If the mine opens, they only see opportunities for the supermarket and car mechanics, because the mining company has to buy food and their cars need to be fixed, like GME stated above. However, while discussing among themselves, they conclude that probably a lot of the workers, machines, and maybe even a large supply of food will be shipped here because that would be much cheaper compared to buying all the goods in Narsaq. While he makes circles in the air with his arms, the manager of the construction company adds: *“If you throw a rock in the water, we’ll be out here a little bit, gesturing to the far end of all the circles.”*¹⁶⁵

The employment cascade runs further than local business because also for the Greenlandic government these employees will bring income in the form of income taxes. This adds an additional layer to the discussion, as touched upon before: people in Narsaq, both in favor and against the project, are afraid the tax income will go to Nuuk and will not be sent back to the local community.

7.3.3 What will you give us if there’s no Kvanefjeld?

To those opposing Kvanefjeld in Narsaq, the above-mentioned question is often asked. Especially to Inuit Ataqatigiit, the party who has most clearly expressed to be opposing the project. As former municipality mayor Wæver Johansen (Siumut) puts it, you can’t say no to a project without knowing all the details. He asks whether IA can come up with other proposals to promote the development of South Greenland: *“what suggestions do you have to create additional 700 to 800 jobs and development in South Greenland, created with outside investment? Or does much of South Greenland’s population have to continue to live a marginalized life in social hardship?”* (Sermitsiaq, 29 March 2016). From this newspaper article quote, it becomes clear how these questions are used by politicians to sling mud at one another; it is an easy question for Siumut to ask, and a difficult one for Inuit Ataqatigiit to answer because more jobs mean happy people and happy people means votes.

From the earlier description of Narsaq today, it is evident that employment is an important argument for people regarding the project. Agriculture and tourism are proposed as alternative options, but these sectors will not employ so many people on such a short notice. The question is, however, if Narsaq will be able to provide all the workers that can potentially work in the mine since many of the unemployed are ‘not able to keep jobs’. Again, we see how there is an information miss-match between information between people in Narsaq and GME, regarding FIFO Chinese workers or people from the settlements.

¹⁶⁴ Respondent 18.

¹⁶⁵ Respondent 34.

7.4 Other sectors as alternative to Kvanefjeld

Besides fears people have, and employment as an important argument to be either supporting or opposing the project, another factor that comes to the fore around mining projects is other economic sectors. “We are so desperate for development here in South Greenland that we sell our land for free.” This quote is from a respondent¹⁶⁶ who remarked this after reflecting on the current social economic situation and the focus on the extractive sector in favor of developing other sectors, that is evident in contemporary Greenlandic politics. An employee from the municipality explains the current policy as follows:

“Dutch Disease: where you have these very big sectors and you build all your dreams, all your activities around that. You don’t care anymore about the fisheries, that’s in the past. Dutch disease is a huge problem in Greenland, also because we get the grant from the state- why do we care about our economy? We have used a lot of resources to build up the mineral sector authorities, that we should have invested in other sectors.”¹⁶⁷

This explanation of Dutch Disease makes clear how the Danish block grant influences policymaking in Greenland away from diversifying the economy. In this paragraph, I explore sectors that come to the fore as alternatives to mining: tourism, agriculture, and fisheries, and how people’s opinions with regard to Kvanefjeld are influenced by this.

7.4.1 Tourism

Tourism is always the number one alternative that is mentioned by people in Narsaq when they discuss employment options that are not Kvanefjeld-related, and almost all people I talked to are happy when people visit the area and see the beautiful landscapes. Again, it is evident that nature plays an important role in shaping opinions on the project.

Recently, an area close to Narsaq has received UNESCO world heritage status for its ‘Norse and Inuit farming close to the Icelcap’ (UNESCO, 2017). In Ilulissat, a city next to an ice fjord in northern Greenland, UNESCO status has been in place since 2004 (UNESCO) and this has caused a serious boost for the city, which tourists visit the whole year round. Ilulissat is mentioned by many as a very successful city, and people are proud of the way it uses the landscape surrounding it to make a profit.

As mentioned before, Iceland is seen by many in Greenland as an example of how to become successfully independent from Denmark, and this also holds for the tourism sector.¹⁶⁸ A respondent¹⁶⁹ mentions how Greenland has hot springs just like Iceland, and the landscape is at least as beautiful as Iceland’s is. However, in Greenland the costs for traveling are much higher, especially compared to the lay-overs Iceland uses between Europe and the United States. State-owned AirGreenland holds the monopoly on transatlantic flights, which keeps the prices high. A former tourist officer in Narsaq says that if you get rid of this monopoly- *just imagine Ryanair could fly here-* tourism could expand rapidly. A new airport is now built in Qaqortoq, which infuriates people from Narsaq (*all the money is spent in Qaqortoq, why build an airport, it will become more expensive to get to Narsaq, people will stay in Qaqortoq*¹⁷⁰), but naturally respondents in Qaqortoq were happy with this development thinking it will bring

¹⁶⁶ Respondent 31.

¹⁶⁷ Respondent 29.

¹⁶⁸ According to respondent 11: *Iceland, I think that they are doing great. They don’t have mines, no uranium mines, they are earning a lot of money, only on tourists and fishing. We can do with the same.*“

¹⁶⁹ Respondent 8.

¹⁷⁰ Respondents 21, 33, 34.

them more tourism in the coming years. Besides infrastructure, the fact that the tourist season is much shorter than in Iceland, running from half June to half September compared to year-round, also makes it more difficult to build up a large tourism sector that could sustain a large part of Greenland's economy. Although Greenland has huge potential as a tourist destination, large investments need to be made as the quote below illustrates:

"You can't just say we don't want the mine we will just earn money with tourism, good on you, but can you explain me how to bring them here? And how to compete with Canada, Alaska, and other polar destinations. That have a lot of infrastructure, hotels and transport systems, like Iceland. But here you want small businessmen to invest in tourism on their own accord and their own investment risk, then to lose everything when the politicians get an idea about changing the infrastructure again." ¹⁷¹

There is frustration with the government and municipality for not investing more money in the tourist industry. Complementary, it was said how Iceland and the Faroe Islands are very good at selling themselves, while Greenland so far has not been. The budget in the culture area is decreasing yearly, while culture is something that can be sold to tourists.¹⁷² Besides culture, she mentions how in other countries, tourists have to pay to go to the top of a mountain. Greenland doesn't make any money out of its landscapes (except for in Ilulissat), while there are many places where the icecap can be visited that could be charging money to tourists. Landscapes could thus besides livelihood provision, cultural and social meanings, also constitute an economic function if they are used like that in the tourist industry.

In addition, tourism is seen as a 'clean industry' and a way to promote Greenland's pure image to the outside world. It is regarded more sustainable compared to a mine with a fixed end date since it will increase slowly over time and last longer:

"It wouldn't damage anything and we would focus on all the good things we already have, instead of ruining the environment." ¹⁷³

If Kvanefjeld would be a reality, some in Narsaq also argue that it could mean a positive influx of tourism, because people today are also already interested in the mountain and the rare stones and gems it contains. One of the interviewees¹⁷⁴ is a rock hound, who guides tourists around Kvanefjeld in the summer, where they collect minerals and rocks. On the other hand, it could also have a downside since people who visit the area to enjoy the unspoiled nature, would lose interest¹⁷⁵. One of the sheep farmers explains how many of her guests walk the hiking trail to Narsaq from Qassiarsuk, along which her farm is located. She is afraid that none will want to walk there anymore because then *"you have to go through it [the mining terrain], go through a fence, wear and overall and a helmet and a Geiger counter"* ¹⁷⁶

Right now, the largest influx of tourists comes with cruise ships, both in Qaqortoq and in Narsaq. But all these tourists don't buy anything in town because they have food and everything at the ship. Also in the small settlement Qassiarsuk, the sheep farmers of whom many run a guest house at the side, complained about the cruise ship passengers checking out

¹⁷¹ Respondent 22.

¹⁷² Respondent 31.

¹⁷³ Respondent 17.

¹⁷⁴ Respondent 23.

¹⁷⁵ Respondent 17.

¹⁷⁶ Respondent 35.

the ruins but not spending any money. One of the sheep farmers¹⁷⁷ explains that there used to be a tourist shop, but then the school had to move because there was mold in the old building and the shop was never opened again, also because there is none that has the time to do it. They also used to do dances and drum demonstrations to earn some extra money, but again there is none that has the time to do this nowadays. Another annoyance is a Spanish company that comes to the area every year and which uses Spanish guides and has bought many houses. Not only do they not employ Greenlanders but also they do not pay taxes so little revenue stays in the country.

In sum, tourism is regarded as an important (future) source of income for Greenland, using the landscape in a clean way. However, today it is not yet developed to such an extent that it can sustain Greenland's economy.

7.4.2 Fisheries and agriculture

Commercialized fishing has always been a major part of Greenland's economy since the industrialization of the industry by Denmark and traditionally an important part of livelihood provision. After the closure of the shrimp factory in Narsaq, the fishing sector has decreased significantly compared to its hey days, but there are still fishermen working for the factory. Recently, a new trawler has been bought by a businessman in Narsaq, but unfortunately, there are much fewer people employed in the sector today. We saw in the introduction how fisheries are regarded by some policymakers as something from the past, not worth investing in anymore. However, by many, it is regarded as a sustainable and important sector capable of providing income for many Greenlanders.

In South Greenland, besides fishing, agriculture and especially sheep farming (and to a lesser extent reindeer farming) has been a traditionally important sector. The area around Narsaq has been used for sheep farming and small-scale agriculture since the 15th century when Norseman Erik the Red arrived. Like in the old days, sheep roam freely during the summer, and they are gathered collectively by all sheep farmers in the fall when around 24,000 lambs are slaughtered at the Neqi slaughterhouse in Narsaq (Nunalerineq, 2017). Agriculture is practiced alongside sheep farming, and there is an experimental farm researching different crops and how they can be grown best, for instance via different greenhouse techniques. Agriculture is still a small sector, and almost all vegetables are still imported. With regard to sheep farming, the domestic production of hay and fodder is not yet sufficient to provide the sheep with food during the winter, and much has to be imported additionally to all machinery, which makes sheep farming an expensive business.

In addition, climate change today poses a threat to sheep farming since it has been very dry in the area. This is illustrated by this excerpt from my field notes:

As I stayed at a sheep farm in June 2017, we were anxiously looking out of the window in the morning during breakfast. The farmer said that her husband had been up since 5, to check whether it had rained yet. While discussing the prices they won with their lambs last year over breakfast, the grey sky opens and a light drizzle starts. The couple smiles broadly to one another: the last summers there has been little rain, which harms the current hay production. Quickly, the farmer rides his tractor to the mountains to see what the field look like up there. Some of their

¹⁷⁷ Respondents 37 & 38.

neighboring farmers have lost half of their production, and are in a difficult financial situation coming winter. ¹⁷⁸

Although currently facing effects of the changing climate, an argument often mentioned is how agriculture is more sustainable than mining since the latter has a clear end date when the minerals are extracted. Agriculture and sheep farming keep on providing year after year and is also seen as part of the traditional identity of the region. The logo of the municipality is, for instance, a ram in Greenland's red and white colors, as a reminder of the long tradition of sheep farming in the area. Many sheep farms have been in families for generations, for instance in Qassiarsuk where sheep farming was reintroduced by Otto Frederiksen in 1924, and his descendants are still farmers in the area today. In South Greenland, belonging through cultural attachment via the longstanding traditions, and through the specific sheep farming landscape (see picture 3 on the Methodology chapter cover) form important factors of attachment to Narsaq and its surroundings.

Many sheep farmers fear that their farms are in danger if the mining will start. One respondent remarked how she does not fear for her own future, but more for the future of the next generations, who must deal with the tailings that will still be in the ground by then and have to be maintained. *"Some of our kids are taking over the farm after us. We want to leave a good place. Not a place they have to be afraid of in the future like we are right now."* ¹⁷⁹

Another point of concern is whether they will still be able to sell their meat to the factory if the sheep roam in areas near Kvanefjeld. Many locals have remarked already that they don't want to eat 'radioactive meat', which will basically put the farmers out of business. However, not all sheep farmers are against the project, and the sheep farmers association wants to retain a neutral position in the discussion in order to represent all farmers. However, this leads to disbelief by others: *"I don't understand why they should be neutral when we don't know how the development of the mine will go and what it will do to us."* ¹⁸⁰ This quote reflects also reflects the lack of information on the impacts the mine will possibly have.

The sheep farmers I talked to also reflect on the regulations in place around buying and starting a new farm: it is really difficult for a young family without capital to start a farm, and it takes years before you make a profit. They told me that if you buy a new farm, you inherit the old farmers' debt. That can almost make you go bankrupt. Right now, it is thus a difficult decision to buy a sheep farm, since it takes a long time to make a profit and it is not clear how long the sheep farmers will be able to farm if the mine opens. ¹⁸¹ Sheep farmers are thus also facing waiting in liminality:

E: "Some farmers are re-thinking about, would I re-invest?"

Maaiké: If you don't know if you're going to be here in 5 to 10 years...

E: We thought like- we can't live like that. Be afraid all the time. We have to think about now, because we need the equipment. But some farmers are very frightened about it, because it's also a lot of money to invest in new machines.

¹⁷⁸ Respondent 37, Field notes 18 June.

¹⁷⁹ Respondent 35.

¹⁸⁰ Respondent 37 & 38.

¹⁸¹ The farmers I talked to described the difference between farmers inheriting debts, and legislation concerning foreign mining companies, who can go bankrupt instead of paying their debt to the government. They felt this was incredibly unfair.

Maaike: And also to invest in the land. A machine you can take with you if you move somewhere
E: Some are holding back. We did a little bit. But no- we have to. We can't live like this, we have
to move on.”¹⁸²

This conversation illustrates first, the practical consequences of an uncertain future: should I invest money or not? Another farmer adds that they and their neighbors stopped thinking forward, about development. They express how they feel frozen in the present.¹⁸³ Secondly, it illustrates the emotional, or psychological consequences of not knowing what the future beholds: dealing with uncertainty about your own future, your kids' future, and living in fear of what is by some perceived as the destruction of their livelihoods, town or surroundings.

In line with the possible impacts on business, it is logical that many of the sheep farmers are opposed to the mine. However, since most of them are located fairly isolated, it is hard for them to organize themselves because they cannot easily travel. Both because of their remote locations, internet connections that are slow and expensive, and also because they can't leave their farms alone for too long a time. As one said: *“it takes so much time, also to be in contact with the others. [To discuss] What are we going to say, what are we going to write? Because we just can't meet.”¹⁸⁴* This makes it difficult for the sheep farmers to unite and make a statement, except for their yearly sheep farmers association meeting.

As described before, a group of 30 sheep farmers sent letters with questions to the government, GME, the municipality; basically, to everyone who would listen. Arguments they made besides poor information provision and environmental impact assessments, and fear for contamination of their grounds and their sheep's meat, concerned South Greenland's reputation as the country's breadbasket providing some of the world's best and cleanest food. They state that the Greenlandic government in the recent years has shown increased interest in the development of a food industry that can make the country self-sufficient with food while contributing to a strengthened South-Greenlandic identity. They state that if a mine with uranium starts, how will that affect Greenland's reputation, to the whole world and to tourists that visit every year? (Letter from Sheep farmers, March 2015).



Photo 14: Inquisitive lambs with a farm and icebergs in the background. An example of Arctic farming near Sillisit. 18 June 2017

¹⁸² Respondents 35 & 36.

¹⁸³ Respondents 37 & 38.

¹⁸⁴ Respondent 35.

Some people are not happy with the negative attitude some of the farmers have towards the project and claim the farmers are selfish in their protest:

*“Many farmers say no to the mine because they want their own sector to stay as it is now. They get a lot of subsidies from the government to keep the sector going, because sheep farming is a really expensive business in terms of logistics and because Greenland itself is the only off-taker. The sheep farmers don’t care for other sectors or broader development, just about their own wellbeing.”*¹⁸⁵

In sum, the focus of the government has been largely on mineral extraction in South Greenland, at the expense of other sectors. The alternatives to mining are tourism and fisheries and agriculture, which are regarded as cleaner and more sustainable. However, these sectors have to be developed further before they can sustain South Greenland, and this is easier said than done regarding infrastructure development, the harsh climate, and climate change.

7.5 Conclusion

Chapter 7 provided narratives of the differing opinions people in Narsaq have about the project and illustrated the various dimensions of belonging. Public opinion has shifted over time, especially around the abolishing of the zero-tolerance of uranium policy. The economic and landscape dimensions of belonging turned out to be of importance to shape people’s opinions, as well as the cultural factor. We know that nature and the pure landscapes comprise an important part of Greenlandic identity and hence it makes sense that many fears revolve around the landscape and environment. I showed how Narsaq is characterized by waiting in insecurity, and fears for the project and its effects are eminent in the answers many respondents gave. Again, information provision is key: many of these fears can be explained or clarified if the right people knew the right information, and if the flow of information would be continuous over time. Lastly, it is also clear that however one would think that people are either totally supportive of the project or totally against it, since many arguments are based on strong emotions, and in frustration with the current situation in South Greenland. However, we see that this division is not as black and white as one would expect, but rather a grey area in between: for instance people are opposed to some parts of the project but not to everything, or feel really strong about one argument but can see where the opposing party is coming from regarding other arguments. In relation to this grey area in between, we have to take the Greenlandic independence context into account, which is also of large influence on people’s opinions on extractive projects.

¹⁸⁵ Respondent 22.



Photo 15: One of the dead arms of a glacier that runs down from Greenland's ice cap near Narsaq. 11 June 2017

Kvanefjeld & its effects today

Chapter 8. Kvanefjeld's effects today

The previous chapters of this thesis have illustrated the theoretical framework and the used methods to analyze the data gathered. The results obtained from the collected data illustrate how people have reacted and how the differing effects of waiting for an extractive project to potentially come into realization are experienced. This final chapter will link the theoretical concepts with the empirical findings from the previous chapters. The results of the research are analyzed as well as limitations of the research. The conclusions and recommendations for further research are elaborated upon lastly.

All around the world, extractive projects come paired with problems originating from power imbalances: limited participation of local communities in the decision-making process, unequal access to information, and the consequences of extractive projects are often experienced locally and not by the multinational companies inflicting these. This thesis zooms in on one particular project within the Greenlandic independence context and researched how the possible advent of this project is experienced by the community living next to it, and how the project already affects people's lives today. Data was gathered during a period of 2,5 months in 2 different places in Greenland using a qualitative approach to interviews and participant observation.

The concepts of place-belongingness (Antonsich, 2010) and waiting and the corresponding power relations, (Sutton et al., 2011, Auyereo, 2010) as well as waiting in liminal space (Van Gennep, 1960 & Lahad, 2012) have been used as a basis to conceptualize people's experiences. The expected outcome of the research was that people are either opposing or supporting this extractive project for clearly opposing reasons: either for relieving the current unemployment and underdevelopment of the region or because of concerns for environmental degradation and public health. However, from the research, the themes waiting in limbo ('we are stuck'), insecurity and unequal power distributions are eminent for both those supporting and opposing the project; exemplifying that the project effects peoples' lives significantly today.

8.1 Discussion

This paragraph will relate the empirical findings to the theoretical framework; to place-belongingness, the politics of belonging, and to waiting.

8.1.1 Belonging

Belonging is a contested concept, and various authors have come up with definitions or dimensions contributing to feelings of belonging. I used Antonsich's (2010) dimensions and Yuval-Davis (2006) distinction between place-belongingness and the politics of belonging. Taking the Greenlandic colonial history into account, it is evident that the search for an (independent) Greenlandic identity today is a significant discussion in politics as well as in people's everyday lives. This Greenlandic identity discussion comes hand in hand with the discussion about whether and when Greenland should become independent from Denmark, and results in many people feeling like they belong somewhere in between: not entirely in Greenland and neither in Denmark. In terms of belonging to Narsaq, it is important to take into account that this takes place within the discussion on belonging in Greenland or belonging within the Danish Realm.

Belonging in Narsaq is constructed through various dimensions of belonging (autobiographical, economic, landscape, geographical, cultural, relational), but not all of these dimensions are experienced by everyone to the same extent or all factors are necessarily needed in order to construct belonging.

Especially landscape is an important dimension of belonging and comprises multiple functions: livelihood provision, but it also has a social and cultural function. This is also exemplified in Greenland nationally through the politics of belonging in which Inuit-ness and the close connection to nature, besides speaking Greenlandic, are used as a discourse to argue in favor of independence from Denmark sooner rather than later. However, a contradiction is present in the data here: the image of Greenland as pure and unspoiled is associated with being Danish, since this was the paradigm used during colonization, and therefore in politics it is argued that people are not true Greenlanders if they do not take the lead in their own development through the extractive sector. It is clear that the focus on attracting investment for the extractive sector over other sectors by the Greenlandic government is related to the aim for complete independence and plays an important role in political discourse. Politics of belonging creates a clear 'us' versus 'them' demarcation, which is also exemplified by the Kvanefjeld project in the discussions between Inuit Ataatigiit and Siumut, who as the two largest parties that are opposing each other so fundamentally on this project, keep these boundaries in place themselves, and accuse the other party of not wanting the best for Greenland or not wanting independence as fast as possible.

Of the various dimensions that construct belonging in Narsaq, the autobiographical dimension is not very strongly experienced since the town has a short history of only two generations. The landscape factor, however, is very strongly experienced, and many fears around the project revolve around environmental degradation (due to uranium) on the long term. I argue in line with the data that many people would not miss Narsaq as much when they move away from the town, but rather the landscape, which is characteristic for South Greenland in general. However, for sheep farmers, the autobiographical dimension, on the other hand, is strongly present since their identity originates around practicing their trade in an area that has been used for sheep farming since the Norsemen. Their belonging is thus also rooted in the cultural dimension, upholding a trade that is important for the image of South Greenland and their sense of belonging to their farms is thus strongly experienced. This in conjunction with the regional identity of South Greenland: the image of being the agricultural breadbasket of the country forms a source of pride for many. The resistance of the sheep farmers is thus logically very strong against the project, also because the mine possibly implicates their business extensively.

Since unemployment is high in Narsaq, it is argued that the economic dimension of belonging is not strongly experienced in Narsaq today. Arguments in favor of the Kvanefjeld project often center around employment possibilities, although it is questioned who would make up the workforce. Differing interests are thus evident from the arguments people put forward in relation to Kvanefjeld: economic development versus tourism, agriculture and nature conservation. These opinions are also rooted in belonging. One could also argue that the eminent feeling of waiting, and dispiritedness in Narsaq, shapes how people belong to the place in different ways, and might even constitute an element of belonging in itself.

8.1.2 Waiting

From the thesis, it is clear that waiting needs to be contextualized in order to understand its meaning (Sutton et al., 2011). However, little research has been done on the effects of local communities waiting for extractive projects to become a reality and therefore this thesis can serve as lessons learned for future extractive projects, emphasizing community involvement and continuous communication and information flows.

Narsaq and Greenland, in general, vibrate a sense of waiting: for opportunities, investments, independence, a better future, and something to fix all the socio-economic problems. However, not much has happened since Greenlandic rock band Sumé song its famous protest songs in the 1970s.¹⁸⁶ However, although Greenland has gained considerably more authority, it is still stuck in between being a colony and an independent nation, and there is no clear-cut end in sight for this period of waiting. Greenland as a whole is actually in liminal space, which as described by e.g. Van Gennep (1960) and Sabo (2014) is a place in between, standing in the old world on the threshold of a new world which has yet to arrive. For Greenland, this old world composes the traditional Inuit hunter-gathering society, on its way and incorporating modern technologies and lifestyles, while not completely letting go of old traditions. This is visible from the sense of belonging and appreciation people have of the landscape for instance, which is so evidently different than how people in the Netherlands, for instance, see their surroundings. Throughout the field research and data analysis, waiting turned out to be an overarching concept to which many other dependent sub-themes were related.

Besides Greenland in general, we see waiting in the local context of Narsaq. The current context of waiting structures and at the same time is the result of numerous developments in Narsaq over time and resulted in a town facing outmigration and little new investments. The theme 'the town is dead' is prevalent and the fear of Narsaq reaching a 'point of no return' in its current decline is evident. This uncertainty about whether this point will be reached comes in conjunction with a sense of 'only time can tell'. We have seen how the distribution of who is the waiting party corresponds with the distribution of power (Schwartz, 1995). The uncertainty around the project for the expectant party, the people in Narsaq, results in a passive wait-and-see attitude, thereby indicating a position of powerlessness for people in Narsaq. In this sense, the town itself is in limbo: waiting for the tipping point to be reached at which the town might be shut down in the future.

Waiting is thus experienced in Narsaq in embodied time (Sabo, 2014): not as time on the clock, but related to how an individual experiences time. In line with Gasparini (1995, p. 39), we have seen how in Narsaq waiting moves from hope and anticipation, to an illusion, frustration, and form of distress: in the beginning of the project's development people were mostly positive about the potential benefits, but the longer it takes for the project to start and the proposed benefits decrease (e.g. the number of jobs), the more critical the project is received. Crapanzo (1985) observed that waiting implies an orientation in time directed towards the future, but this I did not find necessarily with all respondents in Narsaq since some

¹⁸⁶ We came here in ancient times/ to these lands where we now roam/ it is for future generations/ what our ancestor's upheld/ it is the land of the Inuit/ it will be theirs forever/ then came the qallunaat (the white people) with their way of life / their masters decreed/ our lands should be ruled/ and take possession of its riches / and sell them above our heads/ we have been lulled to sleep/ we want to arise/ in unison (Sumé/ Malik Høegh – Inuit Nunaat, 1973).

addressed that they could not think about the mine in all their decisions today and just did what they thought was good for the moment.

Insecurity experienced due to the timespan comes in conjunction with insecurity derived from a lack of information. This thesis shows how information 1) represents power relations and 2) illustrates the effects of waiting. Power dynamics concerned with the availability of information are related to accessing information, which consists of physical access and access to documents/meetings that are understandable in terms of language and jargon. This is also illustrated by the not yet published Economic and Social Impact Assessment reports. The Greenlandic government holds a position of power since it is supposed to provide neutral information to its citizens about extractive projects, and is regarded by many as an important source, besides the 'colored' information provided by political parties and GME. However, the credibility of the experts and some governmental institutions is questioned. This brings the public in an even less powerful position since one would expect the government to provide neutral information in the best interest of the citizens. Between citizens there is also a power difference: higher educated Greenlanders have access to different sources of information in multiple languages, whereby the lower educated part of the population is more likely to (blindly) follow the information provided by the government, political parties, and GME. Civil society organizations, set up both in support and in opposition of Kvanefjeld, organized their own meetings to fill this gap of information. However, since little is happening today and the organizations rest on the commitment of individuals, these have not been active lately.

Secondly, the effects of waiting are illustrated by the information provision around the project and vice versa. Waiting is for the powerlessness and lack of credible and impartial information is one of the things that frustrates people the most over the course of waiting for the coming into being of the Kvanefjeld project. Lack of information also adds to fears people have about the impact on the environment, health and the effects on the town, especially related to uranium and radioactivity, and adds to the insecurity that is already eminent around the town's future, with or without the mine.

The inaccessibility of information thus results in unequal power distributions, leaving the Greenlandic population and Narsaq in particular on the less powerful and dependent side of the bargain. Combined with this lack of information comes a feeling of not being included in the decision-making process around the extractive industries: the democratic deficit. This gives people little ownership over their own futures and little faith in the government bodies that decide on their futures.

8.1.3 We are stuck

All of the above combined is the effect of the Kvanefjeld project today: a sense of being stuck; the consequence of waiting in liminal space without an end date (Lahad, 2012). As mentioned before, I expected to find strong opposing ideals rooted in different degrees of belonging in Narsaq. However, it became more evident that both people supporting and opposing the project wanted someone to make an end to the situation of liminality, to take a decision on the future of the town. With regard to information provided by GME and the government, we see again that the citizen is left in a dependent position without agency to change the situation by him/herself. Only time will tell when the waiting period for Narsaq will end, but today it results in many experienced difficulties around personal decision-making: should I invest in my business, my house, my garden? These difficulties come in combination with frustrations around feeling powerless: it is apparent that people do not feel they themselves can influence this decision, but the decision-making power rests solely with the government.

Reflecting on how waiting and belonging can influence one another, the argumentation can hold both ways. On the one hand, it can be argued that belonging is influenced by waiting, by the fact that it might constitute an element of belonging in itself. Therefore, waiting might increase feelings of belonging. Relating to the case, it can be that because there are so many people that have moved away, the feeling of community among those staying behind might be stronger. On the other hand, it can also be argued that waiting and insecurity decrease feelings of belonging. For instance, we saw that the relational dimension of belonging comprises of social relations, hence if friends or family move away, the threshold for people to move lowers since there is less that keeps them in the town.

8.2 Limitation and Recommendations for further research

Regarding limitations of this research, the first important one is the sample size: the number of people interviewed in this research does not represent the feelings and experiences of the entire town. I aimed to interview a representative population consisting of younger and older people, both male and female and from different professions, in which I succeeded. However, the population consists for the largest part of English speaking Greenlanders, thereby implying that this is mostly the higher educated part of the population. It could be that belonging to Narsaq is made up of other or additional factors for people that have not lived outside Narsaq in order to obtain secondary education for instance, and for those that have more traditional professions (fishermen, hunters). Hence, there are more reasons for people to live in a place than just the dimensions of belonging that are mentioned in this thesis and this could paint a different picture of the town than I did.

In addition, although I did talk to the mining company, I have not talked to politicians in the national government, which could have provided additional information from their point of view instead of just newspaper article analysis and secondary analysis. For future research, increasing the respondent base to include more people from different layers of society would be recommended in order to contribute to concrete recommendations for the Greenlandic government and GME, as well as Narsaq itself to improve the current dialogue on the Kvanefjeld project and to decrease the powerlessness experienced in Narsaq.

8.3 Conclusion

The effects of the possible advent of a large-scale extractive project, as experienced by a small community in South Greenland today, were at the core of this research. I conclude that it is experienced as a process consisting of unequal power distributions related to the availability of information and the participation in decision-making around the project. Combined with the long time span since the beginning of the project, this long waiting period accumulates in a feeling of being stuck in Narsaq: the insecurity about what the future will hold makes it difficult for people to make decisions about their lives today.

In line with literature around extractive projects, we see that there are many problems that come hand in hand with project development: most regarding community involvement. However, little research has been done around waiting for extractive projects to come into being and the experiences of people living in the areas near these sites, before the projects take off. This research adds to diminish this gap in academic literature by elaborating on the effects experienced by people themselves, obtained through qualitative research. In addition, it was unclear to both the government and the mining company that the development of the project has already consequences for people's lives today.

The contextual findings revolve around Greenland's (colonial) history of top-down modernization, and little participation in its own development result in a consequent strong wish for independence today. Much hope is placed by people and the government, eminent via favoring policies, on the extractive sector to diversify the economy away from Danish dependence. On the one hand this implies public support for extractive projects, but on the other hand belonging through landscapes and the traditional Inuit way of life in connection with nature are valued as important parts of Greenlandic identity, indicating possible resistance against extractive industries. This rhetoric is also used in the political arena: politics of belonging is used by politicians to gain support, stating how people are not true Greenlanders when they do not support resource extraction for an independent Greenland, thereby creating a clear 'us' and 'them' demarcation.

Considering place-belongingness and the various dimensions that contribute to people's feelings of belonging, the landscape is considered an important factor, and is mentioned by both opposing and supporting the project as a prerequisite that the landscape is not to be harmed by the potential mine. Narsaq has a short history of residence and hence the autobiographical dimension place a less important role, except for the sheep farmers who have been farming in the area for a longer time and who rely on a history going back to the Norsemen; hereby including the cultural dimension.

In line with literature around extractive projects, the provision of information came to the forefront as an important source of frustration around this project, adding to existing frustrations and feelings of not being heard by the central government. Taking into account the top-down approach in Greenland's history of modernization, not much seems to have changed while Greenland has obtained self-governance.

The main implications of the project today are related to waiting: in line with Sutton et al. (2011) who stated that waiting is experienced by the powerless, it results in feelings of hopelessness, frustration and being stuck. Since the waiting period is characterized by liminality- without a clear end date, people are stuck in the limbo situation that characterizes Narsaq's demise. Both people in favor and against Kvanefjeld agree that a decision has to be made, independently from the fact whether the mine will become operational or not- it is better to know where you stand than to be stuck in this uncertainty for an indefinite time. These findings imply that effects experienced in the local context are already significant before extractive projects take off, and stress the need for continuous dialogue between mining companies, governments and communities to mitigate these negative effects.

This thesis concludes with a recommendation for the extractive sector, whether in Greenland or anywhere else in the world. We have seen how people experience their own influence on extractive projects and decision-making as limited, and feel that much is being decided over their heads. Much research has been done on the effects of extractive projects that have already come into being, or on the negotiations around social licenses to operate or the influence of communities around compensation packages for instance. From this case, however, it becomes clear that information provision and continuous communication back and forth is key in order for 1) both parties being up to date with the developments, the mining company of the sentiments in the community and the community of the latest project developments, and 2) for people to feel taken seriously and part of their own development instead of powerless and in a dependent position.

This thesis addressed the experiences related to the Kvanefjeld project over the last years. The project has had a long time span already and until now it is not clear when more clarity will be provided. However, in the fall of 2017 the public hearing period commences, the ESIA reports are expected to be published, and there are elections at the end of 2017. All these developments could have far-reaching influence on how people experience the project: maybe the public will be extensively consulted and will it play a large(r) role in decision making from now on. Further research during the public consultation phase could provide insights into how the end of the period of liminality is experienced, and whether this changes attitudes towards the project and the decision-making process. In addition, it is recommended to compare the Kvanefjeld experience with other extractive projects that are under development but not yet operationalized, whether in Greenland or anywhere else, to see whether there are lessons learned that can be shared.

Unfortunately for the situation of the people in Narsaq, not much more is known now compared to when the law on zero-tolerance for uranium was lifted and Kvanefjeld became more realistic to be realized. As the title of this thesis says: 'Waiting-When Will It End?' – only (embodied) time can tell.

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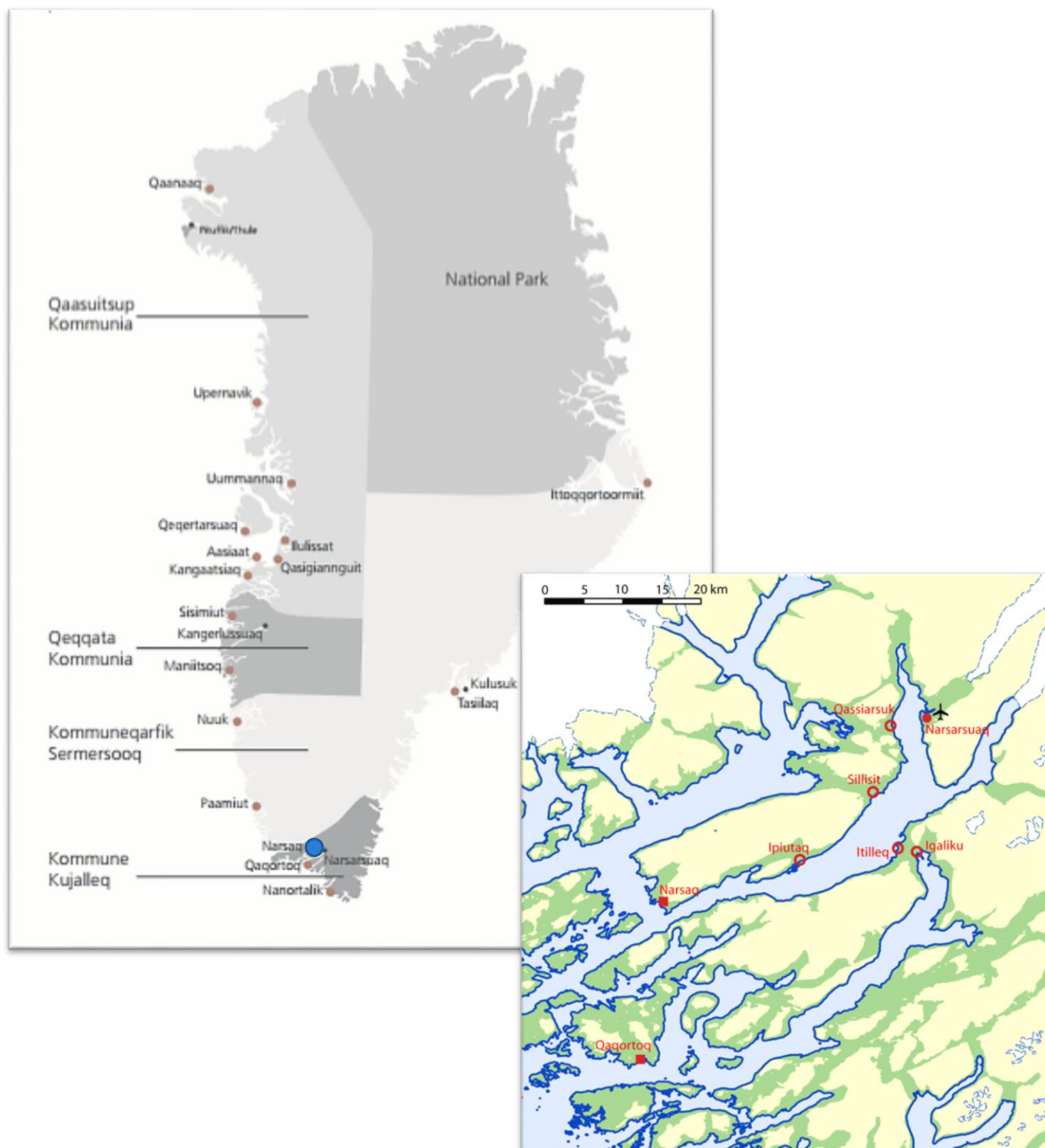
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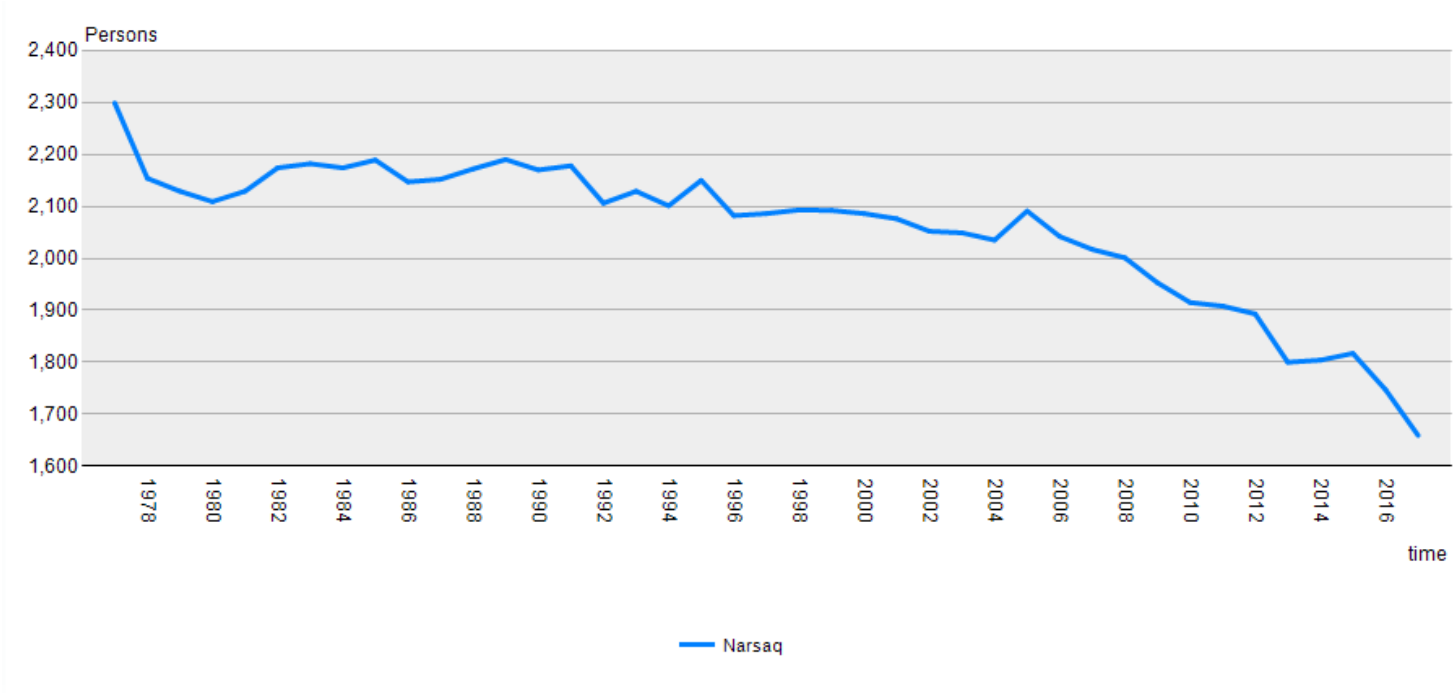
Annex A: Maps¹⁸⁷



¹⁸⁷ North to South, Greenland measures 2670 kilometers. Indicated on the left map are the 4 municipalities: Qaasuitsup Kommunia, Qeqqata Kommunia, Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq (stretching all the way from the West to the East coast) and Kommune Kujalleq, in which Narsaq (blue dot) is located. Source: Statistics Greenland 2017, Blue Ice Explorer.gl.

Annex B: Narsaq's population over time

A steep decline is noticeable, but especially after 2005 a 'point of no return' seems to have occurred. Last year, Narsaq saw its population go down by 10% (around 100 people) (Statbank Statistics Greenland, 2017).



Source: Statistics Greenland

Annex C: Interview topic list

This topic list is a general one, and subject to change per interview. Usually, I see where the interviewee steers the conversation towards, and ask questions about the topics from the list that have not been discussed yet.

It is used as a guiding tool to make me not forget certain parts, instead of a strict guideline. I wrote down the questions in these categories down in my notebook before the interview so that I could scribble quick notes down during the interview.

I asked for interviewee's consent verbally to use the data of the interview and asked whether I could record it. If the latter is not the case, I make as many notes as possible during the interview without being too engaged with this, and as soon as I get home I either transcribe the interview or workout all the notes I made.

1. Opening

- a. Introduce myself
- b. Purpose of the research

The research is part of my master thesis, and it focuses on the Kvanefjeld mining project and its effects on the people of Narsaq so far. I am interested in people's opinions on either supporting or not supporting the mine, and their reasoning behind it. Also, I want to see how the mine is placed within Greenland in its wider context.

Explanation of the interview

This interview is part of the data gathering for my research.

- c. Confidentiality → consent

In order for me to use everything that we will discuss, I would like to ask you if it is okay if I record it. If you are okay with this interview and me recording it, I will use this data as a part of my final thesis. I will not include your name, let other people listen to the recording, or compromise your privacy in any other way. If you don't feel like answering a question, please also say so!

2. Background

- a. Since I have introduced myself already a little, who are you?
- b. Did you grow up in Narsaq?
- c. Did you ever live outside Narsaq?
- d. What do you do for a job?
- e. What do you do in your spare time?
- f. What does your family look like? Do they all still live here?

3. Narsaq

- a. How has the town changed over time? (in terms of population, business, social circle)
- b. What are the problems in Narsaq today?
- c. What are the opportunities in Narsaq? Which companies are important in Narsaq today?
- d. What does this town mean to you?
- e. What do the natural surroundings mean to you?
- f. Do you think Narsaq has reached a tipping point in terms of migration?
- g. Have any of your friends/ family moved away as well?

4. Kvanefjeld mine:
 - a. How and when did you first hear about the mining project?
 - b. Do you have an opinion about it?
 - c. What is your main reason for supporting or not supporting it?
 - d. Are your friends and family divided on the topic?
 - e. Are you active in a group in favor or against the mine?
 - f. If so, what actions do you undertake, and do you feel they reach people?
 - g. Do you think you would think differently about it when there would be no uranium involved?
 - h. How do you think the mine will affect you?
 - i. How do you think the mine will affect the town?
 - j. What is your opinion on the government and the way it handles the resource industry?
5. Information
 - a. How were you informed about the project?
 - b. Do you know what the current state of affairs of the project is?
 - c. Have you been to many community or town hall meetings organized by GME?
 - d. Are these meetings easily accessible and understandable?
 - e. How has the attendance to this meetings been- has it changed over time?
 - f. Do you get information from other sources than GME?
6. Narsaq today
 - a. Do you think the Kvanefjeld project influences Narsaq today?
 - b. Does it affect you in any way? In your work, your business?
 - c. Do you think the mine will be opened?
 - d. If so, when do you think it will be opened?
7. Concluding
 - a. Do you know someone else who would be interested in participating in an interview?
 - b. Do you have anything to ask me?
 - c. Do you have any further questions?
 - d. Thank you very much! Qujanaq!