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The comfort of alignment

Mining, green steel, and killjoy desires in Sweden/Sápmi

GEORGIA DE LEEUW

POLITICAL SCIENCE | FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES | LUND UNIVERSITY





What would a life with a down-scaling in production and extraction even look like? Well, a common view is that the resources we extract are all around us, that they are essential building blocks for our modern way of life, and that we need employment in mining. A life without extraction is in essence gloomy, one of scarcity and deterioration. Or is it? We envision in extraction a promise of the good life, of urbanization, growth, progress, and well-being. Alternatives to extraction and high

levels of natural resource use are unimaginable. We are left to wonder; how else should we organize our lives?

This dissertation deals with Swedish extractivism in Sápmi through the examples of a planned iron ore mine in Gállok/Kallak and the green steel transition in Boden, Luleå, and Gällivare. The purpose is to understand why and how extraction can continue to function as the overarching rationale in human-nature relations, even in green transition efforts. The steel transition seems to manifest optimism for increased local processing and ownership and to break with North-South power dynamics that have rendered the region as a resource colony for the politico-economic centre. However, I show that the scale of the green steel push risks reinforcing rather than curing core-periphery dynamics and amplifying indigenous injustice in Sápmi amid accelerating pressures on Sami land.



The comfort of alignment

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Sweden/Sápmi

Georgia de Leeuw



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Abstract:

This dissertation deals with Swedish extractivism in Sápmi through the examples of a planned iron ore mine in Gállok/Kallak and the hydrogen-based steel transition. The main aim is to understand the trust that is placed in extraction as a means to arrive at a happy, prosperous, green future. Drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis and Sara Ahmed's notion of the promise of happiness, I suggest that extraction constitutes an object of desire toward which people tend in an affective investment, an anticipation of happiness in the future. The fantasy imposes fears of transgression that suggest that misalignment comes with the risk of forfeiting the only alternative to arrive at happiness. As such, I critique the position of rationality that advocates of extraction often monopolize for the sake of the dismissal of alternative development trajectories. Alignment with the fantasy of extraction is generally a comfortable position given the dominant social order. I show, however, that extraction in the North in fact is not a comfortable undertaking but a path that is upheld and imposed despite discomfort instigated through environmental and societal harms. I show how the emphasis on extraction in the Swedish steel transition requires a dismissal of environmental detriments other than emissions, a sacrifice of land and people by weighing green against green. Despite the hopes that come with green steel to onboard processing, diversify local economies, and break with resource colony tendencies of North-South dynamics, this results in a rearticulation of the North as a resource frontier and a re-inscription of colonial relations and indigenous injustice. While the allure of the fantasy disguises alternative trajectories I show that the misaligned interject productive ruptures in extractive desires. The alternatives they outline echo academic calls for dematerialization, a dismantling of the growth paradigm for the sake of reciprocity, care, and regeneration. These ruptures of the extractive allure may serve as entry points into anti-extractive futures that hold real potential to dismantle the North as a treasure trove for extraction. The dissertation builds on fieldwork data consisting of 65 interviews, twelve observations, and secondary material that is read as performative expressions through narrative analysis.

Key words: extractivism, mining, green steel, iron ore, comfort, alignment, Sweden, Sápmi

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1. INTRODUCTION

What would a life with a down-scaling in production and extraction even look like? Well, the resources we extract are all around us, they are essential building blocks for our modern way of life, we need employment in mining and production to ensure welfare, and mining projects result in important revenue that feeds into the state budget. A life without extraction is in essence gloomy, one of scarcity and deterioration. Or is it? We envision in extraction a promise of the good life, of urbanization, growth, progress, and well-being. Alternatives to extraction and high levels of natural resource use are unimaginable. We are left to wonder; how else should we organize our lives?

Sweden has a long history of mining. Especially iron ore has been mined since the Middle Ages in the region of *Bergslagen* in mid-Sweden, with an expansion of the industry and export revenue in the 17th century (Evans and Rydén 2013). With ore ‘discoveries’ in the North in the 1630s and onward (Ojala and Nordin 2019) the region and indigenous Sami land has been framed as an asset for the Swedish Crown, as “Swedish America” and the “Land of the Future”, of “India within our borders” (Sörlin 1988), or “the West Indies of the Swedes” (Ojala and Nordin 2015). Sweden has since come to claim a role as one of Europe’s leading mining nations (Government Offices of Sweden 2013). While the Swedish iron and steel industry is small in global comparison, iron ore and highly specialised steel products such as motor vehicles, automotive parts, and transportation-related products make for a significant share of Sweden’s export trade value (OEC n.d.). Former Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt famously declared that “Our mining industry and our iron ore is for us what oil is for the Norwegians. An amazing prosperity, an opportunity to build investments and development for the future [...]” (Sveriges Radio 2012, translated). This sentiment continues to run deep in Sweden’s sense of self, in which iron and steel and a general mining persona seems to trigger a sense of pride and security. Iron and steel are commonly understood as the building blocks of Sweden’s modernity and welfare state (e.g., former prime

minister Stefan Löfven at LKAB 2020b). In fact, the mining of ore and the prospects that are associated with it seem to trigger enthusiasm, even “love” (minister of business Ebba Busch at Svemin 2022f; former minister of business Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson, Aftonbladet 2021). More recently, mining is also reinforced as the means to accomplish the green transition. For instance, Moderate European Parliament Member Jessica Polfjärd commented on European Union ambitions to upscale critical raw material extraction noting, “You cannot be in favor of the green transition if you are not also in favor of mining” (Dagens Nyheter 2023).

Others have referred to Sweden’s *attraction to extraction*, if you will, or the hope that is envisioned in extraction, as a mining dependency (Jensen and Sandström 2021, 5), extractive paradigm (Sörlin 2022) or extractivist mentality (Sörlin et al. 2022, 40). Today, much of Sweden’s extractive desires are stilled in the North. Still, the socio-ecological impacts of extractive industries on the region generally and the Sami peoples in particular are largely absent from Sweden’s sense of self as an exceptional mining nation, even more so lacks reflexivity on the matter of colonialism (Fur 2013; Lindmark 2013; Naum and Nordin 2013; Ojala and Nordin 2015). In addition to Sweden’s claims to exceptionalism in mining, or what I have elsewhere referred to as Swedish claims to a virtue of extraction (De Leeuw 2023), Sweden has now also proclaimed itself as an international front rider of the decarbonization of the heavy industry (Government Offices of Sweden 2019), most visibly through the reinvention of its steel industry (Baylan at SSAB 2021b). The green steel transition in the North is formulated as building on an equal share of steel scrap and virgin ore, which with a doubling of Sweden’s current steel economy through the H2 Green Steel (2021) project alone would imply a drastic increase in extraction (Worldsteel 2022). While the Swedish green steel transition is heralded as a “green industrial revolution” (Svemin 2022b), there is reason for caution amid a green rearticulation of extractive tendencies in Sweden’s development trajectory that risks triggering unprecedented pressures on land and people in the North (De Leeuw and Vogl forthcoming).

The over-emphasis on extraction in steel and other transitions is problematized (Pauliuk et al. 2013) pointing to ways to reduce a reliance on mined materials (Allwood and Cullen 2012) and to a general necessity to redesign material-heavy living (Kallis 2017). While a focus on extraction seems to be reinforced in the frontier of the North, scrap economies are elsewhere highlighted as valuable transition avenues (Pauliuk et al. 2013). This tendency of extractive solutionism in the North has been discussed as a rearticulation of colonial power dynamics

and a greening of extractive processes in a region cast as a sacrifice zone (Össbo 2023a), reinforcing it as the “land of the future” (LKAB 2022d) for the green transition. There is ample scientific evidence pointing to the impacts of heavy resource living and its associated resource extraction, as well as the pursuit of growth (Hickel 2020) on environments and social structures (Dunlap and Jakobsen 2020). Among these, scholars list biodiversity loss, biomass loss, soil degradation, CO₂ emissions and related impacts, land cover conversion into monocrops or other biodiversity threats, and the like (Rockström et al. 2009). Meanwhile, resource extraction is understood as the “motor of capitalist growth” (Dunlap and Jakobsen 2020, 5). In a nascent literature, the impacts of resource extraction are discussed under the conceptual banner of *extractivism*. Extractivism, derived from extract, meaning to draw from (Willow 2019), is in academic literature conceptualized as large-scale natural resource appropriation, traditionally relating to minerals mining (Gudynas 2013). Extractivism is also often associated with uneven distribution of harms and benefits of extraction in core/periphery dynamics, and with transport infrastructures drawing largely unprocessed riches from peripheries (Acosta 2013; Ye et al. 2020).

These are dynamics that can be identified in the resource frontier of the Swedish North. The material legacies of colonial impositions and capitalist expansions in Sápmi in the form of transport routes, energy infrastructure, existing mines, and other industries have functioned to rationalize new waves of extractive expansion in the region (Össbo 2023c). Extractivism is, however, not limited to mining but includes wind- and waterpower factories, and forestry. It is evident in a web of cumulative pressures on land and people that also include transport and energy gridline infrastructure development past, present, and planned (Kløcker Larsen et al. 2017; Österlin and Raitio 2020). These additional pressures enhance the inscription of the region as a resource frontier upon which the rationale of extractivism thrives. In this way, colonialism and extractivism are intermingled as a gaze upon the region that renders it extractable.

Stemming from the Latin American tradition the ‘ism’ or ‘ismo’ invokes a way of thinking, a doctrine, system, or attitude organized toward a certain goal (Durante, Kröger, and LaFleur 2021, 20). Read in this way, extractivism is understood to trigger a specific, socially, and environmentally damaging way of relating to the other-than-human world. The rationale of extractivism is understood as an “insatiable imperative which drives global techno-capitalism to consume and encompass all life” (Chagnon et al. 2022, 764). Given its destructive qualities, it lacks a disposition of reciprocity, care, or regeneration (Chagnon et al. 2022),

which are stressed in alternative understandings of the living world (Richter 2019). Instead, resource-heavy living identifies extraction as an engine for growth, understood as synonymous with welfare and the good life. Alternatives such as those advocated through degrowth (Barca, Chertkovskaya, and Paulsson 2019; Brossmann and Islar 2020; D’Alisa 2014; Hasselbalch, Kranke, and Chertkovskaya 2023; Hickel 2019; Hickel and Kallis 2020; Kallis 2017; Koch, Lindellee, and Olsson 2021), post-growth (Jackson 2021; Soper 2020), post-development (De la Cadena and Blaser 2018; Escobar 2018), or buen vivir (Broad and Fischer-Mackey 2017) have instead attempted to dismantle the association of growth and the accompanied resource use with happiness as a myth. Instead, these are efforts to open up opportunities to think differently, break with destructive tendencies of the popular economic structure to radically reformulate society (Demaria, Kallis, and Bakker 2019, 432). This would ensure a more inclusive formulation of the good life that is not limited to the affluent few without jeopardizing planetary survival (Hickel 2019). It is suggested that such a reformulation requires an unlearning of anthropocentrism, placing humanity alongside or within rather than hierarchically elevated over the rest of the living world (Blaser 2013; Escobar 1999; Harvey 1996; Merchant 1980; Mignolo 2011a; Plumwood 1993), breaking with tendencies of utilitarian nature perspectives in which “resources” are extracted for the benefit of humanity’s endeavors.

Raw material consumption has risen gradually but with a dramatic increase after 1945, coinciding with economic expansion and the formulation of progress in terms of GDP growth, reaching levels already in the 1990s that exceeded scientific estimations of planetary boundaries (Hickel 2020, 101f; Rockström et al. 2009). The post-45 shift has been referred to as the Great Acceleration and the inauguration of the epoch of the Anthropocene, highlighting humanity’s impact on the planet. Others have stressed that the fault lies not with humanity as an undifferentiated mass, but rather with capital and activities formulated in the pursuit of relentless capital accumulation, denoting the epoch of the Capitalocene (Moore 2017). This distinction is important not least for the sake of accurate placement of ‘blame’, where the focus on the Anthropos tends to spiral into narratives of overpopulation blaming the poor. Focus on capital rather than Anthropos also allows for an inquiry into the detrimental impacts of perpetual growth, rather than inquiring solutions to these impacts within the same paradigm. This is often critiqued as the main emphasis in national and international policy approaches and standards such as those formulated by the United Nations or the World Bank and manifested in concepts such as green

growth and quests for technical solutions to environmental problems (Hickel and Kallis 2020; Voskoboynik and Andreucci 2022). In this popular approach to climate change and other environmental impacts, the greening of economies generally focuses on emissions reduction in existing industries, with the detriments of resource extraction and material consumption largely overlooked (De Leeuw and Vogl forthcoming). In fact, at the same time as extractivism is often accompanied by social and environmental “barrenness” (Ye et al. 2020, 157), extraction continues to be perceived as the main driver of (green) development (see Acosta 2013; Dunlap and Arce 2022; Gudynas 2010; Kaufmann and Côte 2021; Svampa 2019; Van Teijlingen 2016; Veltmeyer 2013; Voskoboynik and Andreucci 2022). While climate change denialism is today becoming more complicated to sustain, extractive activities seem to a large extent disassociated from environmental concern. Where environmentalism is invoked, it seems to be equated with emissions reduction, meaning that a fossil free production process is framed as unproblematic and can be scaled up without discernible limitations, with concerns over biodiversity, disruptions in landscapes, contaminations of water and land often overlooked. I suggest that this indicates that the rationale of extractivism (Shapiro and McNeish 2021) is pervasive to an extent that we are now even looking to extraction in attempts to resolve the very symptoms produced through extractive desires.

There has been much progress made on theorizing the rationale of extractivism and the power it exerts amid various forms of extractive activities. This dissertation inquires why this mentality continues to be successful in regulating the notion that pathways toward happiness or a good life require extraction. What is it that is persuasive about extraction? Despite scientific nudges toward post-extractive alternatives (including post- and de-growth and other such formulations) that stress the incompatibility of green with growth, the attraction to extraction seems imperishable, continuing to hold a position as the driving mechanism behind imaginaries of the good life. The purpose of this dissertation is to understand the steadfast compliance with the rationale of extractivism in times of unprecedented environmental deterioration and outspoken climate ambitions, looking at the case of Swedish extractivism in the North/Sápmi. Resembling tendencies among other affluent states, Sweden has designed its transition agenda based on technological solutionism for emissions reduction in the heavy industry paired with a re-articulation and expansion of extraction and production. I study the implications that can be drawn from Swedish attraction to extraction for the more general project of extractivism in times of transition efforts.

This dissertation adds to existing literature by providing a better understanding of the regulating power of the rationale of extractivism. To do so, I study extractivism – read as a mindset and its material consequences – as facilitated by an *extractive order* (following the notion of the symbolic order in Lacan 2008) that constitutes the rules and norms that organize social life.¹ The extractive order aligns those embedded with the idea that growth, consumption, expansion, and extraction will result in a happy life/the good life². I identify the dominant extractive order as informing an extractive relationality to the living world in a quest for accumulation, growth, progress, the good life. This order manifests itself in the way in which resources are governed, in consumption patterns, and a seemingly insatiable hunger for an expansion of mining and production. I understand the popular conviction that extraction would lead to happiness (Freud 2004; Ahmed 2010b) as a fantasy (Žižek 1997) in the psychoanalytical sense. The fantasy functions as a ‘defence mechanism’ (Zevnik 2017, 240) to cover over a sense of lack that is experienced, ensuring the subjects of the extractive order that desiring a certain object will lead to happiness, telling us that if only we desire right and seek proximity to that object happiness awaits (Ruti 2017). I read extraction as this object of desire that is inscribed in the fantasy as a promise of happiness (Ahmed 2010b). A sensed lack may here for instance be a fear for demographic change, unemployment, or risks to national security.

The fantasy suggests that happiness is conditioned on *alignment*. To illustrate, rural residents may associate extraction with an opportunity for employment or demographic growth, resulting in advocacy of extraction for the sake of prosperity. Resisting extraction, instead, may then be associated with unemployment, one’s children moving elsewhere to find jobs, or poor social service levels. As such, aligning with the idea that extraction will bring happiness gives *comfort*. Behaviour that complies is congratulated, while *misalignment* disturbs the comfort of those in line. Those who misalign or fail to will according to the fantasy of extraction, “unwilling to get along” (Ahmed 2014, 2) may create discomfort among the aligned. The misaligned, or the killjoy to speak with Sara Ahmed “refuses to share

¹ While elaborated in detail in the [theory chapter](#), let me here briefly introduce my concept of the *extractive order*. I understand the dominant, extractive order as the interpretive repertoire, the rules and codes that guide our reading of and navigation in the world. As the dominant set of rules, norms and values that constitute the social order it enables and constrains certain action, orientates us toward specific goals and desires. With ‘extractive’, I refer to the guiding principles of the order that organize human-nature relationality as utilitarian, hierarchical, anthropocentric, and in effect violent in its socio-ecological impacts.

² I understand ‘the good life’ as a hedonic quest for pleasure in absence of pain (O’Neill 2008).

an orientation towards certain things as being good, because she does not find the object that promises happiness to be quite so promising” (Ahmed 2010a, 35). To uphold the order and sustain a collectively held, pre-given orientation toward extraction discomfort must be avoided. In the comfortable state of alignment alternative visions may be viewed as *obstacles* to the promise of happiness (Ahmed 2010b) that is envisioned in extraction. As we shall see, the obstacles that emerge in the data refer for instance to anti-extractive expressions or bodies such as the Sami or environmentalist. Elsewhere, obstacles may be more abstract in the sense that they are figures of imagination on which the aligned focus in their failed attempts to attain happiness through extraction. This form of obstacle-making strengthens the joint orientation of the aligned by inferring that the killjoy sabotages the happiness of the aligned (Ahmed 2010a, 35), that without the Other happiness would have already been achieved (Kinnvall 2016; Stavrakakis 2007).³

I aim to dissect the mechanisms through which the fantasy of extraction functions as a guiding principle toward happiness. Aided by the dissertation’s psychoanalytical framing, I read the comfort of alignment as an affective motivation in which the conduct of the aligned is motivated by an anticipation of happiness (Ahmed 2010b). This framing allows for a scrutiny of the rational/irrational divide that to a great extent governs human-nature relations and renders nature extractable for the progression of man. I thereby emphasize the emotional sphere of the popular orientation toward extraction, in an attempt to question existing binaries and the dismissal of anti-extractive alternatives as irrational or emotionally driven. This also allows me to understand the affective motivation behind the pursuit of extraction as a desire, which I believe will yield new insight into the guiding principles of extractivism.

The instances of extraction that are studied are a planned iron ore project in Gällök/Kallak and the Swedish green steel transition, both of which located in the region of Norrbotten or indigenous Sápmi. Gällök/Kallak is one of the most controversial and lengthy permit processes in Sweden, with an exploitation

³ A brief distinction between orientation and alignment is in order, as further discussed in the [theory chapter](#). Our “inherited” (Ahmed 2007) orientation as prescribed by the extractive order limits our perspective, it allows us to see in a certain direction and makes that which is beyond the given line unattainable. Here, I suggest that we are embedded in an existing, inherited order that stipulates extraction as the only alternative prerequisite to progress. I understand alignment as a normative positioning vis-à-vis a given order. Aligning – staying or stepping in line – means assuming a proper and acceptable position relative to others and the given order. Alignment as staying in line also suggests a collective adherence to a common goal that lies ahead (here: happiness).

concession rewarded in 2022. Sweden's green steel transition consists of three separate but interlinked investments: the HYBRIT project, H2 Green Steel, and LKAB's investment for a fossil free processing of iron ore, all of which are located in and around Gällivare, Luleå, and Boden. These two localities are intertwined, as the Gállok site is now narrated as serving as an important potential source of iron ore for the green transition (Thorwaldsson 2022b). This combined case of Swedish extractivism aids in grasping extraction in the form of mining as well as the processing activities that require extraction (iron ore, deforestation, infrastructure development, wind power development and the like). Gállok and the green steel transition are in this dissertation treated as two intertwined nodes of extraction in a grander web of industrial expansionism, which also means that the analysis of the two localities is merged. This is empirically motivated in indigenous Sami and other locals' frustration about the compartmentalization of extractive impact in the region, resulting in cumulative pressures on land (Kløcker Larsen et al. 2017). Treating these activities as interrelated rather than separate is an effort to break with the idea that extraction happens in single-impacts without ripple effects or additional environmental pressures such as biodiversity loss. It also highlights the need of extraction for green steel production, a connection that is not often emphasised among advocates. Instead, the Swedish steel transition is accompanied by an emphasis on the opportunity of an unprecedented increase in production as a result of drastic emissions reduction. For example, the private push driven by H2 Green Steel has formulated its ambition to produce five million tonnes of steel annually once fully operational, which would double Sweden's steel output (H2GS 2021) adding on to today's 4.7 million ton (Worldsteel 2022) as only one of a series of separate green steel initiatives. Taken together, green steel efforts will by their own estimations result in an increased energy demand by a factor of three to four. The mining company LKAB alone will require an additional 70 TWh (LKAB 2022g), which amounts to about half of Sweden's total electricity consumption in 2021 (IEA 2023). Still, advocates of the green steel transition largely fail to acknowledge the associated strain on land and biodiversity for iron ore extraction, energy production, and the expansion of energy and transport lines.

The dissertation builds on fieldwork data in the two localities of extraction introduced above. The empirical data consists of 64 interviews and twelve observations conducted in two rounds of fieldwork in the towns of Luleå, Boden, Gällivare/Malmberget, Kiruna and Jokkmokk, all located in the region of Norrbotten. Interview participants range from advocates of extraction such as local miners, industry, or state employees to critics of the projects such as local

residents, environmental or Sami activists, artists, and reindeer herders. Observations include for instance visits to extractive sites such as a mine or an emerging green steel site, corporate information events, visits to reindeer pastures, and cityscapes. In addition to the primary data, I have collected a series of secondary material from publicly available material such as recorded industry and company meetings and seminars, information material, reports, website content, documentary films, etc.⁴ I read the data as performative expressions of alignment or misalignment that can range from bodily movement, discourse, visuals, to materiality such as land or cities. I read these expressions as narratives that reiterate or challenge an existing order. Persistent reiteration can result in sedimentations of alignment or misalignment, materialized in land or bodies through intra-active processes of becoming (Barad 2012). For instance, through reiteration, a piece of land may be shaped into a mining site as a sedimentation of alignment, or else, a drilling site may be covered in moss as a sedimentation of misalignment.

This chapter proceeds with a discussion of the aim and research questions that guide the dissertation, followed by a discussion of existing literature to which I speak and contribute. Thereafter, the contributions are discussed.

Aim & research questions

The extractive rationale has been described as a pervasive mindset, totalizing in its reach and as informing colonial and neo-colonial impositions, as “the imperative driving the global capitalist economy” (Dunlap and Jakobsen 2020, 6) today. The idea of the extractability of nature has often been read as rooted in the mind-body and human-nature dualism. This division is in the literature often associated with figures such as Francis Bacon and René Descartes, and broader developments of the scientific revolution and the spread of Western epistemologies during Enlightenment (Merchant 1980; Mignolo 2007). Elsewhere, Christianity is understood to have served to place humanity as external to and elevated over the rest of the living world (Descola 2013, 66f). A shift toward the idea of nature as mechanical has allowed for its domination (Descola 2013; Merchant 1980). What has come to be known as Cartesian dualism has elevated reason over nature and has cast that which doesn't fit the sphere of subject/mind/male/white into the domain of irrationality. It has motivated its domination and resulted for instance

⁴ A list of the empirical material including the relevant actors included is available in the [appendix](#).

in “civilizing” missions and the appropriation of nature that the Other was not deemed adept to administer properly and efficiently (Escobar 1999; Plumwood 1993). Extractive human-nature relationalities that express themselves through extraction follow the sentiment of nature as resource and humanity as elevated above, distanced from, and more than the rest of the living world (Richter 2019). Given the long tradition of this idea, I reckon that extractivism as an imperative of the growth paradigm is the dominant way of relating to and knowing nature, making it difficult to escape even where there is a will.

While I position myself as disobedient to the rationale of extractivism, I therefore find it important to acknowledge my positioning within the extractive order as a system of knowledge that shapes the interpretive potential in my surrounding. As such, I write from within the dominant symbolic order, as embedded in its pervasive embrace. While I see myself wilfully rejecting this embrace in an effort to step out of line, I find it naïve to assume that I am immune its allure. After all, I am a white, western academic trained in the very thought I attempt to dismantle. I grew up in a European capital in proximity to the supply end rather than the harms of extraction, which has surely shaped my position vis-à-vis extractivism. While ideologically disobedient to the growth-paradigm I recognize traces of its regulatory power also in my own desire and anticipation of the good life, and in my role as a consumer. Still, I reject docility. I am provoked by interactions in which alternatives are rejected as unintelligible, in which I am told that within our system, this is the only way, and extraction equals joy, while displaying an incapacity to view any challenge to this constraining system as sensible. Nonetheless, given the ubiquity of the extractive order and its all-embracing qualities (Dunlap and Jakobsen 2020; Krause 2020) I must assume that even where one wants to make active choices to misalign, there may be a structural difficulty to do so. While reluctant, I therefore see it necessary to place myself within the (partly enthusiastic and elsewhere reluctant) body politic that the extractive order nudges toward a specific idea of what is required to be happy, within a community that is advised to orientate toward extraction. This does not mean that the extractive order is inescapable. As we shall see in the analysis, there is active resistance against extractivism that is productive in the shaping of *alternative desire lines*.

The body politic that I speak of here may have already disturbed you, caused a certain unease. My reluctant positioning within it may provoke, especially those who see themselves entirely detached from the extractive allure. Although, I embrace the discomfort that this may cause since it may trigger a greater

understanding of the functions of the extractive order as a regulatory system. Still, you may wonder, ‘who is this body politic that she invokes?’ You are right to be disturbed. After all, Moira Gatens cautions us that a “metaphor of the unified body politic” (1996, 23) channels our vocabulary into one single voice, thereby brushing over variance. The problematic assumptions of a unified body politic is also enshrined in the critique of the Anthropocene that we encountered above, where it is assumed that humanity as a whole is responsible for emissions, land degradation, biodiversity loss and the like. Put in this way, invoking a body politic may risk misrepresenting the disproportionate use of resources by high income, affluent populations (Robbins 2020). The body politic may bring to mind a community, a ‘We’ that resembles Yevgeny Zamyatin’s description of the totalitarian OneState in which unity of thought is required of its citizens. Here, “what I think—or, to be more exact, what we think” (1993, 4) makes the individual invisible for the benefit of the ruler, speaking for others in an effort to control experiences and action. This is not the purpose of this exercise. I find value in denoting a collective metaphorical body as a way of scrutinizing the regulatory power of the extractive order. I am acutely aware that there is great variation in this alignment. The extractive rationale that I am interested in moulds and governs us in distinct ways. For some, the allure of extraction presents a disturbance that interferes with alternative visions of the good life, for others it is a necessary evil or indeed a necessary good. Reiterations of the extractive rationale come in diverse expressions, contingent on proximity to mining sites and to decision-making, but also on race, age, gender, income level etc. Locals may embrace the rationale in a hope for employment opportunities, while city dwellers may align more indirectly through consumption patterns or an uncritical positioning vis-à-vis the growth paradigm. Alignment with the body politic need not take the shape of vocal support, but can equally express itself through passivity, or *docility* to speak with Foucault (1979). In fact, even those who are critical and ideologically divorce from this paradigm may find it difficult to arrive at a lifestyle that does not reproduce the necessity of extraction. And of course, there are also those who successfully keep distance from the stubborn grip of the extractive mindset not only ideationally but also by performing alternatives. Still, I hold that the order is enticing in its promises as it allures the general mass to orientate toward extraction. With denoting the body politic and my reluctant position in it I aim to demonstrate the ubiquity of the extractive rationale and its ability to keep us in line, to regulate our political vocabulary and desire, and present extraction as the only alternative. I find it counterproductive to position myself outside of a rationale that often silently controls much of human activity,

indeed harmful for the aim of dismantling extractivism as an organizing scheme. As such, my positioning within the extractive body politic is not a sign of camaraderie or solidarity to the regulatory scheme of the extractive order but is rather a reluctant admission of my embeddedness.

My purpose is not to devalue the Swedish ambition to reduce emissions. The steel industry counts indeed to the dirtiest of industries and requires a transformation. Instead, my main aim is to challenge the blind obedience to the constraining norm of the utilitarian, extractive nature regime, and the scope in which the search for solutions is limited to its realm. I aim to dissect the extractive order's firm grip on the popular orientation toward extraction and the fantasy that associates it with a promise of a happy future. I aim to scrutinize the supposed rationality of this alignment, its commonsensical nature, and to provoke and tease out avenues of discomfort that may indeed incite a readjustment. In this way, I suggest that there may be productive potential in discomfort (Applebaum 2017; Boudreau Morris 2017; Chadwick 2021; Eaves et al. 2023; hooks 1994) in challenging a given order and triggering the emergence of alternatives. Anti-extractive expressions are frequently narrated and dismissed as threats and as standing in the way of collective happiness. My endeavour here is a commitment to the critique of the rational/irrational divide that I see to function as an effective silencing tool in the imaginary of other possible futures.

I therefore ask:

- 🌐 How is the alignment with the fantasy of extraction upheld and reiterated?
- 🌐 How is discomfort productive in disrupting extractive desires?
- 🌐 How does the killjoy defy the fantasy of extraction?

Situating the study

I speak to the literature on extractivism and related debates of land, mining, and resource use, as well as discussions on the greening of such processes. I am positioned within the field of political ecology that highlights the political in

depoliticized⁵ or apolitical relationalities to nature, which is also an endeavour among scholars that inquire extractivism as an organizing concept (Chagnon et al. 2022). More specifically, I associate myself with the sub-field of feminist political ecology, highlighting the importance of affect specifically and to some extent the body in environmental conflicts and in the shaping of space. Drawing from this field, I hold that the extractive tendencies that enjoy a naturalized status of alleged rationality must be uncloaked as orientating the body politic toward a future constructed in the spirit of extraction, incapable of imagining alternatives. I believe that this focus aids in unsettling the taken-for-granted status of extraction. I am also informed by decolonial, feminist and critical race literature for theorizing the extractive order's power to regulate conduct. I draw on psychoanalysis for a greater understanding of the affective regulation of desire.

In what follows, I discuss aspects of these fields that are relevant to the study at hand. I start with a discussion of the valuation of nature as resource. After that follows a discussion on attempts in existing literature to denaturalize extractive relationalities to land/nature and people, where I also include literature that deconstructs the naturalized assumptions about Swedish extraction in indigenous Sápmi past and present. Lastly, I introduce scholarly efforts to bring emotions/affect into the reading of the environment.

Challenging the resource-ness of land/nature

In an effort to counter the linguistic turn in the social sciences, a call for greater emphasis on materiality emerged in the field of political ecology (as elsewhere) – meaning on the resource as such (Myers and Hansen 2019). Contributions include for instance a scholarly emphasis on the ways in which social dynamics manifest themselves materially in land- and waterscapes (Nightingale 2011b). Within feminist political ecology, the emphasis on materiality has also resulted in investigations into the bodies situated on the frontline of environmental conflict (Doshi 2017), the instrumentalization especially of the female body in environmental activism (Hennings 2019), as well as embodied experiences of

⁵ I do not refer to depoliticization as understood in security debates (as related to de-securitization), but rather as a process in which issues are naturalized, taken-for-granted, stripped from avenues of contestation. Depoliticization effectively insulates political decision-making from accountability, a “convenient mechanism of disarming opposition, sweeping under the carpet potentially contentious issues” (Hay 2013, 92). I view extraction as one such depoliticized issue, as it is accepted not only as a viable but often as the only way to organize society.

exclusion and dispossession (Sultana 2011; Tapias 2006). Despite this increasing attention, it has been argued that political ecology lacks in acknowledging the material body (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy 2015, 659). As I discuss in the pages to come, this call for acknowledging materiality but especially the political potential of affect informs my avenue of critique of what has come to be a taken-for-granted, rationalized, and normalized social order. Dismissing the body, nature, and emotions as politically irrelevant has long functioned as a mechanism of marginalization of alternative trajectories. I therefore find value in adding to this sub-field of feminist political ecology with a critique of the mind-body dualism by focusing on the affective investment through which the body politic is nudged toward extraction. I believe that this approach can yield novel insight into the disinclination to break with extraction in the face of environmental and human rights concerns.

Arguable, the material turn has manifested itself differently in mainstream political ecology scholarship. The emphasis on materiality has resulted in a strengthened identification of places, land, water, forest and the like as natural resources, thus (not necessarily deliberately) inferring commodity-status and reinforcing its extractability, invest-ability and profitability (Hellberg 2014). This emphasis on the resource-ness, or the vision of the environment as resource feeds into the extractive rationale that I aim to critique and therefore deserves more attention here. Much of the discussion below leans on the land literature, but I see the resource-framing to be applicable to other environments as well. For the sake of simplicity, I retain land as the organizing concept going forward.

In efforts to scrutinize the extractability of land/nature and de-naturalize extractive advances scholars have pointed to the ways in which resources, zones or frontiers of extraction are ‘made’ (Bridge 2011; Corvellec and Paulsson 2023; Nygren, Kröger, and Gills 2022; Rasmussen and Lund 2018). Rather than taking for granted the naturalness of ‘natural resources’, the making of resources involves “political, economic and cultural processes through which particular configurations of socionature become imagined, appropriated and commodified” (Bridge 2011, 821). The making of resources coincides with the unmaking of existing “material and cultural attachments” resembling “a form of taking or theft” (Bridge 2011, 823f). This process of unmaking displaces alternative valuation for the benefit of nature as resource. Tania Li is often cited in endeavours to point to the variety of meaning attached to land, in turn questioning its assumed innate resource-ness as purely economic in its potential valuation. She stresses that “[w]hat land is for a farmer is not the same thing as for a tax collector.” She

continues that, “Land may be a source of food, a place to work, an alienable commodity or an object of taxation” (Li 2014, 589). In questions of land distribution, what is often inquired is; “who owns what, who does what, who gets what, and what do they do with it” (Li 2014, 6). In fact, it is commonly on the basis of ownership and property in terms of physical possession and formalized titles that land is governed. Not surprisingly, this rather narrow understanding of relationalities to land has been critiqued from several directions as disregarding customary, nomadic or other alternative ways of land use (Li 2007). It presupposes that land in fact is an asset that can be owned, a notion that is problematic in non-extractive and many indigenous relationalities to land, and arguably also feeds into anthropocentric, utilitarian proclivities.

Brenna Bhandar argues that it is through the logic of a racialized property regime rooted in strategies of colonial land appropriation that we make sense of what land is, how we relate to it and who is deemed its legitimate user. She also argues that “property law plays a significant role in the colonialist narrative of modern progress” (Bhandar 2018, 23). She refers here to property as an indicator of ‘civilized’ life attributing value to the modern subject capable of appropriation, at the expense of those who are incapable thereof. The norm of the property regime – or the “racial regime of ownership” – then, paves the way for the colonial logic of “space as lacking in civilized inhabitants, and therefore empty and ripe for appropriation” (2018, 3–4), an argument that has resemblance with that uttered by John Locke already in 1689. The Lockean logic of the conditionality of legitimate land use tied to progress and efficiency – in which land is understood to rightfully belong to those who improve it, while others can and should be expropriated from it for the sake of progress – provides a logic on which exclusion and expropriation can be justified while rationalizing extractive land claims (Li 2014, 592). In order to decolonize our relationality to land, Bhandar (2018) argues, we must allow for alternative, “non-tyrannical” imaginaries of land. Interventions like these are crucial for grasping what I refer to as the extractive order, as a foundation upon which extraction is deemed the only rational alternative.

There is a growing trend toward scholarly endeavours to acknowledge diverse ontologies of land and nature to decolonize and demarginalize other than capitalist relationalities to nature. These are scholars that often find themselves situated and inspired by ideas of pluriversality (De la Cadena and Blaser 2018; Escobar 2018). For instance, in their study of indigenous water governance, Nicole Wilson and Jody Inkster argue that conceptualizing water as a ‘resource’ –

a notion commonly imposed by settler societies – invokes that water can be “owned, managed and exploited” (2018, 516). Instead, they advance a notion of respect, thereby reflecting “[i]ndigenous ontologies of water characterized by reciprocal relations of responsibility between people and water as a ‘more-than-human person’” (2018, 517). This ontological pluralism, they argue, is necessary for accomplishing a quest to decolonize water. Indeed, indigenous and decolonial research has articulated the importance of epistemic and ontological disobedience (Burman 2017; Mignolo 2011a; Tuhiwai Smith 2012) in inscribing ideas of resource-ness to nature. Pointing to ways of knowing and relating to the other-than-human world, other than capitalist, dialectic and instrumental (TallBear 2019), makes theirs an invaluable contribution to the deconstruction of the universalization of Western-centric relationality. This is a contribution that has its origins in “decades of Indigenous articulations and intellectual labour” (Todd 2016, 8). Similar critiques of the objectification of nature alongside non-Western knowledge, experiences, and bodies as othered, as “the other of reason” (Castro-Gómez 2019, 276) have been discussed by post- and decolonial scholars as mechanisms of colonial control and enshrined in legacies of colonialism (Gómez-Barris 2017; Mignolo 2011b; Quijano 2007; Said 2003).

This literature is instructive for attempts to hear marginal storylines and withstand the urge of measuring their legitimacy relative to dominant “modernist conceptual tools” (Blaser 2013), which render non-capitalist claims unimaginable, inadequate, preposterous, dismissible. I see such marginalizing tendencies in the extractive order and its regulatory power, prescribing extraction as the primary object that one ought to desire to arrive at happiness. Bruno Latour suggests that “agents of modernity” are capable of delegitimizing indigenous claims to land by deeming them unrealistic (Blaser 2013). Latour frames this in terms of a great divide between the modern and the Other. He evokes Edward Said’s (2003) notion of the Self/Other that problematizes a binary view of reality that allows for a practice of othering and exerting dominance. What this means is that the “reasonableness of the demands will depend on the degree to which they align with ‘reality out there’, meaning “whether they are grounded in ‘reality’ or not” (Blaser 2013, 19). This would suggest that there is a true reality (read: the extractive order) on the basis of which legitimate claims to nature can be made. It also infers that anti-extractive claims are not grounded in this true reality and can therefore be disregarded. I contribute to such interventions by dissecting the acclaimed rationality of extraction. With this I mean that the path of extraction is commonly presented as rational while nay-sayers are framed as emotional and thereby irrational. Presenting extraction as an equally affective orientation may

allow for a scrutiny of extraction as the one true reality, opening up for the imaginary of alternatives.

The critique of resource-ness raises questions about the value of nature. Escobar (1999) famously distinguishes between three nature regimes: organic, capitalist, and techno nature, with the capitalist nature regime being most widely acknowledged today. Its features align with what is often labelled a Cartesian worldview, with humans external to and in control of a passive nature, utilizing it as a means to reach desired ends. This regime is also associated with tendencies to view nature as commodity, as “uniform, legible, manageable, harvestable, Fordist” (1999, 7). In contrast, the organic regime challenges the dualism of human/nature and emphasizes nature as constructed rather than pre-social by considering local knowledge and diverse relationalities to nature. Although, advocates of organic nature have also been critiqued for romanticizing for instance indigenous or women’s embeddedness in the natural world. It has been argued that such a reading risks reinforcing the compartmentalization of marginalized communities’ within the realm of the ‘Other’ of reason, within nature and thereby within the dominable sphere (Plumwood 1993).

Escobar’s notion of the capitalist nature regime informs the concept of the extractive order, as a formulation of rules and norms that help actors navigate and relate to nature in the language of extraction. David Harvey has also questioned the “instrumental and capitalistic values” associated with ideas of domination, mastery, and control over the natural world. These values support the view of nature’s “capital assets – as resources – available for human exploitation” (1996, 124). He argues that while proclaiming triumphalism over nature today may not be “fashionable”, it is the direct result of the capitalist political economy (Harvey 1996, 131). He contrasts instrumental with intrinsic values inherent in nature. Although, he acknowledges that recognizing such values indeed may require “anthropocentric mediation”, which questions the neutrality of their discovery (Harvey 1996, 156–58). “Naturalized” values may then be understood, he suggests, as internalized human imaginaries that may be more telling of the qualities of our social processes than of nature itself (Harvey 1996, 164). Carolyn Merchant outlines in her seminal work *The Death of Nature* (1980) the transition from values of nature associated with the “premodern organic world” to those of a mechanistic reality and the consequences that this shift brought for the logic of domination of nature and women alike. She accounts for the manner in which the imagination of nature in two diverse ways ties to that of women. First, nature is cast as a personified nurturing mother, kindly devoted and giving of herself to

provide for its occupants. Second – and what Merchant argues to have become a prevalent idea of the modern world – nature is cast as wild, uncontrollable, disorderly, as chaos that calls for domination and mastery. She ties this second imagination of nature to “‘fathers’ of modern science” such as Francis Bacon prompting a utilitarian doctrine of control, dominion, and exploitation of nature for human benefit, “crucial for the rise of mechanism as a rational antidote to the disintegration of the organic cosmos” (1980, 164, 192). She goes on to argue that this shift eased the constraints that the imagination of nature as pure and nurturing had put on human intrusion. Imagining disorder sanctions behaviour that alters and adjusts nature through its mastery (here: extraction). This was needed, she argues, to facilitate continued ambitions of “commercialism and industrialization”, allowing for activities such as mining and deforestation (1980, 2). She writes that the “Disorderly woman, like chaotic nature, needed to be controlled” (1980, 127).

Denaturalizing extraction

Given the allure of the fantasy inscribed in the extractive order, extraction has gained a commonsensical status as a means toward welfare, progress, and development. To understand its regulatory power, it is pertinent to denaturalize extraction. The emergence of the field of political ecology broadly speaking and inquiries into the extractability of land or water is a testament to efforts to question naturalized assumptions about the environment. Scholars stress here that ecology is in fact *political*, making attempts to dismantle and deconstruct *apolitical* assumptions that conceal dynamics of power (often related to structural economic and political power, historical forces and their legacies) in environmental change, degradation, exclusion, and conflict. In critiquing apolitical explanations about environmental change, there are efforts made to redirect its cause toward forces that are often disregarded in mainstream thinking. With this approach, scholars have contributed to visualizing dispossession, degradation, enclosures and accumulation as politically informed processes, frequently associated with the neo-liberalisation of the environment (Elmhirst 2011; Robbins 2020).

Extractive relationalities to nature are in this literature often discussed in the form of access to and exclusion from natural resources (Peluso 2017), mainly pertaining to land (Li 2014), forests (Myers et al. 2017) and water (Sultana 2011). Most applicable here is the literature on land control, which commonly departs from a critique of neoliberal capitalism (as much of political ecology does) and emphasizes concepts such as (accumulation by) dispossession (Harvey 2012),

alienation, enclosure, expropriation, theft, and seizure – most commonly under the umbrella of land grabbing (Borras and Franco 2012; Hall 2011; Peluso and Lund 2011). Existing literature focuses on the expansion of capitalist relations (Li 2007), often through the concept of the frontier (Peluso and Lund 2011; Rasmussen and Lund 2018; Tsing 2003). Frontiers are situated in peripheries (from a domestic or global perspective) at great distance from economic and political power, which is also a feature of extractivism (Ye et al. 2020). The land that is often targeted to be moulded (Tsing 2003, 102) into extractive frontiers is often indigenous or subaltern land. In processes of reconfiguration (Rasmussen and Lund 2018, 391) – of unmaking of an existing order for the benefit of another – these places are imagined “as a periphery, a void, and an empty land that is idle or underutilised” (Kröger and Nygren 2020, 367). Frontiers are thereby not places *per se* but they “take place” (Rasmussen and Lund 2018, 388). Elsewhere, frontiers are also framed as permanent localities of extraction (Watts 2012), as zones of exclusion (Käkönen and Thuon 2019), or sacrifice zones (Brock, Sovacool, and Hook 2021; Scott and Smith 2018; Shade 2015; Valdivia 2015). The imposition of frontier-making is associated with settler colonial advances (Inwood and Bonds 2017; Simpson 2019) and a neo-colonial reproduction of such mindsets. As such, scholars have urged that land acquisitions and associated extractive activities are not a novel phenomenon but must be understood as intimately associated with colonial expansionism (Chagnon et al. 2022; Dunlap 2020a; Shapiro and McNeish 2021). There have also been efforts made to expand the reading of frontier-making processes and reconfigurations of space to include ‘green’ industry advances (Acosta García and Fold 2022; Yenneti, Day, and Golubchikov 2016). Elsewhere, as an expansion of land grabbing interventions scholars have referred to green grabbing as a process of appropriating land with reference to environmental ends (Fairhead, Leach, and Scoones 2012). The reconfiguration of space, the making, moulding of the frontier, then, is a prerequisite for commodification, resource control, extraction, irrespective of its framing as green or not.

The literature on extractivism has originally focused on mineral and oil extraction (Gudynas 2013). It has later been reformulated to also include large-scale processes of what are traditionally considered renewable resources including forestry, farming, or fishing (Acosta 2013; McKay 2017). Examples are the cancelling out of multiple species spatialities through extractive single species entities such as plantation monocrops (Kröger 2022; Li 2018). Resources commonly understood as renewable are also discussed as failing to renew themselves amid the rate of depletion (Acosta 2013). While accelerating in scale,

the origins of extractivism have been associated with a shift in mindset with which the non-human is approached starting with the scientific revolution, or else Christianity (Merchant 1980), and associated impositions on people and land through European colonialism (Acosta 2013; Escobar 1999; Gudynas 2019; Moore 2015). Extractivism is understood as informed, defined by, or intertwined with capitalism (Veltmeyer and Petras 2016; Ye et al. 2020) requiring spaces for expansion. Resource extraction is understood to function as the “motor of capitalist growth” understood as “techno-industrial ‘progress’” (Dunlap and Jakobsen 2020, 5, 6). Others have alongside the above qualities also highlighted the ‘ism’ of extractivism as pointing to a mindset, a way of thinking, rationale or disposition (Durante, Kröger, and LaFleur 2021) that in turn facilitates the act or practice (Kröger 2020, 5) that is extraction. As such, extractivism denotes a mentality that facilitates relations of environmental and other forms of domination (Krause 2020). It is here that I contribute with the conceptual framework of the *comfort of alignment* to understand the function and power of this rationale to enable extractive activities.

The scale and intensity are important in the identification of extractivism where “extraction is much higher than the rate at which the environment is able to renew the resource” (Acosta 2013, 62). Alongside quantities of extraction, extractivism is identified through monopolized resource control, a geographical division of peripheries of resource extraction and centres of financial development, unequal distributions of socio-ecological benefits and harms (Ye et al. 2020; see also Sultana 2022), and unprocessed or sparsely processed resources and their profits being extracted from these peripheries (Acosta 2013). The compartmentalization of spaces into frontiers of extraction and spaces of beneficiaries shields those placed in centres at a distance from the violent impacts of extractivism (Moore 2015). The infrastructures that connect “places of poverty to places of richness” (Ye et al. 2020, 162) effectively aid in draining peripheries of their socio-ecological wealth. Extractivism is also generally understood as a violent, destructive process of resource use that lacks reciprocal ambitions, impedes the regeneration of environments, and harms living beings of all kinds (Chagnon et al. 2022; Dunlap and Jakobsen 2020; Durante, Kröger, and LaFleur 2021). It is stressed that the value that is generated is “temporary and generally followed by barrenness and an inability to sustainably reproduce livelihoods in the affected habitat” (Ye et al. 2020, 155). Many of the defining features that are associated with extractivism are true to the case of Sweden. The North is rendered as a resource frontier in which much of Sweden’s extraction is concentrated, with low levels of processing, it is connected through transport and energy infrastructure with the South and

harbours for export, significant environmental harms of extraction are placed in the North and benefits that may arise locally (e.g., municipal growth) are often temporary.

Recently, scholarship has emerged that highlights the greening of extractivism. Green extractivism may refer to claims of greening processes of extraction, shifts to what are framed as renewable energy sources, or the extraction of minerals framed as necessary for the green transition (Bruna 2022; Dunlap 2019; Dunlap and Brock 2022; Dunlap and Riquito 2023; Voskoboynik and Andreucci 2022; Riofrancos 2019b). For instance, Alexander Dunlap and Andrea Brock point to the continuation of a reliability on extractive processes such as minerals extraction for “renewable energy infrastructure supply chains” (2022, 92; see also Dunlap 2021). Extractivism continues here to lay claim to environments by applying a green label or supposedly renewable processes such as wind turbines. Here, “extraction and valorisation of mineral resources is rendered not only compatible with ‘sustainable development’, but *necessary* to it and the possibility of a ‘lowcarbon’ future” (Voskoboynik and Andreucci 2022, 802). The literature critiques the greening of extractive processes and sees in it an inability or unwillingness to break with growth endeavours (Brock, Sovacool, and Hook 2021), inevitably reinforcing the totalizing effects of what Dunlap and Jakobsen (2020) refer to as the *World eater* that is extractivism, manifesting as a body whose limbs are extractive industrial compounds, green or otherwise. As such, extractivism literature points to the insufficiency of decarbonizing efforts and the land-intensive articulations of extractivism inherent in growth-based, technological solutionist transition designs (Dunlap 2020b; Dunlap and Brock 2022; Nygren, Kröger, and Gills 2022).

Resistance often arises in light of the violent effects of extractivism and their accompanied resource and frontier making processes (Fjellborg, Beland Lindahl, and Zachrisson 2022; Kröger 2020; Shapiro and McNeish 2021). Resistance agendas may include efforts to discontinue extraction, claim compensation, or strengthen or claim rights to nature (see Nygren, Kröger, and Gills 2022), channelled through strategies such as campaigning, protesting, social movement (Kröger 2020), or engaging in consultations to determine environmental impacts (Kuokkanen 2019). Here, scholars of extractivism explore possibilities of post-extractivism in the form of alternative developments that break with extractive tendencies formulated through the mindset of modernity and progress. Opportunities to break with extractivism are articulated through notions of *buen vivir* or post-development (Broad and Fischer-Mackey 2017; Dunlap 2023;

Gudynas 2013; Veltmeyer and Záyago Lau 2020), a call for anti-extractivism (Riofrancos 2020) or degrowth and “radical dematerialization” (Kallis 2017; see also Brand, Boos, and Brad 2017; Demaria, Kallis, and Bakker 2019; Gómez-Baggethun 2020).

Generally speaking, there is a tendency for research on land grabbing to focus on the Global South. Similar processes of investment and capitalist enclosures in the Global North are instead often framed as conflict over land rights (Allard 2006; Allard and Skogvang 2015; Brännström 2017; Lawrence and Moritz 2019; Persson, Harnesk, and Islar 2017), thereby speaking to the literature that emphasizes the distribution and protection of (customary or other forms of) property rights as a path to justice and recognition. However, critical voices have questioned the sufficiency and Western-centrism of the rights-language to prevent dispossessions or vulnerabilities in land titles (Bhandar 2018; Ferguson 2015). Even if titles are held in theory these may not translate into stable and secure access regulations for rights holders (Ribot and Peluso 2003). Here, scholars make important inquiries into the validity or else flaws in rights systems, not least when facing extractive impulses. For the case of indigenous rights in Sweden, Christina Allard (2018) has shown how consultation rights as formulated in international rights frameworks were not sufficiently anchored in Swedish legal regulations. What is more, responsibilities to fulfil consultation and consent requirements, as well as impact assessments (see Kløcker Larsen, Österlin, and Guia 2018) are placed with companies rather than with the state. Meanwhile, Rebecca Lawrence and Sara Moritz (2019) show the mining industry’s reluctance to embrace the human rights framework’s free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) principles by way of neglecting colonial harm in the Swedish context. Kaisa Raitio, Allard, and Lawrence (2020) also point to discrepancies between a general recognition and de facto implementation of rights, not least pertaining to land rights amid competing interests such as extraction. Sofia Persson, David Harnesk, and Mine Islar (2017) highlight the asymmetrical power that is exerted over the Sami peoples as reproducing colonial relations that result in a misrecognition of Sami rights. Ulf Mörkenstam (2019) has argued that the Swedish partial discursive endorsement of the indigenous rights regime is de-coupled from action. What he calls “organized hypocrisy” allows for a symbolic recognition of rights without the need of altering policy or practice. Elsewhere, scholars examine rights to self-determination as poorly safeguarded through the reproduction of hierarchical and colonial relations in the design of Sami parliaments (Lawrence and Mörkenstam 2016; Mörkenstam 2015). Land rights recognition is also discussed through the notion of cumulative impacts, denoting a cumulation of increasing and multiple

sources of industrial imposition on Sami land, but also past and future material impacts (Kløcker Larsen et al. 2017; Österlin and Raitio 2020). Impact assessments as part of permitting processes are here critiqued as constructed on normative biases that disregard indigenous perspectives (Lawrence and Kløcker Larsen 2017). Others again focus on conflicts that may arise amid differences in perceptions and experiences that inform competing understandings of sustainability in a given place (Beland Lindahl et al. 2018). Here, acceptance levels of mining advances are analysed as potential sources of friction when pressures for mineral exploration and extraction increase (Beland Lindahl et al. 2023; Johansson, Lindahl, and Zachrisson 2022; MacPhail, Beland Lindahl, and Bowles 2023; Poelzer 2023; Zachrisson and Beland Lindahl 2019). The flaws of the rights regime are indicative of the persistence of extractivism in pushing aside obstacles that stand in the way of the fulfilment of extractive desire. The approach I take is different but contributes to insights on the impact of extraction on livelihoods and lifestyles that misalign. I engage in a scrutiny of the very fantasy or obedience to extraction that effectively cancels out the validity of alternative pathways.

While scholarship on Swedish industrial expansion, green or otherwise, rarely engages with the literature on extractivism (for exceptions see Sehlin MacNeil 2018; Sörlin 2022), there is ample engagement with questions of the impacts and harms associated with mining, forestry, wind, and waterpower expansion more particularly. Much of this literature explores “extractive violence” (Nachet, Beckett, and MacNeil 2022; Sehlin MacNeil 2017; 2019) alongside colonial harm. Exploring wind power investments, Lawrence (2014) has pointed to the rearticulation of colonial imposition through a discourse of necessity for renewable energy. Åsa Össbo (2023b) reads past hydropower expansion in the 1910s and onward in Sápmi as a settler colonial policy. She goes on to discuss more recent wind and hydropower investments under the notion of green sacrifice zones that emerge when environmentally questionable and contested projects are revitalized through a green framing that allows for disregard of standard permitting procedures (Össbo 2023a). Zoe Garbis and colleagues (2023) discuss the risks of industrial megaprojects associated with the green transition in the North, pointing among others to a reproduction of existing power relations.

In more general inquiries into Swedish colonialism, scholars have also shown that the expansion in the North is facilitated by a sense of colonial innocence vis-à-vis the Sami and the involvement in the colonial project (Naum and Nordin 2013). This field of literature gives crucial insight into the naturalized assumptions of Scandinavian or Swedish resource politics. It has been shown that Sweden and its

neighbours have been rather successful in preserving an image “untouched by colonial legacies” (Mulinari et al. 2009, 18; see also Lindmark 2013; Ojala and Nordin 2019). Commonly, reference is made to the so-called ‘saltwater thesis’, in which Sweden distances itself from the label of colonization by inferring that such a categorization would require a crossing of the seas (Fur 2013; Lawrence 2014). Sweden’s reasoning has historically disentangled its presence in Sápmi with “that which is commonly referred to as colonialism” (Swedish Ministry of Justice 1986, 164). This despite Sweden’s pre-1945 influential role in race biology, its sterilization program, Sami exposure to craniometric measurements conducted by the State institute for racial biology (Samer.se n.d.), its domestic and transcontinental colonial history, its steel-based involvement in the colonial project, as well as its indigenous rights approach vis-à-vis its extractive interests (Lawrence and Moritz 2019; Mörkenstam 2019; Raitio, Allard, and Lawrence 2020). In her study of the Swedish colony in St. Barthelemy, Lill-Ann Körber maintains that Sweden has been represented in a way that forges impressions of “Swedish colonialism as harmless, good-natured, or even absurd” (2019, 89; see also Fur 2013), allowing for a narrative of innocence stressing the ineffectiveness and irrelevance of Sweden’s colonial activities and reach compared to others, all of which eclipsed colonialism from the Swedish conscience altogether. Although, the “colonial dream” (Naum and Nordin 2013, 6), however, was alive and well and noticeable in the dehumanization of the colonized in Sápmi and elsewhere. Swedish mining policies in the North were successfully disassociated from colonialism, making any expansion, investment or settlement a purely Swedish matter, with Sápmi being constructed as an entity submerged under the realm of the crown (Fur 2013). Carl-Gösta Ojala and Jonas Nordin find that Swedish colonialism is often imagined exceptional, “somehow ‘kinder’ and less ‘colonial’ than that of other empires” (2019, 102). Although, Swedish expansions in Sápmi have been found to be far from exceptional, indeed, resemble a rather routine form of colonial policy (Lindmark 2013; Össbo and Lantto 2011). Rebecca Lawrence and Mattias Åhrén argue that Sweden’s inability to acknowledge its colonial history paves the way for today’s “increasing non-recognition of Sami land rights” (2017, 152). As we shall see, this form of reasoning continues to be prevalent in the (green) frontiering in the North, rendering it an extractable asset.

Violence in land conflict, extractivism, access and exclusion literature focuses to a great extent on physical, economic and political forms of violence. Such accounts refer to issues such as sexual violence in land conflicts, eviction, forced dispossessions and land grabbing, as well as racialized violence, profiling, genocide, colonization, forced assimilation and theft of land (see Lawrence 2014;

Raitio, Allard, and Lawrence 2020; Sehlin MacNeil 2017). Indigenous, post-development, post- and decolonial interventions have nuanced the debate by incorporating an analysis of non-physical (see Nachet, Beckett, and MacNeil 2022), cultural or structural violence (Sehlin MacNeil 2015; 2018). Focus is here given to hegemonic, white, patriarchal, racialized, neoliberal epistemic dimensions of erasure and the silencing of knowledges otherwise. These are for instance mechanisms of the silencing of indigenous perspectives, experiences and forms of expression (Sandström 2020), misrepresentations of historical accounts of colonial violence (e.g. in educational material) and the decolonial reclaiming of histories (Heleta 2016; Tuck, McKenzie, and McCoy 2014) as well as the favouring of settler colonial over other forms of interpreting reality (Bang et al. 2014; Schulz 2017). The normalization of the extractive order that renders nature and people extractable, is also deconstructed by a shifting of the gaze toward, for instance, a “fish-eye episteme” (Gómez-Barris 2017). With this, Macarena Gómez-Barris is immersing herself in the river instead of maintaining a detached, dialectic view to encourage knowing otherwise. Such contributions demonstrate that land conflicts and epistemic violence are intimately connected as they emphasize that colonial and extractive power reaches through lands and minds alike, with enclosures of land conditioned by and through epistemic violence. I follow such interventions and their emphasis on the epistemic dimensions of violence in my framing of the extractive order that regulates desire. I view the repressive regulatory capacity of the order that guides conduct, however, not only as exerting power over the marginalized, but also as making a vocabulary of scrutiny unattainable for a governed to be uncritical, docile mass. Alignment with the fantasy of extraction is, then, a form of control in that it keeps the embedded in line. This regulatory power has ideational as well as material consequences that can take the shape of dispossessions and land theft in processes of frontier and resource making.

Bringing emotions/affect back in

The review above displays scholarly ambition to denaturalize environmental phenomena and conflict, pointing to underlying and often hidden power dynamics. This dissertation shares ambition as I attempt to dismantle the taken-for-granted alignment with the ideas inscribed in the extractive order, facilitating extractive relationalities to nature. I will now turn to the sub-field of feminist political ecology and its engagement with the emotional or affective turn.

Feminist political ecology has since the 1980s diversified mainstream political ecology and environmental research with localizing the gaze toward everyday experiences, communities and households, as well as centring gendered relations of power in the analysis of environmental conflict (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996; Shiva 1989). Although, as is the case in other fields, the much needed centring of gender has been accompanied by inattention to race, racism, and coloniality (Crenshaw 1989). This has resulted in a call for an introduction of a postcolonial intersectional reading in political ecology, in which race and coloniality are not to be brushed off as an “and so on” appendix to gender, but rather, in which the power of patriarchy, racialization, whiteness, and coloniality are analysed and deconstructed in conjunction (Mollett and Faria 2013, 116). With these post- and later decolonial interventions (Lugones 2010; Schulz 2017; Sundberg 2014), feminist political ecology gained new intersectional momentum (Nightingale 2011b).

Decolonial, feminist and indigenous voices especially have pointed to mainstream political ecology’s various avenues of neglect (Sultana 2020, 2). When it comes to access and exclusion from land, water, or forests, the sub-field of feminist political ecology has addressed silences of gendered, racialized and classed dimensions of access. Especially interesting to this dissertation is the incorporation of emotions acknowledging for instance how access and exclusion construct diverse emotional geographies (Sultana 2011; Truelove 2019), the emotional distress that results from environmental harm (Wutich and Ragsdale 2008), and how (memories of) suffering are invoked in claims to environments (Moore 2005). While a focus on emotions is habitually and readily dismissed as depoliticizing resource struggles the field’s emotional turn or emotional political ecology (Sultana 2015) has generated novel insight into thus far neglected sites of power. Emotions are here argued to be intimately tied to and co-constitutive of economic and political materiality (Wright 2012). Scholars have for instance stressed the importance of emotions, affect and embodiment for subjectivities in resource conflicts (Sultana 2011; Wright 2012), practices of resistance against environmental transformation (Hennings 2019), attachments to land- and waterscapes, and non-capitalist relationalities that are neglected for the benefit of Western hegemonic notions of value (Dallman et al. 2013). I follow this same ambition of stressing the importance of the affective realm, but do so with a focus not on the marginalized alone but primarily on the ways in which the hegemonic valuation of nature is an affective investment that functions to marginalize alternatives.

Mainstream scholarship – in political ecology, development, and geography alike – treads lightly when emotions are thrown into the mix. It has been argued that the scholarly unease or shoulder shrug when confronted with emotions is a legacy of enlightenment and modernization discourse (Ey, Sherval, and Hodge 2017; Sejersen and Thisted 2021), unceasingly abiding by the binary division of rational fact and irrational emotion, between that which is deemed reasonable – the place of “non-emotion” (Nightingale 2011a) – and that which can and ought to be dismissed. Scholars following the emotional turn commonly scrutinize this rational/irrational binary through attempts of rationalizing an emphasis on the irrational or go beyond the rational and seek out the “more-than-rational” (Wright 2012). While such research indeed counters the side-lining of emotions, I argue that this approach risks reinscribing the binary by arguing for attention to the realm of the ‘irrational’. Instead, I suggest that this binary is a false division, a mechanism of control that allows for the dismissal of non-extractive sentiments as emotional, while in fact, affect is not unique to the position of the misaligned.

Emotions are in land conflict to a large extent invoked in reference to those marginalized and silenced by dominant and established ‘truths’. However, some have indeed situated emotions among states or corporations. Here, the dismissal of emotions and ‘irrational’ attachments to nature in favour of ‘rational’ arguments of improvement and progress have been discussed as a means of control, a more or less conscious governing strategy to manage natural resources in accordance with the project of modernity and growth. For instance, Melina Ey, Meg Sherval and Paul Hodge (2017) have shown how the dismissal of emotions and the imagination of the extractive industry as an emotionless, rational space functions as a powerful silencing apparatus of discontent. Gisa Weszkalnys (2016) has made important contributions to “resource affect” such as hope, anxieties, doubts and the like that citizens may place in the prospects of extraction. Hanna Lempinen and Marjo Lindroth demonstrate how affect is “consciously (ab)used in the process of decision-making” (2021, 6) to result in desirable outcomes in the planning of extraction projects. Indeed, the strategic use of emotions as a means to exert control over land and resources (Guerrieri 2019; see also Kangasluoma and Lempinen 2023) is an important addition to the mechanisms of power in access regulation. Similarly, Frank Sejersen (2020) shows how the affective “mobilisation of future imaginaries” creates political opportunity in the present. Together with Kristen Thisted, Sejersen (2021) reflects on the effects of emotions on extraction, asking if some emotions are valued higher and in fact deemed reasonable in their support for the modern life. They show how buzzwords such as ‘potential’ are ever so enthusiastically deployed to equate

minerals and their extraction with the idea and sentiment of welfare, well-being and security, of “new positive beginnings and emancipatory futures” (Sejersen and Thisted 2021, 381). Similarly, Li (2007) finds that the development discourse surrounding the “will to improve” is dispersed through governmentality practices. Inspired by her account, Karolien Van Teijlingen shows how “emotive ideals of development” (2016, 910) legitimize extractivism as a cause for the common good, economic growth, *buen vivir*. Elsewhere, Verweijen and Dunlap explore “hearts-and-minds operations to foster sympathy for extractive projects and corporations” (2021, 1). They note that extractive actors manage to turn dissent into consent through strategies of social engineering despite the socio-ecological harm that is associated with their operations. Taken together, such contributions are instructive in their inquiries into the support that is given to extractive activities, and the hope that often is associated with extractive initiations. They actively tackle the dominant assumption of the apolitical nature of affect. Still, the division is upheld. Emotions are rationally used as a tool by advocates of extraction and sincere on the side of resistance, which risks reproducing the very logic in which dismissal is anchored. I critique this tendency in existing literature by framing of the extractive orientation as geared through desire, as an affective investment in anticipation of enjoyment or the good life.

Contributions

The fields of political ecology, land, and extractivism broadly speaking contribute in rich ways to the analysis of environmental impacts of extraction. Still, there are several limitations that I address. First, there is a general geographical imbalance in the framing of conflict over land in which cases of the global North often focus on land rights. While the scrutiny of rights recognition is of essence, a disintegration from discussions of frontier-making, grabbing, or extractivism risks reproducing assumptions of Western or Northern exceptionalism. Scholarly attention on extractivism has largely been directed toward Latin America (Gudynas 2013), though with more recent explorations in Scandinavian countries (De Leeuw 2023; Lassila 2021; Sehlin MacNeil 2017), the Arctic as a resource frontier (Hanaček et al. 2022; Kröger 2023; Sörlin 2022), and green extractivism in the global North more generally (Dunlap and Riquito 2023). I contribute with an empirical focus on Sweden as an affluent country and its embeddedness in extractivism in times of climate concern. In the few cases in which extractivism is referenced, engagement with it as a conceptual apparatus remains limited. I

contribute by properly placing Swedish mining in the extractivism literature and draw from this field to scrutinize Sweden's orientation toward extraction as the preferred development trajectory.

Second, while questioned habitually, assumptions about the resource-ness of land continue to be reproduced and re-enacted in mainstream political ecology and much environmental politics research. The lack of reflexivity involved in such reinforced connotations of land as an extractable commodity risks paralyzing attempts to deconstruct the universality of the capitalist nature regime. While I engage with the materiality of land, I actively question its resource-ness by making visible and dismantling the power structures that render land extractable. I also question the superiority of utilitarian valuations of nature through a scrutiny of the mind-body dualism and the naturalized effects of the elevation of human over nature, mind over body, thought over emotion.

Third, where the importance of affect is acknowledged existing literature lends its primary attention to marginalized emotions in resource conflicts. While this is important, it has come with the neglect of state, municipal, corporate, and pro-extraction actors more broadly as emotionally informed in their own right. Where such actors are addressed, they are read as rational users and abusers (Lempinen and Lindroth 2021) of emotions in efforts of control. This division of analytical attention risks further marginalizing actors, experiences, and visions of the future that are perceived as situated within the realm of irrationality. I believe that this opens up for a contribution to the scrutiny of the naturalized position of the extractive order not only by pointing to the political importance of emotions in environmental conflict, but indeed, by pointing to the emotional underpinnings of the allure of extraction. I do this by applying a psychoanalytical reading of extraction as an object of desire through which happiness is anticipated (Ahmed 2010b; Freud 2004; Lacan 2008). I believe that this scrutiny, if taken seriously, has the potential of seriously scrutinizing the assumption that there is no other alternative to extractive relationalities to nature. This is also an important contribution to extractivism literature, framing the rationale of extractivism as an affective rather than rational investment.

This brings me to my fourth point. I contribute to extractivism literature by digging deeper into the definition of extractivism as a "rationale". This aspect is conceptually discussed in the literature (Durante, Kröger, and LaFleur 2021), but focus is placed elsewhere in empirical analyses. Existing literature focuses to a large extent on the socioecological harm that results from extractivism in peripheries or zones extraction (Käkönen and Thuon 2019; Scott and Smith 2018), resistance

to extractivism (Dunlap 2022; Dunlap and Arce 2022; Kröger 2020; Riofrancos 2019a; Willow 2019) and anti- or post-extractive alternatives (Brand, Boos, and Brad 2017; Broad and Fischer-Mackey 2017; Riofrancos 2020; Veltmeyer and Záyago Lau 2020). I contribute with the notions of the extractive order, the fantasy of extraction, and the comfort of alignment that help scrutinize the regulatory mechanisms through which extractivism as a rationale and process is facilitated. The approach I take to the inquiry into the fantasmatic idea (Žižek 1997) that extraction yields happiness presents a significant contribution to the conceptual literature on extractivism and broadens the discussions on the extractive rationale or mindset. While existing literature is rich in its conceptual development of the processes that constitute extractivism, it lacks a theoretical discussion of its regulatory power and the mechanisms of control that ensure the stability of the given order. This dissertation does just that and therefore provides a significant expansion of our understanding of the *how* of extractivism, the ways in which it continues to forge attraction to extraction and promises happiness in its various articulations.

Outline

The dissertation proceeds with an outline of the conceptual framework of *the comfort of alignment* and a discussion of the fields of literature upon which I draw. Thereafter follows a discussion of methodological choices in [chapter 3](#), including a discussion of my approach to the reading of performative expressions as narratives, a review of my empirical data and coding, a discussion of my own positionality within the extractive rationale and research ethics, and lastly a thorough discussion of the localities of extraction introduced above. After that, the three empirical chapters deal with the three research questions respectively. They engage with (1) how the comfortable, linear story of extraction as a means for happiness is upheld and reiterated, (2) how the discomfort that is sensed in extraction works to disrupt extractive desires, and lastly (3) how those that misalign identify other trajectories to happiness than extraction. The second empirical chapter also speaks to the first research question, discussing the stabilizing effect on the fantasy by way of a dismissal of perceived obstacles to happiness. Finally, in [chapter 7](#) I summarize the results and conclude by tying back to existing literature.



2. CONCEPTUALIZING THE COMFORT OF ALIGNMENT

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand – on the basis of Swedish mining and the green steel transition – why and how extraction can continue to function as the overarching rationale in human-nature relations, even in green transition efforts. Scholars of extractivism argue that the “violent logic” or rationale of extractive relationalities to the natural world “characterizes the modern era” (Durante, Kröger, and LaFleur 2021, 20). It is not a novel insight that extraction has long functioned as the impetus for development (Van Teijlingen 2016; Arboleda 2020; Bridge 2009; Gudynas 2019). It has been argued that in the common dualist tradition, nature is cast as matter, object, as extractable for the purpose of human progression. Empirically, this line of reasoning has found its most visible entry point into the Swedish North through ore extraction in the 1600s (Ojala and Nordin 2019). The enthusiasm for extraction has in recent debates been shown to expand even through green development endeavours (Bruna 2022; Dunlap and Riquito 2023; Dunlap and Arce 2022; Normann 2021). This is visible in an emphasis on decarbonization efforts that fail to break with or question resource-heavy living. I am interested in how this path of extraction is sustained even in the face of climate urgency.

To contribute to our understanding of the common compliance with extraction in the search for development (green or otherwise) I theorize that the dominant symbolic order (Lacan 1993) organizes societies to function on the basis of extraction. It structures the way we know and relate to the other-than-human and defines the terms of the prevalent economic system. In this order, extraction is imagined to promise happiness. It identifies positive, collective affective values associated with extraction and prescribes *alignment* with the path of extraction as

sensible. Aligning with the idea of *fantasy* (Žižek 2008) that extraction is desirable thereby means assuming a position of *comfort* in the symbolic order, at a careful distance from its threatening limits that would risk chaos or *discomfort* (the real to speak with Lacan). As such, the promise inscribed in the *extractive order* – that extraction will yield happiness – is regulatory in its power and keeps subjects in line to desire according to the norms prescribed and align in a *docile* manner with the rationale of extractivism. This does not mean that people chose to align with the fantasy of extraction because it brings them joy. In fact, as we shall see, encountering harms of extraction seems for many of the aligned to cause a whole deal of friction and discomfort. Still, extraction seems to symbolize a path that the aligned associated with an opportunity for a better, greener, more prosperous, future even when treading the path causes unwanted consequences.

In this chapter, I discuss in detail the choices and debates that present the theoretical basis of this dissertation. I start by discussing the theoretical literature that has inspired the notion of *docile alignment* and the power of regulation that functions as a corrective mechanism to ensure linearity in alignment, a *staying in line*. Leaning on psychoanalysis, I also discuss the notion of fantasy or the “fantasmatic promise” (Stavrakakis 2007, 197; see also Ahmed 2010b; Žižek 2008) that I see to regulate desire toward the project of extraction. I go on to present debates about discomfort that have informed my conceptualization about the power of discomfort in alignment, and alternative desires other than extraction. Thereafter, I present a summary of the conceptual framework of the *comfort of alignment* on the basis of which the data is analysed.

The symbolic order, fantasy & comfort

As noted above, I read the rationale of extractivism as facilitated by an extractive symbolic order in the psychoanalytical sense. The *symbolic order* is understood as a pre-existing set of rules and norms constituted through language, a “social world of linguistic representation” (Stavrakakis 2007, 196). It is an order in which one integrates to be constituted as a subject, a member in a social community integrated into and identifying with a given social context (Kinnvall 2018, 531). As such, entry into the symbolic order provides stability by way of connecting with one’s surrounding, other subjects, and categories of identification (Lacan 1993, 179). Although, the symbolic order is also understood as a “superimposed” (Lacan 1993, 96) structure or authority that requires of the subject to abide by it

and “to desire in a socially acceptable way” (Zevnik 2017, 239). Similarly, for Michel Foucault, the structure in which one is embedded “define[s] individuals by giving them their concepts, desires, beliefs, and so actions” (Bevir 1999, 347). “When the subject is fully identified with the symbolic order, it knows what its role and social mandate is” (Zevnik 2017, 240). The symbolic order is normalized, automatic, unconscious in the sense that an identified desire “directs man in his behaviour without his knowledge” (Lacan 2008, 15). Taking one’s role by entering into the symbolic order, then, also entails an inaccessibility of alternatives (Stavarakakis 1999, 20). While this order may give a sense of security and stability, the integration into the symbolic also results from a fear of the consequences that may follow if the subject were to transgress the prescribed codes of the social world (Zevnik 2017, 238). In this way, the symbolic order can also be understood as repressive in its regulatory capacity, dictating which conduct and desire is impermissible (Ruti 2017, 53) to ensure the stability of the order.

Agreeing to integrate also comes with the sacrifice of “pre-symbolic *jouissance* qua fullness” (Stavarakakis 2007, 196). In the original formulation, reference is here made to the child’s sacrifice of the mother in the Oedipus complex and with it, the sacrifice of full enjoyment upon entry into the symbolic; “the subject is symbolically deprived of [its sacrificed part] forever” (Stavarakakis 2007, 239). This sacrifice or loss is in psychoanalysis understood to inscribe a sense of lack (elsewhere referred to as uncertainty or anxiety) that informs subjects’ desires (Lacan 1993, 156; see also Kinnvall 2018; Zevnik 2017). It inscribes a drive to attempt to re-capture a sense of fullness by way of substituting the lost object with an *objet petit a*, “as the final solution to all our problems” (Stavarakakis 2007, 240). It is in this pursuit of the substitute object (which in this dissertation is read as extraction) through which desire is channelled in the hope to retrieve a sense of fullness. This pursuit resides in the sphere of the *imaginary*. It constitutes a fantasy that inscribes a promise that through the pursuit of extraction (read: the substitute object of that which is lost) full enjoyment would be achieved. Slavoj Žižek notes that, “through fantasy, we learn ‘how to desire’ (2008, 132). It is here imagined or fantasised that once we arrive at the lost object, or rather its imagined substitute, the perceived lack would be covered over, filled (Lacan 2008; Stavarakakis 2007; Žižek 2008). As such, it is the lack that is perceived in the symbolic order that regulates desire toward an object imagined as yielding the potential of full enjoyment. The fantasy, then, functions as a ‘defence mechanism’ (Zevnik 2017, 240) against the experience of lack. In more general terms rather than in its oedipal origins, this lack can be understood as a sense of incompleteness in relation to the social order into which one is integrated. Yannis Stavarakakis has

for instance illustrated the sense of lack amid an imagined retrieval of fullness through consumption (Stavrakakis 2007).

I suggest that extraction represents such a substitute object of desire informed through a fantasmatic promise that seeking proximity to this object would result in happiness/full enjoyment. The fantasy suggests that there is an opportunity to fill the sense of lack, experienced for instance as a threat of unemployment or demographic deterioration, with an expansion of extractive industries. However, in Lacanian thought, fullness can never be achieved even if one were to arrive at the substitute object of desire just to realize, “That’s not it” (Lacan in Stavrakakis 2007, 197). The ability to achieve a state of full enjoyment is left at the doorstep, if you will, upon entry into the symbolic order. The sacrifice, or that which is unthinkable in the symbolic order, “that which resists symbolization” (Žižek 2008, 74), that which we ought not desire if we play by the rules of the symbolic order resides in the sphere of the *real*. For Jacques Lacan, “what is refused in the symbolic order re-emerges in the real” (Lacan 1993, 13). The real, then, is “the traumatic point which is always missed but none the less always returns, although we try – through a set of different strategies – to neutralize it” (Žižek 2008, 74). The real, then, may be understood as conceivable in “failures of symbolisation—the play of paradox, the areas of inconsistency and incompleteness” (Stavrakakis 1999, 85), constituting a limit of symbolic representation. For Fink, these are the “kinks in the symbolic order” (Fink 1995, 30), moments of anomaly in language. It is in these instances in which the real re-surfaces that anxiety tends to lie (Stavrakakis 1999, 85). It is here, in these instances of ruptures of the symbolic order that I situate discomfort in alignment (discussed in greater detail below).

The subjects of the order are kept in line by way of the fantasmatic promise of full enjoyment/jouissance (Lacan 1993), or happiness to speak with Sigmund Freud (2004) and Sara Ahmed (2010b). The fantasy serves the function of restricting transgressional tendencies among subjects embedded in the symbolic order. It promises that by desiring accurately, full enjoyment awaits in the future, just around the corner (Ruti 2017, 2). My encounter with psychoanalysis originates from my reading of Ahmed’s re-reading of Freud’s notion of happiness, or else the pleasure principle. While the terminology differs once Lacan develops the notion of full enjoyment, the meaning is similar. Already in Freud, Lacan is sure that, “Certainly Freud leaves no doubt [...] that what man is seeking, his goal, is happiness” (Lacan 2008, 15–16). In both readings, full enjoyment/happiness is a position that is “quite incapable of being realized” (Freud 2004, 16). Ahmed even goes so far as to say that happiness ought to be displaced as a desirable position,

dismantled as merely a promise that misleads (Ahmed 2010b). Partial enjoyment may indeed be achieved for Lacan (read as the obtainment of a substitute object of desire), Freud distinguishes between happiness in the more modest, attainable sense as an “absence of pain and unpleasurable experiences” and “in the strict sense” as “strong feelings of pleasure” (Freud 2004, 16). The fantasy, then, strives toward happiness as fullness, even if this lies beyond the sphere of the attainable. In the original Lacanian sentiment, *jouissance* is “intermingled with suffering; it is a type of painful arousal posed on the verge of the traumatic; an enjoyment that stretches the subject beyond the bounds of the pleasurable” (Hook 2017, 607). In this way, Lacan centres the interconnection of pleasure and pain, or *jouissance* as suffering. I read this to mean that the substitute object toward which our drives are oriented (aggressive or productive such, speaking to Freud’s (2003) death drive) reveals a sense of lack (suffering), a longing for that which one had to give up to become a subject in the symbolic order. It is repressed but retained as an idea, as that which is lacking in a strive for fullness (Zevnik 2017, 240). We are willing to go through great lengths to fill this lack. In this way, “*jouissance* is a form of enjoyment willing to exceed the parameters of life” (Hook 2017, 611). For Freud, this can include aggression which he inscribes onto human activity as the drives that unmake, destruct, break down (Freud 2004, 70) in efforts for fullness. Read as such, the lack that is sensed as suffering is covered by a fantasy that informs an urgency to seek proximity to the object of desire to a degree that one is willing to unmake, destruct, transgress the boundaries of liveability for the sake of happiness. Desiring a substitute object such as extraction, then, is not a joyous path to tread, but is in fact motivated by and intermingled with suffering manifesting in sensed lack. I focus my analysis on the fantasy more than a definition, as it were, of *jouissance/happiness*, in which happiness is mainly read as a construct of a fantasmatic incentive toward alignment. Read in this way, I understand the strive for full enjoyment and happiness as interchangeable notions of the same phenomenon, as a sense of lack experienced that is covered over by a fantasy informing subjects that a pursuit of the object (extraction) will lead to full happiness/enjoyment, thereby ensuring a tending to stay in line.

The regulatory power of the symbolic order is an important component of the *comfort of alignment*. It is this regulation of desire that I see to keep the body politic in line, to desire as prescribed rather than explore alternative imaginaries. As discussed above, the regulation of desire follows the incentives presented by the fantasmatic promise that the pursuit of the substitute object will yield happiness. The repressive tendencies of the symbolic order and the unwillingness of members to transgress it deserves further attention at this point. Foucault’s distinction

between power and violence is helpful in exploring the power of regulation. He suggests that violence involves force, while power guides and regulates possibilities of conduct toward a certain outcome. There is a sense of immediacy in violence, while power is exercised less directly upon bodies or things. He suggests that the regulation or governing of possible actions is, then, less confrontational than when faced with violence. He writes that a relationship of violence “forces, it bends, it breaks on the wheel, it destroys, or it closes the door on all possibilities” (Foucault 1982, 789). Instead, power “incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely [...]” (Foucault 1982, 789).

I read the extractive order to govern by regulating and conditioning people’s conduct, by determining what people ought to and what they effectively can do or think (Oksala 2012, 30–31). Regulated conduct may even be internalized to the extent of subjects self-governing, a state which I refer to as *docile alignment*. For Foucault, “[a] body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (1979, 141), and as such, answers to another’s will. In this way, docility helps us see “how one may have a hold over others’ bodies” (1979, 143), how the body politic is made willing to comply with a given order as the very entity that governs conduct and prescribes desire (Lacan 2008). Frantz Fanon’s (2008) analysis of the efforts of black Antilleans to assimilate and pass as French in the eyes of their colonizers may be read as a display of docility. He illustrates how the internalized gaze of inferiority triggers attempts to prove oneself as a civilized “true human being” (Fanon 2008, 2) for instance by way of mastery of the French language. Read in this way, docility is an internalization of rules for the sake of self-preservation in an order that works to defeat its subjects. They are made willing to comply despite the toll it may take on them.

Docility can be observed in the regulatory mechanisms conducted by the body politic, which to a great extent involves apparent self-regulation and reiterations of norms and rules that serve to correct misalignment and stabilize the order. It is noticeable in a willingness to desire as prescribed by the symbolic order. One such regulatory mechanism is the dismissal of obstacles (the misaligned or alternative desire lines) as irrational in light of the general will and pursuit of the happy object (Ahmed 2010b) of extraction. Subjects have here integrated into the symbolic order to a degree that they work to delineate what counts as conceivable and what is dismissed as irrational or elsewhere as threatening for the happiness of the aligned. The docile subject, then, engages in regulatory activity that “censures, regulates, controls and selects what can be said” (Demirovic 2015, 13). This

exclusionary mechanism of control over that which counts as appropriate, is useful for recognizing the compulsory dynamic of a prescribed orientation toward a substitute object. Meanwhile, the position of docility is for the docile subject that abides by the symbolic order understood as one of rationality. I go on to discuss docility in alignment through the metaphor of the body politic, referencing a general, societal community steered by the fantasy of extraction.

The fantasy and the object

I understand the idea that extraction leads to happiness as a *fantasy* (Žižek 1997). I suggest here that the perceived lack that subjects of the extractive order (the symbolic order that facilitates the rationale and processes extractivism) may experience is covered over by extraction an object of desire that presents a promise for the retrieval of full enjoyment, *jouissance*, or happiness. However, happiness as fullness cannot in fact be reached. I understand this fantasy as enticing and as productive in its power to regulate conduct among the general body politic embedded in the symbolic order. Slavoj Žižek writes that “[f]antasy constitutes our desire, provides its coordinates; that is, it literally teaches us how to desire” (1997, 7). The fantasy, then, commands us to enjoy certain things in a certain way to uphold the given order, cultivating attachments to these things in the form of insatiable desires. Still, there are of course many commands that do not lead us to align. Yannis Stavrakakis notes that commands that are followed, that produce obedient action, or those that create Foucault’s docile bodies, have to be “supported by a fantasy scenario investing it with some supreme value at the level of enjoyment” (2007, 175). This means that breaking with the command of desiring right is also prevented by this affective investment (the fantasy), thereby disincentivizing transgression. It comes with fears of consequences of forfeiting one’s opportunity for full enjoyment (Zevnik 2017, 238). The emphasis on the affective dimension of alignment – as desire regulated by a fantasmatic promise – is an important point for my theorizing since it allows for a scrutiny of common claims to rationality and truth that the aligned pose vis-à-vis the misaligned.

The object of desire is in the fantasy identified as that which is lacking to obtain full enjoyment. As was discussed above, this lack, the idea that the object of desire will create fullness, cannot in fact be realized at a level that would still the desire, meaning on the level of full enjoyment. The fantasy promises enjoyment in the future by way of attaining the lost object, which however, is unattainable. In fact, the desire is conditioned upon the inaccessibility of the object, “a desire which is structured around the unending quest for the lost/impossible *jouissance*”

(Stavrakakis 2007, 239). This does not mean that extraction as the substitute object of desire cannot materialize in ‘reality’, but rather, that extraction would not result in the anticipated enjoyment as fullness. As such, the symbolic lack cannot be filled but with every failure to attain the desire that the object is anticipated to yield, the absence is re-inscribed as a symbol of desire (Stavrakakis 2007, 241) and the fantasy strengthened. What is more, desire can be perpetuated through the inscription of the deprivation of *jouissance* onto an Other, or here the *killjoy* (Ahmed 2010b, 32). It is then the fault of the killjoy that enjoyment is not achieved. Yannis Stavrakakis illustrates this sense of being deprived of joy with a nationalistic personification of the thief of joy in “the Jew, for example, or the national Other” (Stavrakakis 2007, 197). The object of our desire is not only lost, then, but indeed stolen, motivating us to retrieve it from the hands of the Other (Stavrakakis 2007, 197–98). This projection of our unhappiness onto the killjoy – as an imagined figure or a physical Other – lets us envision happiness as achievable if only the Other was not obstructing the path toward it. With the focus on the Other, the object becomes even more desirable, driven by the conviction that without the Other, full enjoyment could be achieved.

The fantasy as an affective investment

Emotions/affect⁶ deserve more attention here given my endeavour to understand extraction as an emotional or affective investment. I question the claim to rationality that is attached to the object (extraction) as a desirable choice of action, narrated as a means for arriving at development, progress, employment, welfare,

⁶ Within affect theory, scholars such as Deleuzian Brian Massumi (2002) frequently stress the importance to differentiate between emotions and affect. If distinguished, affect is commonly conceptualized as a more biological, physical, bodily sensation, “as unconscious, physiological, prelinguistic, primitive, autonomic, and non-intentional” (Morrison 2020, 147). Emotions, instead, are in affect theory often associated with beliefs, cognition and discursive meaning, as “more or less conscious and articulate” (2020, 146). An ambition in affect theory is to utilize affect and its distinction from emotion to prescribe agency to the body independent of social mediation (Liljeström and Paasonen 2010; Thrift 2009). Instead, I follow Ahmed in her resistance against this division, using affect and emotion interchangeably. In line with the feminist and decolonial critique of reason that is introduced below (and to which I aim to contribute), which scrutinizes the dismissal of the material, of emotions, the body, and nature into the sphere of irrationality, I find it counterintuitive to uphold the bifurcation of emotion as conscious and affect as bodily. For Ahmed, while a distinction can be made between an affect’s bodily sensation and its associated feeling (chills versus the feeling of fear), the distinction is simplistic in its compartmentalization. Not only is affect culturally mediated, but emotions also have the potential to “shape how bodies are moved by the worlds they inhabit” (Ahmed 2010b, 230).

and the green transition. I suggest instead that the quest for proximity to extraction is motivated by a fantasmatic promise that happiness will follow. As discussed in chapter one, attention has been paid to the sphere of emotions in political ecology and other related fields in attempts to make sense of environmental conflicts. Still, expressions of emotions/affect continue to be sidelined as insignificant forms of meaning-making, as spheres of the hysterical and irrational. For Patricia Hill Collins, what is recognized as knowledge and expressions of knowing is informed by dominant power structures. These structures determine “who is believed and why”, who is recognized as a knower and “what counts as knowledge” (Hill Collins 2000, 252, 273). She continues that dominant “knowledge validation processes” (Hill Collins 2000, 252) reject and suppress alternative ways of knowing, effectively strengthening the dominant/elite group’s (for her: white men’s) interests. In this binary between thought and emotion, the latter is devalued and dismissed in favour of the former. Rather than a rational incentive, I point to the fantasy of extraction as an affective investment that prescribes the desire of the supposedly rational body politic.

The critique of the hierarchical binary between thought/emotion and the rendering of ‘reason’ as void of affect is not new to feminist thought, in which emotions are understood as neglected to disarm that which is dismissed as irrational (Lorde 2018). Ahmed writes that, “[f]eminists who speak out against established ‘truths’ are often constructed as emotional, as failing the very standards of reason and impartiality that are assumed to form the basis of ‘good judgement’” (2004, 170). The elevation of thought over emotion works to disarm and exclude feminists from rational thinking by displacing their claims into the realm of emotionality, and thus irrationality. At the same time, the emotional elements of thought and reason are disguised. Ahmed’s response then, is not to strive for the absorption of emotion into the realm of rationality, but rather, “to contest this understanding of emotions as ‘the unthought’, just as we need to contest the assumption that ‘rational thought’ is unemotional, or that it does not involve being moved by others” (2004, 170). Rather than claiming space within rationality, the emphasis is here on blurring and unsettling the boundaries of the thought/emotion, rational/irrationality divide. Others such as Amy Allen maintain a firm stance within ‘reason’, calling for feminists to strive for a “rational critique of rationality” (2013, 18) rather than rejecting it in its entirety.

The dualisms of mind-body, thought-emotion, subject-object, nature-culture, male-female, irrational-rational, with the former of these pairs respectively understood as “the excluded and devalued contrast of reason” include according

to Val Plumwood “the emotions, the body, the passions, animality, the primitive or uncivilized, the human world, matter, physicality and sense experience, as well as the sphere of irrationality, of faith and of madness” (1993, 19–20). In this dualist mindset the subject/mind/male is treated as external to, elevated over and in control of a passive object/nature/woman, utilizing them as means to reach desired ends. The understanding of humanity as external to nature allows for a relationality of appropriation and exploitation (Lander 2002). This separation has allowed for a vision of nature and the objectivized Other that is placed within its realm as instrumental in its value. The body and knowledge of the objectivized Other (often female or/and racialized) that is placed in nature makes for the “underside of rationalist dualism” (Plumwood 2018, 104), which “has been a major tool in their oppression” (Plumwood 1993, 19). Val Plumwood writes elsewhere that, “Rationalism and human/nature dualism have helped create ideals of culture and human identity that promote human distance from, control of and ruthlessness towards the sphere of nature as the Other [...]” (2002). This utilitarian vision that these binaries allow relates back to our earlier discussions about the value of nature (Harvey 1996; Merchant 1980).

The so-called feminist critique of reason that emerged in the 80s and 90s encompassed scholars such as Luce Irigaray, Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz and Genevieve Lloyd.⁷ In *The Man of Reason*, Lloyd (1992) influentially critiques the mechanisms of reason as exclusionary male construct that functions to subordinate women. Grosz focuses in her critique on the “historical privileging of the purely conceptual or mental over the corporeal” (1993, 187). She sees what she refers to as “phallogocentric assumptions” to associate the body with the feminine and the mind with the masculine (1993, 195), thus excluding women from knowledge production. Instead, she promotes “acknowledging the body in the production and evaluation of knowledge” (1993, 187). The emphasis on the body and its role in knowledge production, bodily experience and embodiment has been a popular avenue of intervention for the feminist critique of reason, suggesting an inseparability of mind and body (Alcoff 1996). Feminist scholars that pay attention to the body-in-mind dimension have accentuated affect/emotion and the body as a way of deflating what are interpreted as dualistic categories of oppression, and instead emphasize embodied subjectivity (see Ahmed 2000, 41).

⁷ For a thorough account of these early interventions, see Alcoff (1996) and Nagl Docekal (1999).

A related critique of this binary has been voiced in decolonial circles. The equation of Western knowledge with rationality and reason is reflected in the project of modernity and the quest to rationalize and “disenchant” the World (Weber in Castro-Gómez 2019). Aníbal Quijano (2007) and others show how the equation of modernity/rationality positions non-Western knowledge, experiences and bodies in opposition and as “the other of reason” (Castro-Gómez 2019, 276). Implied in the idea of modernity/rationality, then, lies a dualism between the rational subject and the irrational objectivized other (Quijano 2007, 173) to be transformed, civilized and disenchanting. In land and mining conflicts, this critique often relates to the dismissal of alternative ways of life for the benefit of extractive progress. Some stress that extractive industry and pro-mining policymaking is in fact not void of emotions (Ey, Sherval, and Hodge 2017) – as is commonly assumed – but that affect is strategically “used and abused” in mining projects to prompt desired outcomes (Lempinen and Lindroth 2021). It could be argued that the pro-mining side here maintains its status of rationality in its strategic manipulation of affect, in their triggering of positive sentiments by forging associations of mining with well-being and welfare (Sejersen and Thisted 2021).

I follow the call to contest the binary and hierarchy of thought/emotion – the naturalized aggregation of “emotions as ‘the unthought’” (Ahmed 2004, 170). I am resisting trends in existing political ecology literature to extend the inclusion of the irrational/emotional merely to the sphere of resistance and the marginalized. Instead, I am guided by the assumption that also the pro-mining body politic is invested in an affective project as it is oriented toward mining through a promise for the good life, full enjoyment, happiness. This orientation is one of desire yet is as a status-quo preserving affective position immersed into the sphere of rationality. Anti-mining expressions are instead compartmentalized as unreasonable, disruptive, illogical.

Bodies that align

I theorize alignment as a performative act of the metaphorical body politic. This metaphor allows me to illustrate the regulatory power of the symbolic order and its fantasy to shape collectively held desires. The metaphor of the societal body is, however, not an attempt to claim that this body is void of variance. While alignment takes various forms and shapes, my reference to a unified community is an effort to illustrate the far reach of the *extractive order* and its power to keep the embedded in line, desire as encouraged, and indeed, restrict our political

curiosity. I draw here from Ahmed's notion of orientation. The orientation of the societal body toward the substitute object involves a need to align, a compulsory dimension, an expectation to orient accordingly if membership is aspired. In this regard, orientations function as a "straightening device" (Ahmed 2006a, 23), aligning bodies with collectively held perceptions about identified desirable objects. Performative expressions that enact such pre-directed orientations are to be understood as "orientations towards the future, insofar as the action is also the expression of a wish or intention" (Ahmed 2007, 153). As such, an orientation entails a longing, an anticipation of a desired future (Ahmed 2010a).

As discussed in greater detail in the methods chapter, I am beside language also interested in materiality – in how bodies experience deforestation or other extractive impulses or how land may change when it encounters bodies, extraction, or discourse. The body becomes here an important level of analysis in the way that it reiterates or rejects alignment and thereby shapes its surrounding. For instance, I am observing how bodies move through space in reiterations or redefinitions of the given symbolic order. Ahmed holds that bodies take shape through their contact with objects toward which they tend. Objects can refer to physical things, but also to ideal objects such as aspirations, thoughts or emotions (2006b, 553). The way our bodies are shaped through this contact constrains and enables, determining "what bodies can do" (Ahmed 2007, 152), but also what land for instance can do. Importantly, the shaping of bodies involves lived "social experience of dwelling with other bodies" (Ahmed 2000, 48), which rejects the search for essence in the body as in space. This is important since it points to an entanglement of human bodies with their surroundings in the form of both materiality and ideas, in which knowledge, thoughts and consciousness are understood as embodied (Young 2005). This approach connects the body with the mind rather than treating them as binary, since "the practices of thinking are not separated from the realm of the body but are implicated in the passion, emotions and materiality that are associated with lived embodiment" (Ahmed and Stacey 2001, 3). Embodied knowledge is in the feminist fashion therewith understood as contextual, located, situated (Haraway 1988; Harding 2015), rather than objective and generalizable. However, following Lacanian thought, one may also want to add to the discussion of embodied knowledge that some forms of knowledge need not postulate an encounter with another in the physical sense or as experienced, but knowledge about the Other may indeed be imagined. I refer here to the imagined position of the Other as a thief of joy, exemplified among some Lacanian scholars through the position of the immigrant Other

(Kinnvall 2018; Stavrakakis 2007). Here, an encounter with another need not be experienced but can remain in the sphere of imagination.

Performative practices contour, regulate and constrain the body (Butler 2011, xii). Judith Butler understands bodies' reiterative performative expressions of becoming (matter) as "materializations" or "sedimentations", that which "stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter" (2011, xviii). Butler understands that which stabilizes to be a result of regulatory power, productive in its reinforcement, which they discuss in the context of gender:

Performativity is a matter of reiterating or repeating the norms by which one is constituted: it is not a radical fabrication of a gendered self. It is a compulsory repetition of prior and subjectivating norms, ones which cannot be thrown off at will, but which work, animate, and constrain the gendered subject [...]. (Butler 1993, 22)

Similarly, Ahmed (2007) points to the compulsory elements of sedimented orientations as regulative, visible in her discussions of the "path well trodden". She writes that:

When people stop treading, the path may disappear. When we see the line on the ground before us, we tend to walk on it, as a path clears the way. So we walk on the path as it is before us, but it is only before us as an effect of being walked upon. (Ahmed 2006b, 554f)

As such, repetition is a necessity for upholding the given order, ensuring that the path or line continues to be visible. With Freud, "[o]rder is a kind of compulsion to repeat" (Freud 2004, 38). However, as indicated in the discussions of Lacanian psychoanalysis above, I suggest that at the same time as the order requires reassurance through repetition, the path is pre-given, prescribed by the extractive order. In fact, the symbolic order guides its members to reiterate its principles. In this quest for order, the pro-mining body is awarded a rational position in the extractive order that renders any deviation, any form of interrogation irrational.

Desires and the fantasies that identify them are embodied in this reiteration, they come to direct our habits and the way we inhabit space, which in turn shapes the material surrounding with which we interact. At the same time, the physical environment shapes the bodies with which it comes in contact (Di Masso and Dixon 2015). This also implies that bodies and spaces are not fixed but "in a process of continual remaking" (Edensor 2000, 100) in what Karen Barad refers

to as “intra-active” performativity or “material-discursive becoming” (2012). Rather than *inter*-acting, which would suggest contact between separate, independent units, her notion of *intra*-activity, on which I draw, implies an entanglement and embeddedness of cultural meaning, discourse, and the shaping of matter. Barad’s take on performativity critiques a limited focus on linguistic citationality by stressing its material dimension, “matters of practices/doings/actions” (2008, 122), suggesting that not only discourse performs reiterations of existing norms, but so does matter, land, bodies in space. In similar efforts, scholars have opted to find a balance between devotion to the material reality while maintaining the discursive as a valuable avenue of meaning-making (Akong 2020; Alaimo and Hekman 2008; Barad 2012).⁸

Discomfort, obstacles & misalignment

In the text above, I have engaged in discussions about subjects’ difficulties or unwillingness to transgress and disobey the symbolic order given its regulatory power. Among others, I have engaged with Foucault’s notion of docility as a conceptual tool that aids in illustrating this obedient devotion to the prescribed conduct of a given order. To continue with Foucault, we may understand an unwillingness or disobedience to align with the extractive order instead as a contestation of the dominant conduct, or else, counter-conduct. Counter-conduct refers to the struggle against efforts of conducting others, meaning, “how not to be governed like that, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them” (Foucault 2007, 44). However, counter-conduct does not necessarily imply a general rejection of being governed, but rather, reflects “the will not to be governed thusly, like that, by these people, at this price” (2007, 75). I read subjects that transgress the symbolic order as misaligning, as disobedient amid the order’s requests to take a prescribed position in line and desire as demanded. I suggest that those who misalign instead assume positions on *alternative desire lines*, tending to alternative objects of desire. The notion of alternative desire lines is inspired by desire paths in landscape architecture, a concept used for paths that emerge in parks or other public spaces as a result not

⁸ I find Barad especially helpful in this regard, as she resists tendencies of dismissing epistemology entirely for what is commonly referred to as a shift to ontology, and instead attempts a dialogical approach.

of planning but of repetition, walking. This relates to the above discussion of order as repetition (Ahmed 2006b, 554f; Freud 2004, 38). The path or line is here understood as a directional (Ahmed 2006a) instrument, as indicating where to head, as giving purpose in movement.

The Foucauldian notion of counter-conduct would suggest that alternative desire lines seek opposition against an existing order, a prevailing set of governing principles (see also Andrews and Bamberg 2004a; Solórzano and Yosso 2002). As we shall see in the empirical analysis, the misaligned often start from a position of such countering or of refuting the taken-for-grantedness of the object of extraction as desirable, defining their position against the dominant path. However, misalignment may also happen without such active countering, through the treading of an autonomous path. In this way, I opt for a more general conceptualization of misalignment that need not refer to a countering of the extractive order but merely signals distance from the path prescribed by the extractive order. To tie back to Lacan's symbolic order, the misaligned may reside as transgressors in the extractive order, or else, inhabit an altogether different order, one which does not originate in dualistic human-nature relations. However, as we shall see in the empirical data, even those who misalign to a degree that extraction becomes unthinkable as an object of desire must navigate the grip of the dominant order. There is a strive for community in following desire lines among the aligned and misaligned alike. As such, I don't see stepping out of line (speaking from the position of the extractive order) as a disconnect from epistemic or symbolic guidance, from the endeavour of creating order for the sake of collective sensemaking, or that misalignment would yield chaos. However, no matter if the misaligned are driven by tendencies to counter or not, disobedient or alternative desire lines may nonetheless be interpreted as *obstacles* to docile alignment. As such, alternative desire lines may trigger *discomfort in alignment*.

Obstacles: Alternative desire lines & bodies that misalign

What is then this obstacle? The obstacle is a disturbance thrown into the path of alignment that disrupts the fixation of the subject's gaze on extraction as the object of desire. Obstructing the way ahead, we run the risk of stumbling if we don't look down at least to inspect the object we aim to overcome, leap over or discard it in our quest for happiness. The obstacle may take the shape of the Other that is sensed as the thief of joy (Stavrakakis 2007, 197–98) with which we have already familiarized ourselves. I lean here on Ahmed's notion of the feminist killjoy that refuses to go along, to be 'well-adjusted', who by willing otherwise "gets in the

way of the happiness of others” (2010b, 60). By resisting to go along and get in line, refusing to desire the same object, they cause trouble and discomfort for the docile subject. In this way, they may become the “cause of unhappiness” of others by disturbing a fragile state of comfort (2010b, 61–69). I am here inspired by discussions of bodies in space in the conceptualization of misalignment, which I see as helpful for illustrating the obstacle that is perceived to invade spaces where it is unwelcome. Ahmed (2007) has for example discussed how white bodies feel at ease when inhabiting the spaces they have shaped as white through iterative embodied effortlessness. Nirmal Puwar (2004) notes that black and brown bodies entering white spaces are instead noticed as “space invaders” because of this very predisposition of spaces. Gill Valentine presents another compelling example in her analysis of the production of the street as heterosexual space which requires constant regulation as it is “under threat from sexual dissidents” (1996, 150). The Swedish North has been shaped as the ideal location for mining since the early 1600s, rendering extractive activities in what is narrated as a vast and spacious North a logical undertaking. The land has been shaped as an asset to the Crown, which casts those who misalign as space invaders. Such disorderly bodies present a threat to the given order. In her account of disability, Rosemarie Garland Thomson (1997) discusses the completeness that is assigned to certain bodies, while others, “extraordinary bodies” are perceived as deficient. What she elsewhere refers to as “misfits” (2011), deficient bodies, or “matters out of place” in Mary Douglas’ (2003) terminology, create disorder, chaos. Garland Thomson goes on to argue that the disruptive potential of the extraordinary body comes in the form of “entitled bearers of a fresh view of reality” (1997, 38). In this sense, while anti-extractive bodies and their alternative desire lines are sensed as disorderly and as threatening the fantasy of the collective body politic, but also as productive in shaping new interpretive spaces.

However, bodies need not be in space per se to assume a position of the Other, the killjoy. In fact, the Other as imagined or the fantasy of the Other is in Lacanian thought understood as “instrumental in perpetuating human desire” (Stavrakakis 2007, 197) by concentrating the frustration over the inability to reach full enjoyment onto the Other (Kinnvall 2016; Kinnvall and Svensson 2023). The idea that the Other – may it be the immigrant, the woman, or in this case for instance the Sami or the environmentalist – is the thief of happiness has a unifying and reassuring effect on the aligned. The killjoy need not be actively misaligning nor physically present, but rather, the figure of the killjoy also fills the function of a discomforting obstacle by way of the sheer imaginary of the aligned. As such, I

read the literature on obstacles in space as referring to materiality as well as ideational space.

Dealing with obstacles & fleeing discomfort

Leaning on the discussions introduced above, I hold that the symbolic order sustains itself by exerting power in the Foucauldian sense of seducing, reducing, constraining, and limiting our field of actions. It prescribes what object to desire (Lacan 2008) in anticipation of happiness. I suggest that when discomfort is sensed in an encounter with an obstacle regulatory mechanisms are at play to uphold the stability of the line. When faced with discomfort, the aligned may react by re-evaluating their position in line and the desirability of the object. This would trigger them to *step out of line* in search of an alternative object of desire, or their alignment takes on *reluctant* tendencies. When the aligned face obstacles to happiness (which can be internal doubts or queries and external killjoys), regulatory mechanism of the body politic may function to allow a flight from discomfort, by dismissing and delegitimizing the position of the Other. I will here introduce the discussions that have inspired the emphasis on the notion of discomfort in the conceptualization of alignment as a potentially productive intrusion.

In my conceptualization of discomfort, I take inspiration from critical race pedagogy and the notion of the pedagogy of discomfort as inspired by the work of bell hooks. In *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), hooks advocates for the importance of cultivating critical thinking to create spaces of “radical openness”, “an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress” (1994, 207). This critical mindset and the accompanied cultivation of new ways of thinking however, can indeed come with discomfort and pain.

I respect that pain. And I include recognition of it now when I teach, that is to say, I teach about shifting paradigms and talk about the discomfort it can cause. White students learning to think more critically about questions of race and racism may go home for the holidays and suddenly see their parents in a different light. They may recognize nonprogressive thinking, racism, and so on, and it may hurt them that new ways of knowing may create estrangement where there was none. (hooks 1994, 43)

Discomfort can therewith arise when we are faced with new interpretive capacity that interrupts the ordered scheme through which we have thus far understood

our being-in-the-world. The above notion of shifting paradigms relates to Gayatri Spivak's (1990) notion of the "unlearning of our privileges as our loss", where she refers to the efforts necessary to acknowledge and detach from the formation of one's privilege to transform one's mindset. hooks continues elsewhere that this discomfort can be productive in its transformative potential:

Women need to have the experience of working through hostility to arrive at understanding and solidarity, if only to free ourselves from the sexist socialization that tells us to avoid confrontation because we will be victimized or destroyed. Time and time again, I have had the experience of making statements at talks that anger a listener and lead to assertive and sometimes hostile verbal confrontation. The situation feels uncomfortable, negative, and unproductive because there are angry voices, tears, etc., and yet I may find later that the experience has led to greater clarity and growth on my part and on the part of the listener. (hooks 2015, 66)

I am intrigued by this perception of discomfort as a potentially productive avenue of epistemic transformation in which a state of comfort is understood as hindering such change (Applebaum 2017; Zembylas 2018). Eaves and colleagues note that "comforting fairy tales often rely on deliberate erasures, willful ignorance, and harmful fantasies of our imagined futures" (2023, 520) and that discomfort is productive in revealing these omissions. One hindrance to change is discussed by Barbara Applebaum, who argues that "comforting [...] white students' discomfort" when faced with antiracist criticism risks preserving the naturalized state of white innocence. Restoring white comfort also fails to acknowledge the pain of students of colour (2017, 865), and thereby, an antiracist critique is "attributed as the cause of unhappiness" (Ahmed 2010b, 61). Leaning on Audre Lorde and bell hooks, Ahmed writes in her critical reading of the "angry black woman", that "[t]he black woman must let go of her anger for the white woman to move on" (2010a, 36). Instead of following the urge of re-instating the equilibrium that is comfort, feminists and critical race scholars have argued that it is fruitful to embrace feelings of discomfort, to linger with them, "wad[e] through them" (Boudreau Morris 2017, 457) rather than flee toward comfort. Writing "comfort texts" (Lather and Smithies 1997) that align with our understanding of reality and in fact consolidate it, makes passage smooth and uncomplicated. These texts let us be at ease, comfortably lean back, but they also reduce, restrict and homogenize (Chadwick 2021, 15). For Ahmed, "we have to stay with the feelings that we might wish would go away" (2017, 28), since it is in such avenues of unease that epistemic ruptures may arise.

I understand discomfort as a disorientation that may force a re-evaluation of one's position relative to the idea of extraction as the gateway to happiness. Discomfort may have the productive potential to unblur alternative objects of desire that had been neglected as a result of the extractive order's regulation. It may even cause the aligned to question the desirability of the object. It is one of the aims of this dissertation to assess the transformative potential of discomfort, if it can accomplish such a re-evaluation of desire once it makes us linger to examine the shape of the obstacle, compelling us to 'wade through' discomfort (Boudreau Morris 2017). Still, in docile alignment, changing gears and leaving the path involves a risk of "going astray, getting lost" (Ahmed 2006b, 554; also Zevnik 2017), letting go of the order's comfortable embrace that has guided us this far. The attachment to the comfort of alignment makes transformation and re-orientation a difficult undertaking (Pedwell and Whitehead 2012).

Instead of transformation, discomfort may also prompt defensive strategies that aim to uphold the given order. It may trigger attempts to flee discomfort, sparking aversion against the killjoy as a defensive mechanism as they are associated with disturbing the chance to fulfil the fantasy. In fact, I have noted above that for Lacan, transgressors even play an important role in reinforcing the original desire, as they present an opportunity to place the failure to achieve full enjoyment among them (Stavrakakis 2007). Robin DiAngelo shows that the discomfort and anxiety that is caused by challenging the idea of (in her case) white innocence spurs a range of emotive and behavioural 'defensive responses' such as anger, guilt, withdrawal, silence, and fear. These responses effectively "reinstat[e] white equilibrium as they repel the challenge, return our racial comfort, and maintain our domination within the racial hierarchy" (DiAngelo 2018, 2). What she calls "white fragility" is, while defensive, not a state of weakness, but one of control and "protection of white advantage" (2018, 2). In this way, discomfort may trigger us to retract to "epistemic comfort zones" (Chadwick 2021, 8) as a refusal to engage with unsettling emotions that may disturb our worldview or sense of self. I follow DiAngelo (2018) in her insistence that fleeing discomfort is not to be read as weakness or powerlessness, but signals rather that with privilege comes the power to control and protect comfort zones and the path of the collective body politic in its march toward extraction. To illustrate this, the former chairman of Jokkmokk's municipal council commented on anti-mining protest saying, "I think it is actually terrible that people stand in the way of hundreds of jobs in a sparsely populated municipality like Jokkmokk" (Bernhardsson 2020), which may be interpreted as an attempt to reiterate comfortable alignment with extraction by eliminating the validity of protestors' concerns.

It is important to note here that discomfort is not exclusive to the aligned that are disturbed by various obstacles. First, those that reluctantly align may find discomfort in a perceived necessity to conform, or else in a sense of no alternative. Even where such discomfort is sensed, bodies may find difficulties to identify alternative objects of desire given the power of the extractive order to blur their vision beyond the fantasmatic line. Lingering on the line of extraction, then, may not necessarily be a sign of joy or conviction. Rather, staying in line may be an expression of fear about the unknown or about breaking with the stability of the line and the soothing embrace of community. It may also be an expression of worry or frustration over possibilities of subsistence when exiting a sphere of congratulatory conduct. Continued alignment may here be understood as an uncomfortable evasion of precarity. This sense of precarity may even lead bodies that misalign to step (back) in line. Second, the misaligned may also sense discomfort in encounters with reiterations of the extractive order and its material consequences.

After this discussion of the literature from which I draw I now go on to present my conceptual framework of the comfort of alignment.

The conceptual framework of the comfort of alignment

Extractivism is in a nascent literature discussed as a rationale, a way of thinking, a doctrine in which the activity of extraction (which can refer to mining and drilling but also land transformation amid wind, waterpower, or forestry) is “organized towards the goal of maximizing benefit” (Durante, Kröger, and LaFleur 2021, 20). What is then this benefit or goal? In the general formulation, profit maximization naturally comes to mind, but my entry point is different. I suggest that the benefit that is sensed in extraction is *happiness* as read through Freud (2004; see Ahmed 2010b) or *full enjoyment* in the Lacanian sense (1993), which is in the data among other things envisioned as total contentment amid demographic growth, municipal development, employment, geopolitical security, etc. I understand the symbolic order (Lacan 1993), the rules and norms that identify appropriate conduct, to facilitate the logic of extractivism and extractive relationalities to the other-than-human by identifying extraction as the fantasmatic substitute object of desire. I refer to this order as the *extractive order*. As I read it, the extractive order is rooted in the logic of the capitalist nature regime (the utilitarian idea that nature is here to serve humanity and shall be dominated

to ensure progress). It structures accepted ways of relating to nature, renders it extractable and there for our benefit, paves what we envision as a rational path toward happiness and presents us with a collective understanding of how and what we ought to desire. Rooted in a certain lack that is sensed in one's surrounding, a *fantasy* (Žižek 2008) ensures us that if only we desire right (read: the object that is extraction) we can indeed achieve full enjoyment by retrieving that which is lost (Lacan 2008; Stavrakakis 2007; Žižek 2008). This fantasy, the idea that extraction will lead to happiness in the strict sense (Freud 2004) is what drives us, tells us how to desire. Read in this way, I suggest that the allure of extraction is an affective investment (Ahmed 2010b, 24) rather than a rational endeavour.

With Freud, I understand the strive toward happiness, or what is in the data also referred to as welfare or the good life in line with hedonic reasoning as a pursuit of pleasure (or here: *comfort*), and an avoidance or absence of pain (or here: *discomfort*) (O'Neill 2008, 126; Freud 2004, 16). While happiness in its minimal form as an avoidance of pain may be achieved, even if just momentarily, I follow Freud and Lacan in their insistence that pure happiness or full enjoyment cannot in fact be attained. With this, I mean that even if extraction were to take place, the happy associations through which extraction as the fantasmatic object of desire is imagined will not necessarily be accompanied by contentment in the real sense. This is for instance noticeable in interviewees reference to past projects that failed to deliver on promises such as job creation. Nonetheless, subjects that are integrated in the extractive order may continue to abide by the fantasy or the promise that happiness follows from proximity to extraction as an object of desire. The fantasy may in fact be strengthened in light of short-lived joy or in encounters with various obstacles that are mobilized to rationalize failures of happiness to manifest. I do not set out to further identify an essence, as it were, of happiness, or to define what it is that constitutes happiness. Instead, I suggest that this theorization can aid in understanding the steadfast conviction that increased extraction is the rational path toward happy, prosperous, and sustainable futures. I borrow from Ahmed's theory of the "promise of happiness" (2010b) when I suggest that extraction manifests in the dominant growth-driven psyche a fantasmatic path toward happiness. The unextracted resource may in an extractive relationality to nature instead be perceived as an opportunity lost, happiness forfeited.

The extractive order guides the metaphorical body politic (Gatens 1996) effectively toward extraction through its ability to regulate desire (Freud 2004, 20), to enable and constrain what is deemed as a rational path toward happiness.

The fantasy inscribed in the extractive order suggests that there is a right way to desire, a rational path to stride, and the right things are “enjoyable to those with good taste” (Ahmed 2010b, 34). The order – the set of rules that surrounds us – are pre-existing, meaning that certain objects are associated with happiness before we have even encountered them while others are dismissed as “unhappy objects” (Ahmed 2010b). Rather than assuming that proximity to a given object causes an affective stimulus such as happiness (e.g. coming in contact with a mine), “the judgement about certain objects as being ‘happy’ is already made” (Ahmed 2010b, 28; see also Žižek 2016, 57). In this way, we can assume that the embeddedness in the extractive order ensures us that an extractive activity such as mining ought to be pursued with the foresight of happiness, it ought to be desirable. The object is already determined as happy in its affective value (Ahmed 2010b, 34) even prior to our encounter with it. This false sense of causality works to strengthen the assumed desirability of said object. For instance, as we shall see, interviewees display enthusiasm about the promise of mining even prior to the arrival of a mine. As such, the object of extraction is not identified as happy post but rather prior to an encounter. We assume that if we are to pursue the object happiness follows.

In this way, one can, and for the sake of upholding order should learn which objects to desire, and to desire them in the right way, which in turn suggests that a pursuit of happiness requires a regulation of our desire (Ahmed 2010b, 36f). Geared by the extractive order, we learn that we ought not reject the happy object of extraction if we don’t wish to forfeit our chance to happiness. The inherited, prescribed object that the fantasy has identified as happy keeps the gaze aligned, straight ahead toward extraction, while making other potential paths or happy objects, those that are out of sight, unimaginable, irrational, illogical. In this way, there is a compulsory dimension to this orientation in that the restricted vocabulary available in the given order refrains curiosity to “look around rather than ahead” (Tsing 2015, 22). What speaks to me in this framing is that the orientation toward objects that promise happiness that is triggered by a fantasy of enjoyment in the future aids in grasping the intent behind extraction as an affective motivation (Ahmed 2010b, 24). It helps understand extraction as a fantasmatic undertaking. Rather than an unemotional, rational demeanour, we are driven and informed by that which we are moved, affected. Still, it also aids in displaying the way in which that to which we ought to aspire is presented as bereft of all affective association, portrayed as the comfortable path of rationality and reason. As we shall see, the story of alignment is one that makes frequent

reference to emotions in arguments of nay-sayers as a way of dismissing concerns of the misaligned.

The extractive order requires a regulation of desire also to ensure continued affiliation with the collective body politic. As such, I understand the pursuit of happiness to be a collective endeavour in which the happy object is pre-defined, suggesting how one ought to desire according to the promise engraved in the fantasy of extraction. It is here, in the collective affiliation with the rationale of extractivism, that I see value in introducing and developing further the concept of *alignment*. I view alignment and orientation as intertwined concepts. We align with the fantasy of extraction as a result of orienting in a given way, which infers a sequential emergence of (1) inherited orientation, and (2) consequential alignment. Also, while I read orientation with the suffix 'toward', we align 'with'. Orientation directs our vision and brings our attention to certain things more than others, while alignment suggests a normative order and desired stability where misalignment means chaos. To align is defined as "arrang[ing] things so that they form a line or are in proper position", or else "to be in or come into precise adjustment or correct relative position" (Merriam-Webster n.d.). Aligning, then, denotes taking one's correct, appropriate place in a given order, to step or stay in line. The reference to the correct relative position indicates that happiness is understood as a collective endeavour in which individual subjects are arranged to form a *line*. It requires a sense of and an "integration into a community, or adaptation to it" (Freud 2004, 99). It also suggests some degree of passivity, in that we are the things that are *being* arranged to conform.⁹ Important in the above definition is also the emphasis on the 'relative position', in which the accuracy of alignment is measured relative to others and relative to the path we are expected to tread dictated by the symbolic order. Aligning fully may trigger a sense of accomplishment or is congratulated relative to others' *misalignment* or tendencies of *stepping out of line*. The regulatory power of alignment speaks in many ways to a collective desire for conformity with a "we", of desiring right relative to others and according to the rules of the symbolic order.

That which does the arranging doesn't refer to a governing authority in the strict sense such as a state or police, but rather, the ubiquity of the extractive order and

⁹ It is worth commenting on agency at this point. I hold that actors have agency in their use of the interpretive repertoire that is available to them (both discursive and material such), which includes diverse perspectives on the ordering of society and the living world. However, the extractive order is powerful in regulating conduct, making the availability of alternatives to extraction less obvious. This does not mean, however, that alternatives are unattainable, which is noticeable in the desires expressed by the misaligned.

its guiding principles that are *keeping us in line*, creating disincentives to transgress from prescribed desires. As such, in its cleanest and most successful form, we are being aligned without triggering complaint, seemingly self-governing (Foucault 1979; Freud 2004, 79–82) into alignment by the internalized order. Ultimate alignment results in self-governing as a *docile body* (Foucault 1979), willing to improve (Li 2007) in line with the symbolic order's instructions, which I term *docile alignment*. I understand docile alignment with the fantasy of extraction as performed enthusiastically, as embracing the idea that extraction will lead to happiness without doubt or visible concern. I suggest that the notion of alignment, then, signals in a more visible way than does orientation the corrective mechanisms inherent in the symbolic order, keeping us in line as a means of regulating desire. In the Lacanian sense, regulation of desire is also a constant attempt to cover over the sensed lack with the substitute object of desire (read: extraction), the failure to fill the lack, rationalizations of this failure (e.g., placed in the position of the Other), and a re-inscription of the fantasmatic promise.

The conviction that extraction (as an object of desire in the psychoanalytical sense) leads to happiness gives comfort. We are guided by the promise that if only we desire the right object in the right way, we can be happy. Abiding by the path of alignment will reward us with happiness once we arrive at its end, once followed without missteps. The fantasy that it is in fact possible to attain full enjoyment by seeking proximity to the object of our desire thereby incentivizes us to welcome extraction. Although, in this fantasy, happiness is placed at a temporal distance, it is promised (Ahmed 2010b), presented as conditioned on *alignment*. Even in light of docility, happiness “seems to await us just around the corner but [...] repeatedly eludes us” (Ruti 2017, 2). Here, it may be questioned if those that indeed practice docile alignment in fact will be rewarded with happiness at the end of the road, or if the object of our prescribed desire in fact cannot be obtained (Freud 2004, 16; Lacan 2008). This does not mean that the activity of extraction will not take place but the anticipated happiness that is associated with the object by way of the fantasy may still not be realized (Freud 2004, 5; Lacan 2008, 85). Nonetheless, the fantasy is enticing as it informs us that we would obtain happiness through extraction. It may even be strengthened by imagining that the cause of the object's inaccessibility stems from obstacles that stand in the way of happiness, “as if happiness is what we would have, if that thing did not get in the way” (Ahmed 2010b, 32; see also Stavrakakis 2007). As such, while alignment comes with a striving for linearity and comfort I suggest that the (imaginary or physical) presence of an obstacle may indeed be productive for the unity of the aligned. An empirical question that will be explored is what this means, however, for the

productive potential of discomfort to bring about a sustained disturbance of the line.

The happy life is one of comfort, of ease, the envisioned ability to pursue the prescribed desire without *obstacles* that create discomfort, fixate the gaze upon the “happy object” (Ahmed 2010b) without interference, without disruptions and anti-extractive provocation, evading unnecessary consequential foresight. The fantasmatic promise that extraction will bring happiness is a “comfort text” (Lather and Smithies 1997) that applauds the dominant order’s reiterative performative expressions. It is a comfortable path to stride so long it is held free from intrusion. Obstacles to alignment in the form of anti-extractive performative expressions or as personified in the figure of the *killjoy* (Ahmed 2010b, 60) may instigate a sense of *discomfort*. Obstacles may also be imagined, meaning that the aligned may envision the killjoy as the thief of their happiness (Ruti 2017; Stavrakakis 2007) even if they are not actively interfering. This means that the killjoy need not be active in their misalignment nor physically present to induce a sense of discomfort among the aligned. Merely the idea of the killjoy as the figure that stands in the way of full enjoyment classifies as an obstacle in the gaze of those abiding by the idea that extraction yields happiness.

The killjoy is misaligned, trotting a different path, unwilling to desire as prescribed. I refer to their transgression as *alternative desire lines* (Bates 2017) as lines that deviate from extractive desire lines. With this I mean that killjoys that find themselves disinclined to abide by the fantasy and its identified object of desire carve out dissident paths guided by an alternative set of rules. As such, I suggest that the conduct of the aligned and misaligned alike is guided by objects of desire. The notion of the line suggests a quest for linearity among the aligned and the misaligned, signalling an endeavour to reach the unattainable objects of desire that are envisioned at the end of the respective lines. While the killjoy indeed creates ruptures, friction (Tsing 2005), chaos for the aligned, another order emerges with the missteps of the killjoy. In this conceptual moment, I leave behind the disrupted comfort of the aligned and instead follow the productive potentials of discomfort to create new orders, identify alternative pathways that may be desirable in quests for happiness. I read alternative desire lines and the discomfort that may be caused in disruptions of the extractive order not only as moments of rupture but also as opportunities for alternatives to emerge.

In landscape architecture, a desire path is understood as a path “used by pedestrians in preference to or in the absence of a designated alternative (such as a paved pathway)” (Merriam-Webster n.d.). This is fitting for the theorization of

the lines of the misaligned, that may deviate from a prescribed path to form one which they prefer over the line of extraction. In the example of a public green space, a desire line may emerge as a more efficient, a faster or more direct path leading up to the same end goal as the paved line. However, I imagine desire lines here to emerge with a different goal or object in mind (as indicated in the illustration below). With this I mean that the killjoy subscribes to a different substitute object of desire in their shaping of alternative desire lines, in which not extraction but for instance preservation of nature may manifest such an object. The metaphor of the line is in either case one that suggests linearity and determination to reach a certain goal, also as pertaining to the paved, prescribed path (Ahmed 2006b, 555) of extraction. In this way, I distance myself from Ahmed (2010b) as she sees in happiness an altogether troublesome infliction in its corrective, prescriptive tendencies. I open here up for fantasies to also speak to the desire of those disobedient to dominant, repressive orders. The objects of desire with which happiness is associated can as such be renegotiated in a less destructive, oppressive manner. In this way, my problem lies not with happiness per se, but with the *what* and *how* of the thing that is believed to make us happy. Read in this way, the pursuit of happiness may also be fruitful as an incentive for misalignment when the extractive object of desire is displaced and exchanged for another. Following psychoanalytical reasoning, this still does not imply that happiness is attainable by way of dismissing the extractive object of desire. Still, I wish to preserve the possibility that the shifting of the general gaze toward an alternative object of desire (1) is possible, and (2) has a productive potential for articulations alternative, more creative, less destructive fantasies on the level of the imaginary.

With Ahmed, I see the killjoy as the figure that questions the idea that the prescribed object results in happiness. The killjoy, or what I also refer to as the misaligned:

[...] refuses to share an orientation towards certain things as being good, because she does not find the object that promises happiness to be quite so promising. Not only that: her failure to be made happy is read as sabotaging the happiness of others. (Ahmed 2010a, 35)

Instead, I find that the misaligned identify other happy objects toward which their desire is channelled, such as low-resource-living or care for others and nature. In light of the affective investment in extraction the aligned may perceive the killjoy as an obstacle, as that which stands in the way, the thief not only of comfort, but

indeed happiness (Ahmed 2010b, 67; Stavrakakis 2007). While this discomfort may have the potential of triggering an investigation of alignment, it can also come with defensive responses, adversary, a dismissal of the annoyance as just that, and a retraction into the *comfort of alignment* through the guidance of the extractive order. When the state of comfort is threatened, the aligned react either by re-evaluating their place in line and with it the idea that the object in focus in fact is desirable, or else, attempting to flee discomfort through emotive and behavioural “defensive responses” (DiAngelo 2018, 2). The former may either result in misalignment or continued but reluctant alignment. Speaking to the latter, I perceive the flight from discomfort as a form of control (DiAngelo 2018), as a regulatory mechanism that ensures cleanliness, linearity, purity, order, homogenization (Freud 2004, 38; Douglas 2003; Puwar 2004; Shotwell 2016; Lacan 2008, 241). *Fleeing discomfort* may take various forms as a regulatory mechanism. For instance, the aligned may reinforce linearity by dismissing obstacles as irrational or as threatening to the general quest for happiness. The quest for comfort hinders scrutiny and possibilities for misalignment, stepping or staying out of line, for shifting the gaze toward an extended interpretive repertoire and new desires. Instead, comfort can only be assured by the rejection and elimination of obstacles, intrusions, “matters out of place” (Douglas 2003) that stand in the way of happiness. As such, the regulation of desire requires a purification of the line, the correction of one’s own and others’ missteps.

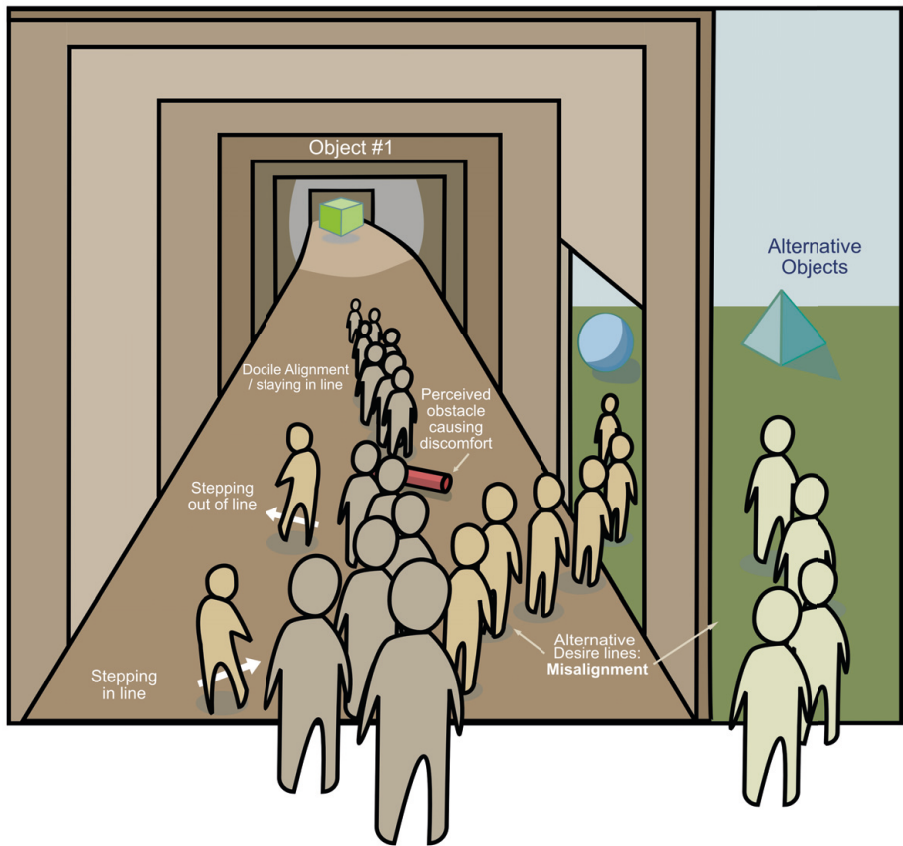


Illustration. The conceptual framework of the *Comfort of Alignment* (own source).

The illustration above may help to further clarify the conceptual framework of *the comfort of alignment*. The extractive order is here illustrated as a mining tunnel. It presents a pre-given set of rules, regulations, norms, and desires that guide the conduct of those embedded, the body politic. The fantasy that is inscribed in the extractive order prescribes extraction as the object of desire upon which one ought to fixate one's gaze to ensure to reach *happiness* at the end of the tunnel. In anticipation of this happiness, the body politic aligns with the fantasy of extraction, or more accurately put, is arranged by the extractive order to align, to the degree of internalized self-governing, docility. In this way, the body politic is governed to ensure that nothing stands in the way of extraction. I call this state of self-regulation *docile alignment* or an endeavour of *staying in line*. As such, the

fantasmatic promise that extraction leads to happiness has a compulsory dimension in that aligning – read as taking one’s appropriate or proper position in line – prevents chaos and ensures linearity, purity, conformity. Being or standing in line, collectively oriented toward the same object of desire, also alludes to queuing, aligning patiently in anticipation of the attainment of the joint goal, the substitute object of desire that promises happiness. Alignment, then, infers linearity, unity, compulsion, repression, but also companionship along the path of anticipated happiness. The sense of unity in alignment as a prevention of chaos and a joint pursuit of happiness gives comfort. For the sake of illustration, I envision the aligned as moving along a pre-constructed path or *line* resembling cross-country ski tracks, the skis moving effortlessly in the prescribed lines. What lies beyond these lines seems irrelevant, the snow elsewhere too deep and chaotic to ensure friction-free progression. One may wonder; why would one ever consider abandoning the confines of the well-travelled track for the benefit of a seemingly much more troublesome path, or else no path altogether? It seems obvious to the aligned that staying on the path is the safest choice. However, the skier may be triggered to leave the track despite their initial conviction if they get sight of gravel or a tree that has fallen upon the tracks, calling for a readjustment.

These *obstacles* to alignment come in the form of anti-extractive performative expressions (e.g., narratives of rights violations) or are personified in the figure of the *killjoy* (e.g., Sami rights activists). These obstacles to happiness may trigger a sense of *discomfort* that the aligned react to by fleeing discomfort to return to their original position of comfort in line (staying in line), or else, they re-evaluate extraction as an object of desire. Some may return to a position of docility without complaint, while others may not be able to reject the concern that the obstacle has raised quite as easily, which leaves them in a position of uncomfortable or *reluctant alignment*. To push the above analogy further, some only leave the ski track temporarily, to overcome the obstacle as quickly as possible to later return to the path of least resistance. Others may notice once they left the track that there are other indulgences of which they were previously unaware but that may be worth exploring. Others again may be discouraged to return to the initial track as they fear it is unsteady in light of the risk of recurring gravel or trees. They may *step out of line*, possibly abandon the track altogether to shape *alternative desire lines*, focusing in on a new object of desire. The stepping out of line is instigated by the allure of alternative objects of desire that become visible within the existing order or an alternative symbolic order, an altogether different set of rules and norms dissimilar from that of the extractive order. As the illustration shows, *misalignment* can result from such dismissal of the path of extraction, or else, can

originate elsewhere altogether, meaning that some may never have entered the sphere of the extractive order. I do not wish to make general assumptions here about the emergence of various desires, however, I suggest that the path of extraction does not by default need to be understood as temporally prior, but that there is variance relative to alternative desire lines. Also, the misaligned may encounter similar triggers of discomfort in their orientation toward alternative objects of desire when facing powerful reiterations of the extractive order. Again, these obstacles may either strengthen the position of misalignment or cause a re-evaluation of misalignment, possibly leading them to *step in line* to anticipate happiness amid a fantasy of extraction. This may for example be noticeable in monetary difficulties to uphold misalignment that result in employment in extraction, or a sense of no alternative that is associated with an embrace of some degree of extraction for happiness.



3. DESIGN

As presented in depth above, this dissertation seeks to understand the regulatory power that aligns the collective body politic with the fantasy that extraction leads to happiness. I have discussed this alignment as characterized through comfort, following the command of the extractive order and the normative orientation toward extraction that it prescribes. The *comfort of alignment* guides action and incentivizes the body politic to stay in line and uphold a given order. When facing discomfort triggered by various obstacles to happiness, the aligned may flee the sensation of discomfort by rejecting the obstacle, thereby assuming either a comfortable or reluctant place back in line. Others may re-evaluate their situatedness to the end of a rejection of the line, resulting in misalignment with the fantasy and the articulation of alternative desire lines/objects of desire. Such misalignment can, however, also originate elsewhere than in the extractive line. I read expressions of alignment as an affective investment (Ahmed 2010b, 24) in extraction, a motivation that moves the aligned, affects them to seek proximity to extraction as the object of desire. This allows me to read performative expressions of the necessity of extraction as affective motivations. Likewise, performative expressions that reject extraction as the happy object indicate an affective motivation to misalign and seek out alternative objects of desire. Performative expressions can come in various forms (discursive and material). They shape spaces in accordance with one's orientation, resulting in sedimentations of the extractive order or alternative desire lines. Through this intra-action (Barad 2008, 139), land may for instance be shaped and materialize as a mining-site through performative reiteration of embodied alignment, where bodies may interact with space by moving through it, or stories may be told of the perks of extraction.

I study the comfort of alignment in the case of Swedish extractivism in the form of mining and green industry expansion. I have selected two localities as interconnected instances of extractive ambitions in the North of Sweden, or Swedish administered Sápmi. The first is the controversial plan for iron ore

mining in Gállok/Kallak in Jokkmokk municipality. The second is the Swedish push for fossil free steel production with processing primarily located in Gällivare, Luleå, and Boden. By denoting their interconnectedness I refer here to the green steel transition's need for ore and extraction. This does not mean that iron ore from Gállok would necessarily feature in the green steel projects in Gällivare, Luleå and Boden, but rather, that iron ore extraction is a requirement in today's resource heavy green steel imaginaries (De Leeuw and Vogl forthcoming) that is poorly acknowledged. While I outline these localities as tied to specific spaces, I also want to stress that these impulses of extraction are in fact spatially much broader since they are dependent on existing and expanding energy grid lines, infrastructure, deforestation, land for wind power factories (Dunlap and Arce 2022), and the like. As such, a description of the chosen cases as limited to distinct, enclosed land areas is misleading and risks reproducing dominant representations of extraction as limited in its impacts to the delineation of the mining pit or industrial site. In this way, I read proposed mining in Gállok and the green steel push as interrelated expressions of Swedish extractivism.

In this chapter, I discuss the methodological choices that underpin this research and that assist in answering the research questions. The chapter proceeds with a discussion of performativity and how expressions of alignment or misalignment are studied. I then move on to a discussion of empirical data, coding, and analysis, after which I turn to my own positionality within the dominant order. The chapter concludes with an account of the case and the two localities of extraction.

Performative expressions

I understand performativity as a reiteration of existing norms and rules (see Butler 1988), here referring to those that constitute the extractive order. Such performativity is understood as compulsory to a certain extent in that the rules of the symbolic order in which we are embedded guide us to reiterate these same rules. Persistent performativity results in sedimentations or materialization of a reiterated order, meaning the forming of boundaries, fixity, or matter. I draw on Karen Barad (2012) and her insistence that performativity goes beyond discursive citationality include the performative capacity of materiality (e.g., bodies or space). As such, performative expressions may come in various form, such as stories that are told about extraction, images or videos, bodies that move in space, or space that is already shaped in a certain way (e.g. deforested land or existing

mining infrastructure). The emphasis on the performative potential of discourse and materiality guides my analysis of the reiterations of the extractive order and helps analyse possible sedimentations of alignment or misalignment, manifested in the materializations of desired futures.

Importantly, I read all performative expressions as narratives that draw from an available repertoire of discursive tools (Somers 1994) to reinforce or reject a given order. For instance, I read miners that move through space in workers' attire as telling a story that may reiterate the visibility of extraction as the object of desire, reinforcing the idea that mines generate jobs. I opt for 'narrative' rather than 'discursive' since I understand discourse to constitute "not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said" (2008, 137), which is what I have referred to as the symbolic order¹⁰. In the reading of performative expressions, I am interested in reiterations and contestations of the given order or discourse, and how it may be reiterated to the extent of embodied alignment or sedimentation. While I read the order as restraining, I find it fruitful to acknowledge a certain degree of agency in actors' situatedness within the extractive order, which narrative analysis allows me to do. I read narrative performative expressions on individual/unit level as productive in reproducing or disrupting the extractive order in their protection of comfort or provocation of discomfort.

Jacques Rancière's (2004; 2010) metaphorical police is conducive here. He reasons that, "The police is that which says that here, on this street, there's nothing to see and so nothing to do but to move along" (Rancière 2010, 37). Thus, the police controls what he refers to as the "distribution of the sensible", that which guides "what can be seen and not, felt and not, thought and not, and, as a result, between what is politically possible and not" (Bleiker 2018, 20), meaning, what may sediment in matter or be embodied. These boundaries are arbitrarily drawn but can gain a commonsensical status. Nonetheless, the order which is upheld by the police (read: the extractive order) is not beyond contestation. Rancière proposes that attempts to transform the police's ordering of space to bring into appearance alternative understandings is a process of politics. "Politics, before all else," Rancière contends, "is an intervention in the visible and sayable" (2010, 37). Politics, thus, "consists in re-figuring space, that is in what is to be done, to be seen and to be named in it. It is the instituting of a dispute over the distribution of the sensible [...]" (Rancière 2010, 37). I concur with this view on the power of

¹⁰ I will in the discussion below use 'discourse' and order interchangeably. I am aware that this probably would make Foucault frown. Still, I see benefit in keeping with the linguistics of the methodological literature that I draw on here.

performativity to renegotiate the boundaries of the sensible. As we shall see, while the order is powerful in restricting the sensible interventions into the taken-for-granted limits of the scheme of possibilities can be powerful in renegotiating alternatives.

I will now turn to the literature on materiality that has informed my approach to the performativity of matter and its intra-active becoming when in contact with other narratives. I then turn to the performativity of visuals. After that, I discuss my overall approach to narratives, which encompasses all forms of performative expressions in the data.

A brief note on matter

With Barad, I view matter as “substance in its intra-active becoming – not a thing but a doing, a congealing of agency. Matter is a stabilizing and destabilizing process of iterative intra-activity” (2008, 139). Matter is thereby not fixed, but changes, shifts, it sediments through its process of becoming in co-constitution. It is shaped by and shapes our knowledge, experiences, and our discursive repertoire. For the sake of illustration, information plaques, mining pits, infrastructure, deforested land, pollution, etc. in mining towns, or else untouched vegetation or undisturbed reindeer herding paths are materializations of alignment and misalignment respectively that continue to inform the ways we can speak about and move in the given space. In this way, I read deforested areas of land as narratives that reiterate the extractive order.

The notion of the body may indeed be understood as an expression of space, meaning space may be perceived as a body of land, as a “site of knowledge” (Bauhardt and Harcourt 2019, 12) that is shaped or takes shape through contact with certain objects (other bodies, stories, etc.) that come near (Ahmed 2006b). Land is also often discursively enacted as a feminized body, a site that is extractable, dominable, controllable (Merchant 1980). Land itself may bear signs of an assortment of embodied emotions, displaying linearity or “affective dissonance” (Hemmings 2012) in space. Intra-activity, then, requires attentiveness to materiality, (e.g. observations of vegetation on drilling sites as sedimentations of possible re-alignment). Through such intra-active becoming, performative alignment may shape land into mining sites, while killjoy performativity of misalignment may shape the land and materialize in an absence of extraction.

A line of scholarly work that ought to be briefly addressed in our dialogue with Barad is that of the material turn in the form of material feminism or new materialism. This turn has emerged as a response to a perceived over-emphasis on linguistics and representation that renders matter passive, critiquing that “the only thing that does not seem to matter anymore is matter” (Barad 2008, 120). I sympathize with the material turn’s emphasis on the de-centring of *Anthropos* and its agential capacity of matter (Bennett 2010). Yet, I am sceptical whether an anthropogenic observation of matter can be fully capable of grasping the intentions behind the agency of matter. One may wonder if imposing meaning onto the essence of matter does not in fact risk reproducing the supposed primacy of *Anthropos*. This speaks to the critique of new materialism risking to conflate matter with an interpretation of the essence of matter. It is here stressed that such a reading would indeed risk situating the human again “external to (the rest of) matter that enables us (and only us) to access matter’s true nature or essence” (Gamble, Hanan, and Nail 2019, 113). Instead of assuming that a reading of matter would yield any insight into its essence I focus on the intra-active becoming of matter. I reject the Cartesian imposition of passivity upon nature and suggest instead that land, bodies, and discourse can be read through their intra-action, shaping one another through their performative expressions. Through such intra-action the extractive order may be embodied in matter (various bodies, land), which itself generates performative expressions of such embodiment. I read matter and its performative expressions through bodies and space as narratives. For instance, the materiality of existing mining infrastructure can be read as telling a story of extraction as a line drawn from ore to harbours, cutting through and dividing areas of land. This narrative may in their intra-action with discursive citationality (e.g., actors talking about the importance of infrastructure for an expansion of extraction) and bodies operating the rails, result in further sedimentation of the order in the form of an expansion of infrastructure, the materiality of which again narrates the extractive order.

A brief note on visuals

Another performative expression that is represented in the data are visuals such as photographs or videos. The proper reading of visuals is much debated in existing literature. While some read visuals as mimetic windows into the real world, others suggest to read them as “aesthetic” representations of the world (Bleiker 2009). It is here assumed that there is a gap between representations and that which they represent. I follow this latter approach in my reading of pro- and anti-extractive

visual performative expressions. I see visuals as performative exercises of framing reality, i.e. the pointing of a camera toward certain objects rather than others. But visuals are also performative in the encounters with spectators, in which every encounter constitutes a new process of meaning-making that is contingent on the spectator's orientation. For instance, imagery produced by mining companies provides a frame that depicts reality as one of extraction. In encounters with the aligned, these images may reiterate the order while they may provoke the misaligned to distance themselves even further.

Butler holds that in performing delimitations, "in framing reality, the photograph has already determined what will count within the frame [...]" (2010, 67). "Images reveal and conceal. They show and hide [...]" (Bleiker 2018, 20). Seen in this way, visuals are "never innocent" (Rose 2001, 6) but selective in their performance. Photographs and film especially tend to pass as "inconvertible proof that a given thing happened", Susan Sontag contends in her seminal piece *On Photography*. "Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we're shown a photograph of it" (Sontag 1979, 5). They create what Bleiker refers to as an "illusion of authenticity". When they are considered authentic reflections of reality, it is ignored that even they are selectively setting a frame, including certain events while excluding others, obscuring agency and intent behind a "seductiveness of the real" (Bleiker 2018, 13). Nonetheless, when read as authentic they work to constitute and fix that which is displayed as real. Butler (2010) has elsewhere discussed the media's role in delimiting the realm of appearance and providing epistemological frames through which some life is made conceivable and thereby grievable. They reason that; "The frame does not simply exhibit reality, but actively participates in a strategy of containment, selectively producing and enforcing what will count as reality." They go on to argue that the frame is not always successful in its attempt to contain, still, "it is always throwing something away, always keeping something out, always de-realizing and delegitimizing alternative versions of reality" (2010, xiii). Thus, the visual (as is the case also with other forms of performativity) directs our gaze as it is indicative of the way we are facing, how we are oriented, framing that which can be seen and leaving out that which lies beyond the lens.

Narrative reading of diverse performative expressions

As noted above, I read performative expressions (discursive citationality, visuals, bodies, materiality broadly speaking) as narratives that tell stories about the embodiment or rejection of the extractive order. I differentiate between discourse

as on par with the extractive order as our surrounding's guiding principles, and narratives as the stories that are told (broadly speaking) about this surrounding. Molly Patterson and Kristen Monroe (1998, 316) suggest that narratives are distinctive in that they are never voiceless even if it is not immediately evident who is speaking, which suggest agency in the telling of stories. They can be individual or collective and are told to make sense of one's surrounding. Narratives are also commonly understood as requiring agency, meaning that a story is being told by an actor for a specific purpose. This means that I assume agency in the telling of stories, in that narrators construct their stories by assembling elements from an existing repertoire of discursive tools (Somers 1994). Although, the repertoire that is within reach may be limited given the control that the order exerts.

Narratives also inform us about the positioning of an actor in a given "repertoire of emplotted stories" (Somers 1994, 614). This in turn reveals how the actor makes sense of her surroundings, her concept of self, and what she considers to be right and wrong (Patterson and Monroe 1998, 316). Thus, narratives are tools for positioning ourselves relative to other performative expressions and within the given order. Together with Molly Andrews and Catarina Kinnvall, Monroe writes that narratives "help us understand who we are, where we come from, and the implications of that for our current lives" (2015, 141). An existing discursive repertoire provides a set of tools that we can use to make sense of our experiences and to tell a convincing story. This story interacts with coexisting storylines by rejecting, reinforcing, or renegotiating competing knowledge formations. This also means that narratives do not emerge in a discursive vacuum, but indeed are heard and measured relative to established understandings of our surrounding (here the extractive order). The degree to which a narrative aligns with or rejects said order regulates the probability to which audiences find them convincing. This order – the discourse, or in narrative theory often referred to as a dominant or master narrative – serves as a commonsensical frame of reference that guides us to interpret our surrounding in a given way. The more powerful a symbolic order, the more it is constitutive of action (Rose 2001, 192–93). Such constitutive discourse can create order, control and delineate what we perceive as real and what is politically possible/comfortable for the body politic in a given sequence of events.

Narrative reiterations of the discourse/order organize sequences of events into a logical, coherent, and linear plot with which reality is made comprehensible for the story's audience (Bamberg 2004, 360). By constraining our actions the

extractive order organizes orderly coexistence as it provides rules to follow. For instance, a common understanding of the meaning given to traffic lights helps create order and prevent chaos. In this sense, discourse provides those that are embedded with a certain frame of reference against which to identify suitable action (Somers 1994, 38), here, green light telling us to walk. Such shared interpretive frames are considered especially powerful in that they are capable of naturalizing or normalizing meaning, they are taken for granted, taken to be true. An order that is accepted as commonsensical informs its listeners about what is right, wrong, acceptable, and objectionable. Given this naturalized status, we may in our everyday lives encounter various narrative performative expressions that we accept without contemplation. As we are embedded in the given discourse, we are unaware of it, sometimes unable to recognize them (Somers and Gibson 1994, 63), which I perceive to be the case for the extractive order. In her compelling account of the barriers produced by the inherently masculine language of the academic field of strategic security, Carol Cohn describes her gradual immersion into the ever more naturalized discourse and the effort involved in identifying the constitutive power inherent in the taken-for-granted:

[...] what had once been remarkable became unnoticeable. [...] once inside, I could no longer see it. Speaking the language, I could no longer really hear it. And once inside its protective walls, I began to find it difficult to get out. (Cohn 1987, 712–13)

Despite the constitutive power of discourse it is important to note that meaning is never fixed in its totality. It is fluid and constantly reproduced and renegotiated. Even narrative performative expressions that align with the extractive order can be challenged by competing performative expressions of misalignment. Tying back to our earlier discussion of the making of subjects, I assume that the stories we tell have the potential of reframing and renegotiating our “possible field of action” (Foucault 1982). Chantal Mouffe has argued that; “every order is political and based on some form of exclusion. There are always other possibilities that have been repressed and that can be reactivated” (2005, 18). Thus, any given order that is perceived as natural is merely a temporary fixation of meaning that despite its elevated status is susceptible to competition and change when contested by competing accounts. I view performative expressions as having the power to articulate challenges to momentarily fixed meaning by reactivating what has been repressed and to reframe what is considered misrepresented in reiterations of the order. While my initial focus is on the power of alignment, meaning the protection of the dominant order, I am in inquiries into the possibilities for social

change indebted to scholars situated in feminist and critical race theory, where stories frequently have been highlighted as powerful instruments for disrupting the sensible and challenging what dominant discourse has cemented as real or true. In these traditions, stories are considered to bear the potential of dismantling established, destructive hierarchies (Solórzano and Yosso 2002; Woodiwiss, Smith, and Lockwood 2017). Such narratives are commonly referred to as oppositional narratives (Lawson 2014), resistance narratives (Cermele 2010), counter-stories (Solórzano and Yosso 2002), or counter-narratives (Andrews and Bamberg 2004b). I read performative expressions that misalign and thereby disrupt the extractive order as *killjoy performativity*. Thus, I start from the extractive order and read narrative and material performative expressions as either reiterating the taken-for-granted extractive relationality to nature, or as reiterating alternatives to the dominant scheme. Though, there are of course performative expressions that neither reiterate nor challenge the extractive order. I understand these performative expressions still as aligning with comfort in that they do not question the discourse in which they are embedded.

I resist to a certain extent the common assumption that counter-stories emerge and break loose from within a dominant, original order. Instead, I hold that diverse discourses coexist, but they may be out of reach or unavailable to us. The common notion of countering master-narratives infers the prior existence of an already set frame, placing the counter-story as emerging as a reaction. This may well be the case at times, although, I want to challenge this view of the dominant discourse as temporally prior, and argue while one order is dominant, marginal narratives may well have been performed without having been heard or seen (see Spivak 2010). The relational approach to master/counter narratives – the latter emerging from and through the former – suggests that there are elements of one storyline that are “left intact” and are reproduced in another. It assumes that resistance occurs “from within” the dominant scheme, suggesting an inability to create distance and to liberate entirely (Bamberg 2004, 363). I follow scholars such as Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso (2002) who believe that counter-stories (or for us killjoy performative expressions) can have a life of their own and need not emerge solely in response to dominant stories. I want to illustrate this with reference to our earlier discussions on orientation. I have suggested that the collective body politic is geared or oriented toward extraction in a promise for the good life. With Ahmed, I have envisioned this as a line or the “path well trodden” (2006b, 554), controlling our gaze. Looking around (Tsing 2015) would be the work of a killjoy, inspecting the path, turning the head to search for an alternative discursive repertoire to make sense of the world. This would suggest a deviation

from an existing path or order, forming a new break-away path or alternative desire line (which is akin to the idea of emergence from within). Although, there may well be bodies that were never aligned, never setting even a foot on the dominant order's path, trotting elsewhere, and wondering why the aligned don't see them. I imagine these alternative lines in the likes of alternative "desire lines" (Bates 2017) – the lines that may emerge in a park next to asphalted tracks, since the goal that we have set our sight on is another than ordained through the predefined fantasy. While my primary interest is the ability of the order to uphold the fixation of the body politic on extraction, killjoy desires and their performative misalignment is analysed in its productive potential of creating change through discomfort. I aim for an inquiry into the power of discomfort to engage in performative reimagination of what is included and excluded, making available alternatives beyond the path. I aim to show that this approach to performative inquiry allows us to see the reiteration of alternative discourse as a tapping on the shoulder of the dominant body politic, a renegotiation of the "sensuous parameters of reality", a recalibration of "what can be seen and what can be heard" (Butler 2010, xi).

Data, coding & analysis

Performative reiterations and contestations of the extractive order are collected through a wide range of data.¹¹ The empirical data consists of 64 interviews, twelve observations, and a series of secondary material collected from publicly accessible output produced by actors that are vocal on mining in Gällöck/Kallak or green steel. Interview participants include those critical of mining in Gällöck/Kallak or green steel investments (which I classified as killjoys or KJ throughout interview excerpts in the analysis), local mining advocates (Mining in Jokkmokk or MJ), and green steel advocates (GS). These are classifications that I did not discuss openly with the participants but rather emerged from my interpretation of their respective affiliations, their vocal dismissal or embrace of the project of extraction. All interviews were held in Swedish¹² and transcribed

¹¹ In the [appendix](#), I have included a list of empirical material (interviews, observations, and secondary material).

¹² All quotes from interview material are translated into English by the author. This is not indicated at every quote in-text. However, since some of the secondary data is Swedish and some English, I indicate here whenever the quote is translated from Swedish.

and coded in their entirety not to lose out on nuances and theme overlap. Most interviews were held in person, although some were held online if their suitability did not match my fieldwork. Also, Stockholm-based interviewees such as state actors were interviewed online. The secondary material includes reports on mining and green industrialisation, documentation of the Kallak decision-making process (requested from the government archives), information material, website content, industry roadmaps, video footage of company statements, recorded seminars and workshops led by industry representatives available on various YouTube channels, publicly available statements made by industry and government representatives, parliamentary debates, art, documentary films, etc. Relevant actors include among others Svemin, The Swedish Mine (Den Svenska Gruvan), Jernkontoret, Mining For Generations, the state sponsored initiative Fossil Free Sweden (Fossilfritt Sverige), companies such as SSAB, LKAB, Vattenfall, H2 Green Steel, and JIMAB/Beowulf, state actors such as Bergsstaten, SGU and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, relevant municipal offices and the county administrative board, the Sami parliament and reindeer herding communities, and artists such as Sofia Jannok, Timimie and Maxida Mäarak, and Anders Sunna.

What constitutes the core of the empirics was collected in the form of interviews and field observations during two field trips to Norrbotten, or Sápmi. I spent one month in May-June and one in November-December 2022 in the towns of Luleå, Boden, Gällivare/Malmberget, Kiruna, and Jokkmokk. I identified these towns as relevant places of inquiry given the locations of mining and green steel projects and by locating interview participants that actively express opinions about green steel investments or mining in Gällok/Kallak in either a personal or occupational capacity. Though, these categories are not clearly drawn and most of the identified interviewees that I contacted for one of the localities also expressed experiences and opinions of the other. The locally represented organizations or actors that I have identified for the collection of secondary data have also functioned as an initial contact point for interviews. These are among others the municipal offices, the county administrative board, local branches of various relevant NGOs, Sami parliament and reindeer herding communities, and mining and steel company employees. In addition to locally represented actors, I have interviewed a smaller number of actors working on a national level with green steel investments, such as the government assigned coordinator Peter Larsson, a Swedish energy grid employee, and two employees working with the national fund for just transitions. Participants that are visible in the debate on Gällok/Kallak have initially been identified through various Facebook groups for and against the initiation of the

mine. Here, I have identified individuals that are especially vocal in the debate and contacted them via social media or telephone. This strategy was fruitful on the anti-mining side, where identified actors were responsive and keen on meeting. Initial contacts with two key actors in the resistance to the mining project also helped gain others' trust, wherein many told me they had asked my two initial contacts whether I was reliable before agreeing to meet with me. Apart from the Facebook page, I have also contacted other public figures that speak out on the issue such as artists, environmental and human rights activists, and former or current local politicians. Many subsequent contacts also emerged through referral from participants.

The contact with locals favouring mining in Gállok/Kallak was more challenging. Before entering the field, I had only received a small number of vague 'let's see when you are here' responses and after the first field trip only conducted three such interviews. I was told by these three participants but also opponents to the mining project that they were not surprised by this outcome, referencing the infected nature of the issue leaving only a few mining advocates who still speak out. One interviewee told me that since the issue divides the town, people rather keep their opinions to themselves as not to lose customers or friends. On my second fieldtrip, I had gotten a tip that the local café is the place to be if I want to meet mining enthusiasts (or the term commonly used by critics 'mine-huggers'). Sitting there behind a local newspaper made it easy to chit chat with the café's common crowd – workers recharging on their morning breaks. My second visit to Jokkmokk also coincided with a JIMAB information meeting, where I took the opportunity to chat with participants and arrange several meetings.

Taken together, I have conducted 64 interviews with as many participants, of which 30 were with active opponents of the mine in Gállok or more general critics of industrial expansion in the North, ten with local advocates of the mine, and 24 with green steel advocates. Six of these interviews were follow-up interviews during the second field trip, where I contacted interviewees whose answers triggered additional questions during the transcription process, or those who noted that they could not yet disclose certain information at our first meeting. In seven interviews more than one interviewee participated. The interviews lasted between 25 minutes to three hours, depending on the nature of the conversation. One conversation lasted only for about 15 minutes during the JIMAB information meeting's mingle and did not take the shape of a formal interview. The chats in the city café also did not follow a list of questions but rather had an open format. While critics of green steel or mining in Gállok/Kallak generally met

with me in a more open-ended matter with several interviews lasting 2-3 hours, in the green steel context interviewees usually dedicated an hour to me during their working time, which was the common length of these conversations. Local mining advocates were in general less elaborate in their answers, and it was made clear to me, often in brief responses that it is all about jobs and being able to stay in Jokkmokk. Still, also here in some more lengthy meetings locals working in mines or mine-related jobs were keen to share their views.

I entered the field with a set of semi-structured interview questions, three versions with slight changes for the groups I had identified (KJ, MJ, GS). During the first couple of interviews the list of questions came to good use and guided the talks to a rather large extent. After a while, I returned to the questions only toward the end of the interview to check if we had covered the main themes. As such, the interviews had a rather open setting and the participants largely dictated the directions we were heading. My role was here to pose follow-up questions and ask them to elaborate on formulations, concepts, or topics they did or did not raise. Whenever the conversation halted, I intercepted with one of the by then memorized questions. Though, I tried to allow for silences and not rush through them with new questions, which often led to the participants adding to their previous points or taking us into yet another direction. In the less formal settings such as the city café I did not use the interview guide but rather initiated a conversation by asking open questions about their opinion on the mine, telling them I was there to research the mining project, or asking them about an upcoming information meeting that was advertised in the local newspaper. Responding to interviewee preferences, interviews were held either at participants' place of work, in their homes, at cafés, or my temporary home in Jokkmokk. During some meetings I joined participants to various industry sites, walked through a steel factory, a site for a planned steel mill, or reindeer pastures. These instances gave a setting that allowed for directed questions in relation to materiality. For instance, visiting the land for the planned steel mill in Boden, I asked a research participant how it makes him feel to look over the land, which was an especially fruitful exercise.

I conducted twelve observations that included walks through localities that are framed as green steel, traditional steel, or mining towns in the data such as Luleå, Boden, Gällivare/Malmberget, Gällök/Kallak, Jokkmokk, and Kiruna. I also joined a guided tour to the underground mine in Kiruna, visited a horse race organized by H2GS for interested local entrepreneurs, workshops organized by LTU, a tour of the Swerim research factory in Luleå, and participated in a JIMAB

information meeting for local citizens in Jokkmokk about the current state of the mining project. I visited reindeer pasturelands and participated during the slaughter of a reindeer, its shooting, skinning, and cleaning in an enclosed pasture site, with reindeer herders telling me about the process. During these observations, I studied the ways in which bodies move in space and how their movement in relation to discursive citationality and sedimentations may reinforce or challenge the extractive order. For instance, bodies may through their interaction with language and materiality help shape land into spaces of industrial expansion or of reindeer pastures. Bodies also figured in the data in protest, conducting prospective drilling, singing, chanting, playing Sami drums or meditating on land, or reinforcing the allure of mining through mining industry attire and the common vision of heavy industry vehicles in cities and country roads. I also observed the materiality of land, towns, and other materializations that reinforce or challenge the extractive order. These materializations include physical barricades, flags and art positioned to hinder the advancement of machinery, reindeer lichen in old forests, fences erected to enclose mining sites, clear-cut forests, tractor tracks cutting through mud, new roads, trucks transporting ore, information plaques about town districts that were moved because of a mining deposit, abandoned houses close to mining pits, motor vehicles in front yards, cracks in housing façades as a result of quakes, vibrations, and explosions.

Starting during fieldwork and a significant amount of time thereafter I transcribed interviews and field notes. I coded the interviews and excerpts from the secondary material in the qualitative data analysis tool NVivo, which allowed me to grasp overarching themes and patterns as well as connections, dissimilarities and similarities among actors and data sources in the large data set. Initial coding generated about 400 codes that I organized and merged where appropriate to arrive at about 190 somewhat more overarching though still rather detailed codes. These overarching codes or what are in the programme referred to as parent codes were further nuanced through additional child nodes to allow for a more detailed reading of identified themes. For example, a parent code such as 'nature' has in the data set child codes that refer to biodiversity, untouched nature, Natura 2000, and dependence on nature. As such, I could throughout the process choose a suitable level of detail in the reading and cross-referencing of codes. I investigated the coded data through various queries looking for quantity of codes in different interview groups (KJ, MJ, GS) and data sources and cross-referenced codes to find overlap in themes. With overlap I refer to different codes that emerge in the same text excerpts. Given the large data set, I had some troubles when cross-referencing codes in NVivo, with initial attempts to inquire the quantity of overlap of all

codes leading to a system crash. This led me to break down this process by letter, cross-referencing all A's with all codes, then all B's and so on. From the still large number of parent codes, I identified the most significant patterns through frequency queries and code overlaps. These patterns served as guiding themes for the analysis.

When reading the data, I followed a set of stages that aided me in identifying relevant performative expressions, how and if they align or challenge the extractive order and how their performative expressions may be viewed as shaping matter, as stabilizing or sedimenting the order. To start with, I familiarized myself with the data and engaged in meticulous reading and re-reading. I interrogated the data by asking a set of questions borrowed from Gillian Rose (2001, 209–20) and slightly modified to make fit: How is the story structured, what kind of knowledge does it reproduce, does the story make claims to truth and does it attempt to persuade its audience of this claim, are the arguments on which the claim builds linear or are there disruptions, how do these disruptions emerge and how are they dealt with discursively, is the story coherent or not, how does the narrative relate to the dominant order or possible alternatives, how do actors engage with and make use of others' narratives? Also, importantly, I read the data asking: is the promise of extraction reiterated and how, are there affective elements in the performative expressions and what do they do? My effort to recognize the ways in which actors align through their performative expressions requires attentiveness to the power of epistemology, including an endeavour to reveal assumptions, naturalized identities, dichotomies, binaries, neutrality of language, contradictions, social categories, hierarchies, and suggested boundaries (Ackerly and True 2010, 22–31).

My interest in comfort, discomfort, and other emotive indicators, invites to wonder how such expressions are detected in the data. I am not necessarily interested in identifying specific emotive conditions, but rather, I read orientations toward extraction as an emotive/affective investment in the project of extraction or alternative visions of the future respectively. For instance, I understand a reiteration of the necessity of extraction as an affective position in that the aligned are moved by their object of desire to seek physical or ideational proximity to it. More specifically, I detect affective investments through instances of comfort read as linearity and discomfort as irregularity in the data. To exemplify, a comfortable performative expression may suggest that we need to open more mines to ensure job security. In this linear form of reasoning causality is established between two or more nodes, which displays an undisturbed quest

for proximity to the object of desire. This linearity is in the data identified through frequency of overlaps between codes and the sequence between the emergence of different themes. For instance, the code 'employment' frequently overlaps with data that is also coded as 'mining+' (positive sentiments toward mining), suggesting a supposed linearity or causality between the two codes. Elsewhere, comfort is identified in the data through participants' associations that arose amid my direct inquiries into the prerequisites for of a happy future. This linearity through which I detect comfort is in narrative theory understood as a "sequential ordering of events" (Patterson and Monroe 1998, 316) forming a plot in a process of "causal employment" (Somers and Gibson 1994, 59). In this way, linearity infers comfort by way of creating supposed coherence for the narrator and their audience, established through assumptions about the causal connections between the sequential elements from a plot's beginning to end (Patterson and Monroe 1998, 329). The end of the plot is here constituted by participants' reference to the future envisioned through the realization of the object of desire that they are directed toward in their telling of stories. The direction of linear employment is indicative not only of the affective motivation of the narrators' orientation toward certain objects of desire rather than others (Ahmed 2006b; Hammack and Pilecki 2012, 93f), but also the embodiment of the plot in bodily movement and other social practices (Hammack and Pilecki 2012, 89; Patterson and Monroe 1998, 316). With this I mean that I read linear/causal employment to suggest an emotive and embodied investment toward a certain goal (e.g., mining).

Discomfort is in the data identified in ruptures or discontinuities (Andrews and Bamberg 2004b, 5; Tamboukou 2015, 37) of the linear plot, even if only momentary. Similar to comfort, discomfort is also evident in code overlaps in which negative emotive responses such as fears of unknown futures or anger about sensed restrictions to one's freedom or capacity reside alongside mention of various obstacles such as nature conservation or Sami rights. This suggests that the above noted linear employment is disturbed until the comfort that is linearity can be restored. I also identify discomfort through the emergence of codes, meaning that certain themes emerge first after my direct inquiries, after silences or absences, or material reminders such as timber trucks passing by. I code alterations in movement (e.g. slapping one's thigh, leaning back in the chair), changes in posture, or sighs that coincide with such discursive ruptures as embodied signs of discomfort. Silences in narratives are telling of possible avenues of discomfort. For instance, I caused discomfort – meaning I broke linearity without the participants' initiation – by inquiring themes such as the Sami peoples or environmental degradation if they were omitted in linear stories of the

aligned.¹³ As such, linearity seems to require “selective appropriation” (Somers and Gibson 1994, 59), a selective inclusion of some and omission of other elements. This form of discomfort often resulted in a sense of confusion in attempts to “integrate” (Somers and Gibson 1994, 60) the theme that I probed into the existing plot. For some, it resulted in a renegotiation of aspects of the plot (e.g., by noting that intrusion in nature indeed is a problematic effect of extraction) and for others a dismissal of the theme and return to linearity/comfort (e.g., through discursive breaks such as ‘but’).

On the matter of absences in narratives, it is often argued that stories highlight the remarkable, extraordinary, the exceptional rather than the mundane, the commonplace or the obvious (Patterson and Monroe 1998). This would suggest that what is performed in a given narrative informs us of the narrators’ sense of boundaries, of what they find worth mentioning and therefore reiterate. It also suggests that what is left out may in fact be either insignificant or too obvious to include. As proposed by Wendy Brown (2005) silences also bear political value in their power to regulate discourses. They are not merely “aesthetic” ruptures of discourse and are thus not the opposite of speech but may in fact be performative expressions in their own right. In a similar fashion, Rose suggests that “[...] absences can be as productive as explicit naming” (2001, 219). In this way, the absences for instance in stories of the aligned are indicative of the power of the extractive order to regulate desire toward extraction. The fantasy that extraction results in happiness, then, can be read as a “straightening device” (Ahmed 2007, 159) that requires linearity in its narrative reiterations. But listening to silences may not only inform us about that which is silenced, but indeed also about that which is considered commonsensical, self-evident to a degree that it need not be uttered. Silences are also opportunities for other performative expressions to emerge, as they are sites that allow for “insurrectionary noise” as they may be “filled with explosive counter tales” (Brown 2005, 84). In this sense, what is omitted can be the onset of alternative performativity. Thus, the way in which performative expressions address silences in alignment can be understood as utterances of alternative desire lines and renegotiations of the sensible.

¹³ See [Research Ethics & staying with discomfort](#) for a discussion about discomfort in interview situations.

Positionality in the extractive order

I am writing from within the body politic that is geared toward extraction. This collective body is oriented toward extraction and economic growth as the promise of happiness, toward the potential that lies beneath the earth's surface in the happy object of the un-extracted resource. I suggest with this position that the extractive order is difficult to escape even when actively attempting to disconnect. I understand that this positioning within the body politic is not unproblematic. It does not infer a desire for camaraderie and is not to be read as a statement of solidarity with the collective body that craves mining as its source of nourishment. In fact, this research is very much inspired by my bafflement and frustration about the persistent reliance on the self-defeating system through which human-nature relations are organized today, which has its expressions in resource-heavy living, mass and luxury consumerism. However, while wilfully desiring to divorce from the dominant extractive relationality to land, it is an attempt to withstand Donna Haraway's "god trick of seeing everything from nowhere" (Haraway 1988, 581), but to acknowledge my embeddedness in its naturalized knowledge structures. It is an attempt to withstand the temptation to assume that I am beyond the reach of the extractive order just because I perceive myself as critical to the project of extractivism. Indeed, I am situated at a sufficient physical distance from extraction – in the Austrian capital and later in the Swedish South, that allows for a positioning privileged enough to be oriented toward the supply end rather than the extractive force of the mine. I am as a white woman and western educated academic positioned at a safe distance from Boaventura de Sousa Santos' (2014) abyss, within an "epistemology of blindness" in which the hegemonic gaze fails to remark that which does not align. Still, the anti-capitalist spirit of the late 60s and 70s echoed loudly in our modest, bohemian Viennese apartment, and did so in dissonance with the pro-growth, neoliberal sentiments presented as the only alternative. My first encounters with Sweden were through the romanticizing eyes of my father, who has left the country at a young age and reminisced about neighbourliness and strangers greeting each other during walks in the forest. While trusting this vision then, my now 15 years in Sweden have demanded a readjustment. Still, it is a vision that fascinates me and that I see reflected in various aspects of Swedish exceptionalism.

While actively trying to misalign, I am aware that I am embedded in a structure of "inherited" (Ahmed 2007) complicity that positions me in closer proximity to privilege. It allows me to move relatively comfortably in certain spaces (Ahmed 2007, 154) that may be less comfortably inhabitable by others, in which others

may be stopped. Still, following José Medina, one must also be attentive to the “hermeneutical insensitivity” that results from privilege, possibly placing me at an interpretative disadvantage (2012, 211). He argues that it may not be in the interest of a subject carrying privilege to self-scrutinize as that “undermines their authority and requires them to pay attention to things that can be uncomfortable and disempowering” (Medina 2012, 214). This disadvantage requires attention to potential shortcomings in detecting the order and its effects. It infers a responsibility to confront our “interpretative limitations” (Medina 2012, 216), to ensure that the reading that I provide is not complicit to the dominant order and the “modern/colonial world system” (Mignolo 1999) that I intend to disrupt. This is a crucial first step in delinking from the acclaimed singularity that the Western extractive order presents, and to acknowledge it as one option in a plurality of knowledge systems.

This positioning allows me to enter the field with curiosity guided by an endeavour to delink and re- or unlearn, to be attentive to alternatives, other knowledges that are subsumed or cast aside by the taken-for-granted understanding of extraction for happiness. Charles Mills (2017) notes that white ignorance functions to protect the collective memory from contradictory accounts. This ignorance selectively dismisses and excludes knowledge and experiences to allow us not to engage with that which disturbs our comfort. Taking this seriously, I have to “cultivate [my] own epistemic disobedience” to attempt a “liberation from assuming an expected role in the systems of oppression” (Velásquez Atehortúa 2020, 158). This requires persistency in “learning to unlearn” (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012) not to abide by the limits of the metaphorical abyss of the extractive order, to relearn not to only look beyond it but actively question its’ taken-for-granted reasoning. As I will elaborate in more detail below, I believe this unlearning to require exploring the sources of my comfort and embracing discomfort. For Katie Boudreau Morris, “nurturing a habit of discomfort” in our research practices has the potential of building “decolonizing solidarities” (2017, 456, 466). Yet, I perceive the extractive order that I am embedded in to be self-defeating and its loss of influence a prerequisite for transformation. I take seriously the responsibility of “cultivat[ing] hermeneutical openness” (Medina 2012, 216) and assuming the role as a feminist killjoy (Ahmed 2010b) within the normative order.

Intending to unlearn means for example to perceive my research participant not simply as informants from whom to extract information that I deem relevant, but to strive for epistemic interaction and cooperation with “inquirers” whose

“epistemic subjectivity” allows for communicative relations of reciprocity and reversibility (Medina 2012). This quest for reciprocity in a co-creation rather than extraction or imposition of knowledge also speaks to de Sousa Santos’ “postabyssal knowledge” through “nonextractive methodologies”, characterized by “wanting to know with the group instead of the conventional wanting to know about the group” (2014, 156). In interview situations, I have tried to implement this quest to unlearn by actively deviating from questionnaires guided by interview participants, initiating discussions about the practical implications of the research results, and the format of the output that may be most helpful for the research participants. Co-creation and reciprocity were also an important guiding principle of various walks and movements through space together with the research participants. Experiencing the encounter together was an attempt to break hierarchies in data collection, where participants guided me through a terrain more familiar and comfortable to them than me. Non-extractive knowledge production also importantly speaks to questions of ownership. It implies that the knowledge shared and produced in the research process is not mine once exiting the field but is the result of collective work and should to the greatest extent possible be treated as commonly owned and shared. This mindset has implications for the dissemination of the results in a way that is beneficial for the participants (De Sousa Santos 2014, 156). With this, I also want to resist the extractive assumption that knowledges of the margins come into existence first through their absorption into the Western/academic realm. However, practically the ownership of the data is inevitably surrendered to the university archive post-publication, which may be interpreted as becoming complicit to academic knowledge extraction. Here, it is again important to provide for knowledge production and output that goes beyond the confines of academia. I have upheld the contact with the research participants to ensure their continued involvement and inquiry to the extent possible for my own and their workload.

Starting with the extractive order

Sandra Harding has argued that one ought to start research “from the daily lives of those groups forced to live in the shadows” (2008, 225) of modernity and progress. She urges us to study “from below” and trace power upward in order to allow us to recognize it. While I put great emphasis on the experiences that are dismissed by the dominant fantasy of extraction it is the question of the starting point that troubles me here. Is there a risk that I do not perceive the silencing effects of the extractive order when starting my inquiry facing it, therefore initially

allowing it to orient my gaze? Although, while ignored in the Swedish story of mining I hear anti-mining outcries ringing forcefully toward those that are receptive, even if overlooked in the taken-for-granted order. The variety of different actors included as participants in the research – both aligned and at the receiving end of the order’s silencing power – is helpful in preventing me from proclaiming “certainty” about the essence of the order, but instead maintaining a “language of inquiry” (Yanow 2009, 581) in my reading. I believe that such a reading can aid in grasping what is fixed and excluded in the order.

But the caution persists: does starting with power risk re-centring the extractive order? Do I risk reinforcing power structures through my entry point? Important here is Achille Mbembe’s notion that we must relocate the site of theorizing away from the West and resist treating “the Rest” as the “kingdom of ethnography” in which theory can be tested (2017, 214). This tendency is critiqued as having enshrined a form of inquiry that reinforces the vision of that which lies beyond the West as lacking, as inadequate and incomplete (Chakrabarty 2000). Though, while my starting point is the Swedish extractive order, I am interested in what Sweden is ‘lacking’, where the body politic is lead astray by the fantasy of extraction, regulating its desire and constructing an incomplete and inadequate, self-defeating sense of self. This is an active stance of resisting complicity in reproducing normalized silences. This involves disrupting the claim for rationality in the orientation toward extraction, of mining expansion as environmentally unproblematic and void of colonial implications. I therefore hold that starting with power can in fact be a productive exercise in dismantling the injustices inherent in the order. By pointing to the silences of the order that work to reinforce historical violence, a more “authentic” (Trouillot 2015) story can be told, one in which progress and prosperity is not detached from but in fact one side of the coin that is the “modern/colonial world system” (Mignolo 1999). It is important however, to be attentive to the regulating power of the order throughout the research process. This means for example refraining from discursive complicity in labelling state interest mining sites as “Swedish” or essentializing groups and narratives as monolithic.

Research ethics & staying with discomfort

The research has been reviewed by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority and follows ethical guidelines related to issues such as reflections on potential harms and benefits, consent, the handling of data and the like. However, generalized ethical guidelines have been critiqued in indigenous research for insufficiently

addressing what it means “to be ethical from the point of view of indigenous peoples” (Drugge 2016b, 270), which is why an engagement with Sami perspectives on ethical procedures is vital. For instance, it is standard ethical practice to strive for the greatest possible level of confidentiality in efforts to protect participants’ integrity. However, indigenous research has critiqued anonymization as potentially harmful when researching with indigenous peoples. It has been argued that through anonymity the extractive tendencies of the relationality between researcher and the researched is amplified, risking a “stealing” of knowledge when there is no owner named (Svalastog and Eriksson 2010). Anonymity also risks rendering individuals invisible, submerged under a homogenizing group identification (Kulchyski 2005). In fact, two of my participants noted they may want to appear by name. However, during my stay at Várdduo, the Centre for Sámi Research in Umeå researchers were critical about the visibility of some participants in instances in which not all have the same possibility. They noted that providing visibility for some may risk disempowering those who may not have the power and security to appear by name. While I don’t want to render anyone invisible I arrived at the conclusion that confidentiality and the wellbeing of all participants was the most desirable way forward. I reached out to the two interviewees in question to ensure that they were comfortable with this decision. Elsewhere, for some of the aligned anonymity could not be provided given certain interviewees’ unique roles, which I discussed with them to ensure that their consent is informed.

Another matter to consider was research exhaustion that Sami communities may experience amid a rising academic interest (Löf and Stinnerbom 2016). I entered the field knowing that some of my participants are approached rather frequently by journalists and academics, and that while others are in less pressing demand research exhaustion may be experienced individually nonetheless. I therefore engaged conversations giving potential participants an out, being attentive not to pressure them into a commitment. For instance, I ended up renting a room in a potential participant’s house and after loose discussions about an interview I encouraged a friendship, instead sensing that our Airbnb liaison may affect her to agree to the interview. Being attentive to participants’ time and levels of engagement is also important when it comes to efforts of collaboration (Drugge 2016a; Löf and Stinnerbom 2016). In an effort to break, at least to some extent, with the tendencies in research to place knowledge production within the researcher rather than the communities from which the knowledge originates (Drugge 2016b, 274) I have given much space in the analysis to interview excerpts and have discussed the research at various follow-up conversations with

participants to ensure harmony in the direction that I found the empirics to have guided me. Although, I refrained from leaving too much of the interpretive work to the participants in order not to overburden them in times where their resources are already stretched in processes of appealing a government decision and withstanding extractive pressures more generally. In terms of dissemination of results, I have discussed best ways in which research results should be packaged to be most helpful for the community and I am planning a release party of sorts after the defense.

I go on to revisit my theorizing on discomfort at this point to discuss ethical deliberations regarding my own and participants' emotive responses in research situations. Given my positioning of immersed distance from the extractive order I entered the research process expecting my own and others' discomfort to be triggered in data collection, analysis, presenting my research and findings for diverse crowds, and in facing potential avenues of complicity. As suggested by bell hooks, exposing myself to "new ways of knowing may create estrangement where there was none" (1994, 43), it may cause pain and disturb my sense of relating to my surrounding. Discomfort may for instance come with the entry into the field in my position as a researcher in a context in which state financed 'research' historically has been equivalent to racialized violence, craniometric measurements, and race-biological mapping (Drugge 2016b). Famously, Linda Tuhiwai Smith has stressed that "[t]he word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary", as it "stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories" (2012, 1). There is an ethical endeavour not to reproduce such power dynamics and extractive relationalities to my research participants. Not engaging with the discomfort inherent in my positionality but brushing it off, moving along, dismissing it as irrelevant and returning to the comfort of institutional privilege could have instead risked naturalizing problematic relationalities (Trouillot 2015, 129) in existing North-South and Sweden-Sápmi power dynamics. It is therefore important that instead of fleeing it to embrace the discomfort of my own position. This requires me to stay with the colonial implications of my presence in Sápmi and actively question my presence regarding historic violations exerted in the name of 'research'. This has uttered itself for instance in approaching the participants that find themselves marginalized by the extractive order through an open conversation about my normative positioning and criticism against extractive advances. I found that this initial conversation was important to gain participants' trust and ensure them that the research is not financed by or in other ways complicit with the mining or steel industry despite my possibly problematic association with the state in my employment at a

Swedish university. In theory, this conversation also risked opening up for inquiries into my persona in a way that could lay bare potential doubt of whether or not it is in fact my place to conduct such research. This was not the case among the misaligned, but in fact, discussions into my reflections on colonial power and fears of complicity seemed to reassure my participants and strengthen trust in interview situations.

The emphasis on unlearning and relearning discussed above also meant being attentive to my discomfort in attempts to track avenues of unlearning. A feeling of discomfort may be a sign of rupture, of epistemic or “affective dissonance” (Hemmings 2012) that may present interesting avenues of further inquiry. Instead of fleeing or retracting to “epistemic comfort zones” (Chadwick 2021, 8) steering into discomfort may result in a greater understanding of the extractive order’s protective tendencies. Thinking about my own positionality in this way, as one in which I relentlessly must be attentive to my entanglement in the dominant order that I am critiquing as inadequate, incomplete, and in fact self-sabotaging, I met discomfort with curiosity, and a language of inquiry in an active attempt of de-linking. In this way, I read discomfort during fieldwork and elsewhere in the research process as instances in which I had to practice an additional level of “passionate humility” (Yanow 2009), to acknowledge the error of my epistemic situatedness and to tease out and deconstruct the assumptions that caused my unease. I turn to some examples below.

There are numerous examples of my discomfort in the research process, most often related to encounters with the aligned. Starting this research project, my critical stance toward the project of extractivism left me rather sceptical to mining advocacy and painted the field in too binary terms. While my position on extractivism has not changed I had to face discomfort in recognizing my own preconceptions. For instance, I was anxious ahead of corporate mingles and events, a sentiment that peaked on my way to a business event held at a horserace track. Prior to the event, my imagination went straight to sunhats, monocles, and southern US accents, which of course was entirely misplaced. The conversations I had around the dinner table during the race were welcoming and fascinating, with local entrepreneurs and others that showed interest in the green steel investment lifting issues related to extraction while reinforcing its local need. They raised issues such as insufficient access to health care or the paradox of energy abundance but not having streets lit in the nights. The discomfort that I sensed in anticipation of this event was worth exploring, which allowed me to better grasp the nuances of the phenomena of extraction in the North. This shift in

increased sensitivity on my part also resulted in additional discomfort in the form of a bad conscience about not being entirely open about the severity of my critique in discussions with the aligned. Green steel advocates without fail treated me as an ally in interview situations. We had of course a conversation about the purpose of the research and my endeavour to understand holistically the hopes and risks of green steel and mining expansion, but this did not seem to curb their enthusiasm and comfort in sharing, for instance, outrage about critics. It discomforted me here for instance, when green steel advocates shared in very pleasant conversations their pride about their involvement not least to provide a better future for their children. This sense of trust that they seemed to place in our encounter left me wondering if I risk breaking it through the critical nature of my research.

At the same time, I wondered if the quality of the data were to decline if I had laid out my criticism in its entirety. On the other hand, the thought of them closing off if they knew my exact position may be another preconception. In fact, one of the green steel advocates that I interviewed contacted me some weeks after and asked for another chat because he had seen my research profile on the university website. I was immediately worried he would withdraw from the research because he found me to be too critical. His motive was instead to discuss ways in which the region could divorce from a perceived need to extract without having to forfeit economic development. Another interviewee noted in the initial discussion about the research aim that 'surely, you are objective because otherwise it is not research', to which I countered with a discussion about situatedness and that I do not make claims to neutrality in my research (Lawrence and Raitio 2016). In these cases, openness about my position did not alter or even increased the quality of the interviews. This suggests that I possibly could have pushed discomfort as a productive tool in interview situations more actively with the aligned. In fact, given my inquiry into the productive potential of discomfort, I suggest that some level of discomfort indeed is necessary also for the engagement with research participants, especially when it comes to the aligned. I make this distinction here between the aligned and misaligned given the empirical insight that the aligned assume an initial position of comfort in their telling of the story of extraction while the misaligned are embedded in the discomfort of the encounter with extraction. Indeed, while I let the aligned dwell in comfort in their initial telling of the story of extraction, I did actively aim to trigger discomfort by remarking silences in their accounts after they had exhausted their lines of thought. I did this by prompting engagements with Sami rights or biodiversity, forcing a rupture of linearity. Instigating even more discomfort for instance

through a more blunt revision of my position could have possibly generated greater potential for epistemic openness (hooks 1994), or else, retraction into comfort zones (Chadwick 2021; DiAngelo 2018). Others' image of me as an ally became clear when noting that it is good that people from the South spread information about the opportunities of the North, so that more young people, preferable women, would want to move there – accompanied by a wink and smile. Again, this triggered a sense of discomfort that regarding the expectations of research participants that I cannot meet and their potentially somewhat misplaced trust in the potentials that this research project may yield for their endeavours. Engaging with this discomfort allowed for a greater understanding of the hopes for development that participants place in extractive projects. Another example of my discomfort was triggered by expressions of hostility or racism in some of the interviews with proponents of mining. Here, my initial reaction was a moral duty to interject, though, I chose to interpret these expressions as part of the story of local alignment. I found this to be especially troublesome in my role as a researcher and in deliberations about the risks and benefits of the research.

Some of the aligned were also initially discomforted with my presence in the North as a researcher from a southern university, with critiques uttered in a general lack of interest in the troubles of the North; 'nobody cares until something like this happens, but aha, now people suddenly want to come here'. One of the misaligned denied her participation after having seen on social media that I was in contact with someone with whom they did not agree. Others again expressed scepticism toward researchers in general with reference to earlier experiences in which promises to feed back to research participants were broken, or also referencing scepticism to universities as extensions of the state. Having these different roles imposed upon me was uncomfortable though fruitful, since it forced me to face the potential risks that are associated with sloppy research as well as my own positioning in systems of power. Instead of fleeing discomfort by insisting on my innocence in these systems I attempted constant scrutiny of my own position and potential risks for reproducing relations of power. One example is the attention that I gave to studying Swedish colonialism and resource politics (Lawrence and Raitio 2016), and the importance to portray extractive harm accurately according to Sami perspectives.

Being embedded in a southern university setting, advancing the notion of Swedish colonialism was not always an easy undertaking. Before I was entirely familiar with the everyday components of Swedish exceptionalism the pushback that I received startled me. As a tendency of fragility (DiAngelo 2018), the thought entered my

mind that I may run into difficulties of finding postdoc funding when seen as a troublemaker. Though, in hindsight I interpret such pushback as evidence of the power of the extractive order to ensure linearity – meaning that a disregard of Sweden’s history of colonialism allows for a continuation of extractive land and resource management in Sápmi – that has bolstered my conviction about the necessity of this research.

The case of Swedish extractivism: Two localities

I am focusing on the case of Swedish extractivism to study the comfort of alignment. Within this case, I have chosen two instances or localities in which the extractive desire is articulated in Swedish administered Sápmi. I view these localities of extraction as two nodes in a grander web of industrial expansionism. This wider web of extractivism is visible throughout the data, with interviewees referencing Gállok or green steel vis-à-vis other incisions in land as cumulative or adding onto existing pressures. The two localities are in the analysis treated as intertwined. This is important in order not to reproduce the idea that extractive impulses of mining pits or steel mills are unrelated to ripple effects such as energy and transport infrastructure, wind and waterpower factories, clear-cutting, climate change, and biodiversity loss. Illustrating them as connected also allows highlighting the necessity of iron ore extraction for the project of green steel.

One example of extractivism is the prospective iron ore mining project in Gállok/Kallak, Jokkmokk municipality. British Beowulf Mining has in March 2022 been awarded an exploitation permit in one of the most controversial and outdrawn Swedish permit processes, initiated in 2013. The prolonged controversy over the initiation of the mine has in November 2021 shifted into an even higher gear in light of a push to produce fossil free steel by 2045 in Boden, Luleå, and Gällivare. This initiative, which makes for our second example of extractive endeavours, has increased tensions in the Gállok/Kallak case. With the need for iron ore for the production of fossil free steel, Gállok finds itself absorbed into a climate urgency narrative, a shift that is by some critics, there among members of the Sami resistance, labelled as an expansion of the repertoire of exclusion, under the banner of green colonialism (Arctic Circle 2020; see also Normann 2021). These two localities are excellent examples of the Swedish extractive rationale and give an interesting insight into the promise of extraction for progress and environmentalism.

The case: Swedish extractivism in Sápmi

Extractive activities in Sweden are to a large extent concentrated in the high North and takes the shape of mining projects, hydropower dams, wind power factories, tourism, and forestry. Iron ore especially has alongside timber played an important role in Sweden's development, facilitating its advancement from a poor agricultural nation (Evans and Rydén 2013). Forestry and metals still figure prominently and make up a quarter of Sweden's exports (Blomström and Kokko 2002). Iron ore extraction was initially concentrated in mid-Sweden's *Bergslagen* before its expansion through the North. Processing was initially fuelled by charcoal requiring large amounts of Swedish timber, and later by fossil metallurgical coal. During the time of charcoal processing, the state held a central role in controlling production processes, among other things to avoid too high levels of deforestation and resource overuse. These state-imposed limits were liberalized from the 1850s onward as a response to technical advancements that introduced coal and coke fuelled processing (Blomström and Kokko 2002, 11). The iron and steel industry was triggered by export demand, with its peak in the 1720s when iron and steel made up 75 per cent of Swedish exports (Isacson 2018). Later on, there was also a rising domestic demand for iron and steel among other things for large railway and energy infrastructure investments (Blomström and Kokko 2002). Notably, the Iron Ore Line (*Malmbanan*) was constructed in the 1880s to connect mines in the so-called Ore Fields (*Malmfälten*) with transport harbours in Luleå and Narvik.

Another important wave of liberalization in the mining industry came in the 1990s. Informed by an ambition to open up land for increased investments into the extractive industry, regulations that limited the engagement of foreign actors in prospecting were dismantled and the rule stipulating a 50 per cent state share in private mines was removed for the benefit of a 0.05 per cent mineral fee (Envall 2015; Liedholm Johnson 2000). This deregulatory mindset continues to inform Sweden's resource management and is enshrined in the mineral strategy's ambition to uphold its image as attractive for international investments, and its role as Europe's leading mining nation (Government Offices of Sweden 2013). Sweden has often been represented on rankings of the most attractive global destinations for mining investments assessing geological and economic potential and host countries' favourable mining policies (Fraser Institute 2020). Sweden houses 60 per cent of Europe's deposits of iron ore and accounts for 90 per cent of its extraction (Persson, Harnesk, and Islar 2017, 21). Between the years of 2000-2022, an average of 178 exploration permits – which allows permit holders

to inspect bedrock qualities and mining potential – were granted per year (Bergsstaten 2023b). There is great domestic and international interest in Swedish natural resources. Although, there is a slight decrease in recent years when it comes to the number of mines that are currently in production. While there were 18 active mines in 2014, the number has dropped to twelve in 2023. All of these twelve mines extract metal (iron, base metals or gold), nine of them are located in Sápmi (Bergsstaten 2023a).

Gruvor och aktuella koncessioner i Sverige dec 2022
Totalt 12 metallgruvor i drift

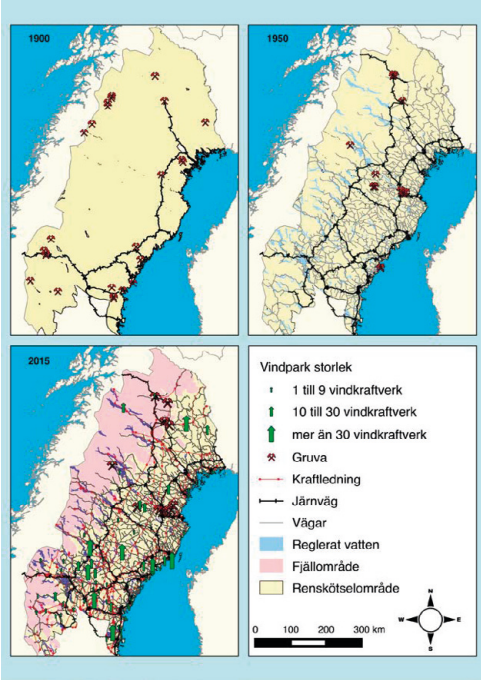


Figure 1. On the left: SGU (2022) map of mines and concessions in Sweden, status of December 2022.

Figure 2. On the right: Cumulative pressures on Sápmi. The arrows indicate wind power factories, the hammers mines, the lines various infrastructures (energy, railway, roads), and the blue areas indicate controlled waterways. Source: Larsen et al. (2016).

Extractive activities are largely at odds with traditional claims to Sami land. Sápmi is the communal land of the Sami peoples, divided through national borders of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. Traditional indigenous land was divided as a result of the Swedish expansion competing for territory, resources, and trading routes with the Danish-Norwegian kingdom and Russia (Ojala and Nordin 2019, 103). The view of the North as an asset to the Swedish Crown, as a land of

opportunity accelerated with the discovery of silver deposits in Nasafjäll in the 1630s (Ojala and Nordin 2019). The historic dimensions of the Swedish expansion toward the North involved state investments in beneficial tax arrangements and exemption from army conscription for Swedish citizens' relocation to the North, churches that were established to Christianize the 'heathen' Sami population, new regulations and land ownership arrangements that served to favour cultivation rather than nomadic practices of subsistence and reinforce the value of reindeer herding elsewhere for instance to explore the economic value of the mountainous areas of the North (Hall 2020), and legitimizing of expansion through racialized othering as well as assimilation policies (Ojala and Nordin 2019). Through its perceived mineral resource abundance and the development opportunities with which it is associated, Sami territory has historically held the reputation of "Swedish America" and the "Land of the Future", of "India within our borders" (Sörlin 1988), or "the West Indies of the Swedes" (Ojala and Nordin 2015). Given the historic association of rights violations with extractive state ambitions, land has gained not only material but also symbolic importance for the Sami resistance.

The Sami were through the Reindeer Grazing Act of 1886 acknowledged as the original occupants of north Sweden, while maintaining that the land they used falls under the ownership of the Crown. Given the Sami peoples' traditionally nomadic lifestyle, it was argued that no ownership rights can be claimed over land that was not cultivated or otherwise altered (Mörkenstam 2019, 1723). Importantly, the right to use land that was enshrined in this policy was specifically oriented towards reindeer herding, leaving non-herding Sami peoples largely unaccounted for (Lantto and Mörkenstam 2008, 29). In a court case in 1966, reindeer herding communities (*samebyar*) voiced a renewed claim to ownership rights to certain areas of land with reference to Swedish colonization and eviction of the Sami peoples. The court ruled in 1981 to dismiss the claim, although, it resulted in the Sami Rights Commission being appointed in the following year. In the meantime, the Sami were in 1977 recognized as a national minority and as an official indigenous population (Mörkenstam 2019, 1723–24). In 1992, the Sami Parliament Act was formulated in an important step towards cultural autonomy. Its function is to monitor matters of interest to Sami culture, without inferring self-governance of any kind. The establishment of publicly elected Sami parliamentary representation in the Nordic countries was highly praised by the United Nations as a best practice model to allow for indigenous inclusion in the decision-making process (Mörkenstam 2019, 1720).

The Alta controversy in 1979-1982 – a Norwegian hydroelectric power dam project that led to thus far unprecedented Sami resistance – is commonly referenced as a starting point for increased recognition of the status of the Sami as an indigenous peoples in the Nordic countries (Minde 2001). In 1990, Norway was the first country to ratify ILO 169¹⁴. This is a binding convention that among other things recognizes indigenous peoples’ rights to self-determination and ownership in questions of land that has been used for traditional subsistence activities (Article 14-15, International Labour Organization 1989). It also grants the right to be consulted if extraction objectives of sub-surface resources fall under state ownership; “with a view to ascertaining whether and to what degree their interests would be prejudiced, before undertaking or permitting any programs for the exploration or exploitation of such resources pertaining to their lands” (ILO 1989, Article 15). In Sweden, the decision on ratification is tabled since the convention was formulated in the 1980s. While Sweden was involved in its drafting the attribution of ownership claims especially was “considered incompatible with Swedish legal tradition” (Mörkenstam 2019, 1726). As a result, Sweden has frequently received criticism from the UN for its poor protection of the Sami peoples and their disregard of indigenous interests (Lawrence 2014). Meanwhile, Sweden has signed the non-binding, but symbolically significant United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2010 (Lawrence and Mörkenstam 2016).

The principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) has internationally become an important buzzword for assessments of mining impact and rights violations. Rebecca Lawrence and Sara Moritz (2019) have shown that in practice, ethical responsibilities are often embraced discursively, yet, state and corporate mining advances alike continue to sidestep adequate consent negotiations with affected communities. In Sweden, the consultation requirements are outsourced through lax regulations to mining companies (Allard 2006; Lawrence and Moritz 2019). Also, a minimal interpretation of FPIC as consultations allows for ethical responsibilities to be met rather quickly, which effectively evades the need for indigenous consent (Lawrence and Kløcker Larsen 2017). There is an institutionalized assumption of co-existing, harmonizing land use interests and activities that builds on an image of Northern Sweden as vast and reindeer herding as flexible and adaptable to new industrial advances. When interests are indeed

¹⁴ International Labour Organization’s convention No. 169 (or the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention) is a binding convention that among other things recognizes indigenous peoples’ rights to ownership of traditionally occupied land.

identified as incompatible, socio-economic implications such as tax revenues and employment opportunities are often highlighted, giving priority to extraction (Raitio, Allard, and Lawrence 2020).

Example 1: Iron ore mining in Gállok/Kallak¹⁵

Gállok/Kallak (the Sami and Swedish name respectively) is a piece of land located near the city of Jokkmokk in Norrbotten and the Sami reindeer herding communities of Jáhkgáasska tjielde, at the edge of Sirges, and adjacent to Tuorpon in the South, where additional bedrocks have been found that triggered the idea of a mining district. It is also situated close to the UNESCO World heritage site of Laponia, which has increased its international visibility. Laponia has been awarded its status given its geological qualities, rich biodiversity, and reindeer migratory routes (UNESCO n.d.). Gállok is located on a peninsula in the Lesser Lule River and is identified as an area of national interest for both its mineral deposit and reindeer husbandry.

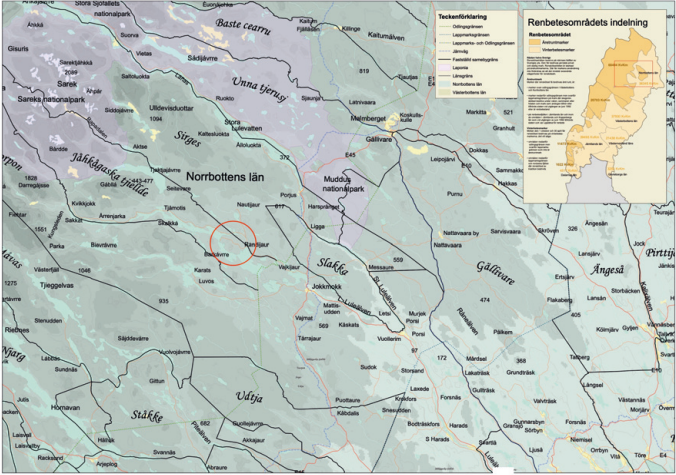


Figure 3. Map over sami communities’ reindeer grazing lands. Gállok/Kallak is marked out with a red circle (own alteration). Source: Sametinget.

¹⁵ A version of this section is part of my book chapter “The Virtue of Extraction and Decolonial Recollection in Gállok, Sápmi”, from: *Coloniality and Decolonisation in the Nordic Region*, 1st Edition by Eds. Adrián Groglopo and Julia Suárez-Krabbe, © 2023 by Routledge. Reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis Group.

In the 1970s, the state agency for bedrock, soil, and groundwater (SGU¹⁶) identified Kallak as housing the largest unexploited iron ore deposit in Sweden. British mineral extraction company Beowulf Mining has since 2006 been granted several exploration concessions to evaluate the deposit and has waited for an exploitation permit decision from 2013-2022 (Beowulf Mining 2017), involving numerous rounds of statements by the county administrative board, the Mining Inspectorate of Sweden (Bergsstaten) and most recently UNESCO, accounting for diverse views on the environmental and societal risks versus benefits involved. While Beowulf Mining presents Kallak as its flagship project due to “superb drilling results” (Sinclair-Poulton 2012), the case has risen in controversy after former executive chairman of Beowulf Clive Sinclair-Poulton wondered “What local people?” when asked about potential impacts during a mining convention (Tuorda 2011), causing outrage among the local community. Gállok/Kallak visibly divides interests and presents an especially polarized case of prospective mining (Beland Lindahl et al. 2016). Actors such as the former (Social Democrat) Jokkmokk municipal leadership vocally in favour of the initiation of the mine.¹⁷ Environmental activists, local anti-mining advocates, Sami activists, Green Party members as well as the county administrative board (Wilson and Allard 2023) point instead to environmental degradation, threats to Lapponia and Sami cultural heritage.

While the former Social Democrat (as well as the current right-wing) government’s general stance was the advocacy of an expansion of the mining industry, delays in permit processes (notably in Kallak) led critics to fear for Sweden’s reputation (see Hjalmered 2020). Meanwhile, government representatives hinted to the importance of attention to human rights and environmental concern as a cause of delay (Baylan 2020). The Committee on the Constitution¹⁸ has in late 2020 examined and critiqued the government’s inefficiency in the Kallak permit process and concluded that the processing time of seven years, three of which displayed no visible action, was “unacceptable” (KU 2020). Prior to the verdict, the government requested a statement by UNESCO

¹⁶ Geological Survey of Sweden (Swedish: Sveriges Geologiska Undersökning)

¹⁷ In the time of writing and after the decision for the permit was granted a new local government took place, led by Future in Jokkmokk (FJK) and the Green Party that have voiced strong critique against the mining project (SVT 2023b).

¹⁸ Konstitutionsutskottet (KU), oversees and ensures that the government respects and follows existing regulations and rules. As a tool of parliamentary control, members of the Riksdag can report government processes and ministers for scrutiny by the Committee (Sveriges Riksdag 2021).

on the risks associated with mining in Kallak. In its response, UNESCO stated that an initiation of the mine may indeed constitute a threat to Lapponia and its cultural and environmental heritage (Swedish National Commission for UNESCO 2021). Still, pro-mining critics argue that there is no legal need to involve UNESCO given that Kallak is situated outside of Lapponia. In response, former Minister for Business Ibrahim Baylan (2020) stated that Sweden cannot risk renewed critique from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) for its insufficient dialogue with the Sami people.

After an eventful 2021 autumn of Swedish politics, the Green Party left the government as a response to the dismissal of the centre-left budget proposal and the adoption of the opposition budget. Taking over from Stefan Löfven, Sweden's first female Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson was elected in parliament on November 29. Regarding the positive stance on mining her Social Democrat (minus Green Party) government was quick in triggering concerns about Sami rights (Sametinget 2021; SVT Nyheter Norrbotten 2021) with newly assigned Minister for Business Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson stating just days after his assignment that a decision regarding Kallak is to be expected in the near future. He also reinforced the 'general stance' of the Social Democrats, that, "We like mines, mines are good. Mines can help us with this green transition and mines create lots of jobs in Sweden [...]" (SVT Nyheter Norrbotten 2021, translated). This also led to raised eyebrows with Green Party spokesperson Per Bolund, suggesting a potential conflict of interest given the minister's former leadership role within Swedish Steel giant SSAB. Indeed, on 22 March 2022 the government finally awarded Beowulf Mining/Jokkmokk Iron Mines AB the exploitation permit. This has resulted in the Jåhkågasska reindeer herding community filing an appeal to the Supreme Administrative Court. The decision is in the time of writing still pending. If the Court decides in favour of JIMAB the next step would be an environmental assessment.

The above reference to the green transition in Thorwaldsson's statement is becoming increasingly evident amongst advocates of mining in Kallak. This narrative shift in the Kallak project is connected to the recent push for green steel production in Sweden (see MacPhail, Beland Lindahl, and Bowles 2023), a large-scale industrial investment in dire need not only of a vast increase in energy production, but also iron ore extraction, which has resulted in a narrative shift in Kallak. A decade-long controversy over environmental and human rights protection now finds itself submerged under a climate urgency logic, presenting extraction in Kallak as a necessity for climate change mitigation. This shift in logic

brings us to the second example of prospective extraction that this dissertation addresses.

Example 2: The Swedish green steel transition

Steel production counts to the dirtiest of industries, accounting for about seven per cent of global emissions (Åhman et al. 2018). The steel industry is today reliant on coal for its iron processing. Swedish steel production has gained attention in recent years for investments toward fossil free production in which the coal-based process is substituted with hydrogen. The rest product of hydrogen-based production is water instead of carbon dioxide (HYBRIT n.d.), resulting in what is referred to as “green steel”. The investment in this green steel transition in Sweden consists today of three separate projects. In 2016, the HYBRIT (Hydrogen Breakthrough Ironmaking Technology) consortium initiated its “revolutionary” transition of the iron- and steel industry (HYBRIT n.d.). The consortium comprises partly state-owned steel producer SSAB, state-owned energy company Vattenfall, and state-owned mining company LKAB, aiming to achieve fossil free steel production by 2045. This involves a transition toward hydrogen processing of iron as well as low-carbon energy provided by Vattenfall for the energy-intensive production process. The initiation of a pilot plant started in 2016 and was opened in 2020 in Luleå, with a demonstration plant to be built by 2026 in Gällivare municipality. The second investment through H2 Green Steel, founded in 2020, is in the process of initiating its fossil free steel production in Boden. Production is planned for 2024 with a scale-up toward five million tonnes annually by 2030 (H2GS n.d.), which would double Sweden’s current steel production. The third investment is the most recent, with state-owned mining company LKAB to announce a 400 billion SEK investment for making its entire iron ore processing fossil free. LKABs plan is part of the government-initiative Fossilfritt Sverige (Fossil Free Sweden) “in what could be one of Sweden’s biggest ever industrial investment programmes” (Reuters 2020). The increased energy demand for this transition amounts to about 40-50 per cent of current electricity production in Sweden (IEA 2023).

Existing literature presents hydrogen-based steel production as one of three possible transition pathways, the other being a less desirable continuation of traditional blast furnace processes coupled with carbon capture and storage (Åhman et al. 2018) and scrap economies that are generally dismissed as incapable of covering demand (Karakaya, Nuur, and Assbring 2018). The problems of the upscale of production with which the hydrogen pathway is accompanied are

largely missing, with brief mention of demand reduction dismissed as not feasible (see Åhman et al. 2018). Barriers to this transition are commonly presented as cost and policy challenges (Åhman et al. 2018) or uncertainty about the demand for green steel (Vogl, Åhman, and Nilsson 2021). Elsewhere, focus lies with an inquiry into the sociotechnical change of a difficult-to-change industry (Vogl 2023).

While distinct, these three projects are here understood as a joint push for green steel. As such, these initiatives will at least double steel production in Sweden, and require a three to four-fold increase of energy supply. How this energy demand will be covered is thus far undecided, with wind power and nuclear being discussed first and foremost. While it is not my objective to diminish ambitions of emissions reduction, this transition is accompanied by a significant scale-up in production which will trigger significant environmental degradation. The scale of the cumulative impact of these investments implies not only extensive strain on energy supply but also significant expansion of infrastructure, grid lines, and vast areas of land for both wind power parks and iron ore extraction (which is not commonly addressed in the advocacy of this transition). Given the location of the investment, the push risks exacerbating the cumulative pressures on Sami land rights (Kløcker Larsen et al. 2017; Ojala and Nordin 2015; Österlin and Raitio 2020). This has led the resistance movement to critique extraction in the name of the green transition as a continuation of colonial pressure and a shift toward green colonialism. Still, critical voices against the investment and the increase in production are few in the time of writing. For instance, in parliamentary debates, interpellations are limited to questions of the effects on the energy supply to the South of Sweden (Sveriges Riksdag 2021). Green steel investments have also been critiqued in the media by a group of researchers that question the energy heavy trajectory of the transition (*Affärsvärlden* 2021). A report financed by influential private sector actors also critiqued the amount of energy and capital to be used for a technological solution that may soon be dated, and that energy prices will escalate for the rest of Sweden (SVT 2023a).

We will now turn to the empirical chapters. The first empirical chapter ([chapter 4](#)) deals with comfortable alignment, meaning how the linear storyline of extraction for happiness figures in the data. After that, I discuss ruptures of linearity, which I understand to signal discomfort in alignment ([chapter 5](#)). Lastly, I discuss killjoy trajectories, discussing both the comfort and discomfort of killjoy, in their formulations of alternative desire lines ([chapter 6](#)).



4. COMFORTABLE ALIGNMENT

In the first empirical chapter I analyse the extractive order and its performative reiterations. This chapter seeks to outline and dissect the ways in which alignment with the fantasy of extraction is upheld and reiterated, speaking to the first research question. As we shall see, the order's ability to regulate desire happens through various mechanisms that ensure alignment with the fantasy of extraction. This part of the analysis inquires *docile alignment* with the fantasy of extraction and the comfortable reiterations of the extractive order. I explore the ways in which the *fantasy* that extraction results in happiness is expressed to ensure that the body politic *stays in line*. As such, this chapter seeks to analyse the regulatory mechanisms of the body politic to uphold comfort through the stability of the line. I also explore the future that is envisioned through extraction and its role for imaginaries of happiness or the good life.

The performative reiterations of the order come in various forms. As discussed in [chapter 3](#), I understand sedimentations of alignment to result from intra-active becoming of intertwined narrative and material performative expressions. For the sake of illustration, comfortable performative reiterations of the extractive order sediment alignment in mining infrastructure, steel industry emissions, new roads that cut through nature and toward spaces of extraction or export facilities, clear-cut forests that make room for steel mills and mining pits, and are embodied in bodies that extract and seek proximity to extractive activities. As such, I read legacies of past expansion such as existing mining infrastructure as sedimentations of alignment. Alignment also materializes or sediments in street art and statues commemorating a town's mining history, in plaques that remind of city parts that were moved to make room for the mining deposits full potential, in the material that is taken up and moved on ore lines, or remnants of earlier industries that are kept on display in cityscapes. Alongside discursive performative expressions, I read

these sedimentations as embodying stories of extraction. To a lesser extent, I also read the ways that bodies reiterate alignment through movement. This form of performative expression is more evident in the third empirical chapter.

I have in the data identified various expressions of comfortable, docile alignment in the performative reiterations of the extractive order. Notions of the necessity of extraction for happiness take various forms. This anticipation of happiness is future-oriented, meaning that happiness is placed at a temporal distance and narrated as conditional on the arrival of extractive industries. Hope for or a belief in the future (Swedish: *framtidstro*) are in the data strongly linked (identified through code overlaps) with positive sentiments toward extraction in which mining is narrated as an asset for municipal districts, regions, the nation, and the international community. Extraction is reiterated as an engine for growth and wellbeing, and a necessity for the survival of the periphery. Extraction is also narrated as a requirement for a successful green transition in which increased mining is understood as a means for targeting the climate crisis for instance by fuelling the green steel push. Swedish mining is habitually narrated as environmentally benign, cleaner, and more just than elsewhere. Mining is here done “with nature” (Svemin 2022d), in symbiosis and respect. Alongside an emphasis on climate urgency, other crisis narratives that are often invoked are geopolitical insecurities involving Russia, Chinese metals and mineral market domination, and poor justice and environmental regulations in undemocratic countries. Increased extraction in Sweden is here presented as taking responsibility for the global climate, social sustainability and European self-sufficiency and security. Upon the fulfilment of the condition of extraction a happy future awaits.

This alignment with the fantasy of extraction is a linear imaginary and as such reiterated rather comfortably, invoking logic and rationality, a sentiment of no alternative, a community striving for a joint goal, togetherness in saving the world, securing Sweden and Europe against outside threats, and providing jobs in struggling peripheries. There is causality invoked in the association of overlapping codes wherein participants suggest that the one is a prerequisite for the other. This causal, linear form of emplotment (Somers and Gibson 1994, 59) is indicative of the narrators’ affective motivations, the discursive and embodied direction they are heading. As we shall see, the bright future that is promised through mining is here often presented as an either or, othering the absence of mining as a state of despair, darkness, of peripheral and environmental demise. Its absence, then, is associated with going backward to a pre-modern state, back to the Stone age, and letting the climate go loose. In fact, if one wants to ensure a happy future, there

is no other alternative than extraction. The story that we encounter in this first empirical chapter is telling of the quest for coherence in the performative reiteration of the fantasy of extraction. The comfortable linearity through which it is performed is enforced through the sequential ordering of the plot (Patterson and Monroe 1998, 316), with its elements carefully interlinked in a way that ensures coherence from beginning to end (Patterson and Monroe 1998, 329). This requires of the narrator to ensure the purity of the line (Douglas 2003; Puwar 2004; Lacan 2008, 241) through the selective appropriation of certain elements for the favour of others (Somers and Gibson 1994, 59). The absences that this selection generates, the sources of discomfort that would emerge in a deviation of linearity, are addressed in the next empirical chapter.

The linear/comfortable story goes like this. Metals and minerals are the building blocks of our modern lives. Steel is a wonderful material since it can be recycled infinite times. But the data indicates that there is as of today not enough material in circulation to ensure for us to sustain our modern lives. Given rapid global population growth this is an urgent issue also for the needs of those who want to exit poverty. This means that despite leading Swedish recycling technologies we need mining to cover domestic and global needs. Mining has had a great historic importance for Sweden's economic development, and the mining industry and Swedish quality bedrock is today its economic backbone and source of a favourable international reputation. Sweden has historically been and continues to be a mining nation. This is a source of pride and a competitive advantage in the global market that ought to be cherished. The Swedish mining sector is narrated as relationally advanced, as environmentally cleaner, more just regarding working conditions, and as technologically more innovative. Equipped with these qualities Sweden bears responsibility to counter irresponsible mining practices elsewhere and to contribute to the green transition through technical solutions and sustainable mining domestically. Given the emphasis on its historic importance, mining especially in the North of Sweden is presented as a natural continuation of past accomplishments. Infrastructure in the form of ore trains, roads, energy gridlines and transport harbours but also mining experience and culture is already in place. Meanwhile, the countryside of the North of Sweden is commonly narrated as in urgent need of mining or other industrial activities to shift the trend of a demographic downward spiral and accompanied fears of insufficient municipal financing of social services. Taken together, this makes for a smooth expansion of domestic extraction and production. In fact, to mine more is only logical for the sake of global and societal benefit. Now, let's break this story down.

This chapter proceeds with a discussion of the starting point of the linear story of the aligned – needs. I discuss the way in which the aligned reference needs in various ways to highlight the necessity of extraction. I then turn to the avenues through which an expansion of extraction and steel production is rationalized in the data, speaking for instance to existing expertise and infrastructure as a natural continuation of past accomplishments, and the necessity of extraction for social justice and employment. I then go on to discuss in greater detail the focus on extraction for the sake of the environment, informed by an emphasis on climate urgency. Lastly, I engage in a theoretical discussion of the empirical analysis.

The matter of needs & how to provide for them

The notion that we need iron and steel may be the most frequently posed statement in the data. These needs are presented as definite, incontestable. Needs are often narrated for a Western, affluent us eager to uphold a modern lifestyle. More specifically, there is also an emphasis on a need for increased access to minerals and metals for the green transition. What is more, needs are narrated as attached to a rapidly growing population that wants to modernize. To ensure that these diverse needs are met, Sweden is envisioned as responsible for making the mined materials and processed products available in the most sustainable and fair matter possible. In this way, increased extraction in Sweden is presented as the morally right thing to do.

Iron and steel are invoked as manifesting the foundation of our wellbeing in modern societies. Metals and minerals are enacted as essential for our everyday lives and for upholding a high standard of living. “Our societies depend on mined materials to build and improve quality of life” (LKAB 2022e). The necessity of steel and iron is associated with products such as cars, infrastructure, buildings, bridges, boats, medical appliances, hip joints, scalpels, medicine, etc. In fact, steel is everywhere (SSAB n.d.). We are so dependent on iron, steel and other metals and minerals that we may not even think about all their benefits in our day-to-day activities. For that reason, the information platform The Swedish Mine organized by Swedish mining companies and the mining association Svemin has launched a campaign to inform the general public about the importance of mining for our daily lives. It portrays instances of what may be perceived as typical, joyous activities such as camping in nature with a loved one, charging an electric car while eating a hot dog, preparing oneself to go to a party with friends, and playing

charades on a Friday evening with one's family (caption in Swedish: *fredagsmys*, which refers to a practice of relishing a Friday night after having endured another week of work). The minerals and metals that are needed to attain such a moment of joy in a modern life are here highlighted in their periodic elements.



Figure 4. Den Svenska Gruvan (The Swedish Mine) marketing campaign about the benefits of mining in a Stockholm subway station (Image: Rågsjö Thorell 2020).

While people may take such materials for granted it is also stressed that it is hard to imagine a world without steel.

We would have had no machines, no industries. And without machines no computers or trains, no modern clothes, houses, or medicines. We would have had no electricity. We had lived as if during the Stone Age. (Jernkontoret n.d.)

There is a common emphasis on iron and steel as building blocks for our modern lives and reminders to the inverse reality in which we must return to an uncivilized life or temporally transport ourselves back to the Stone Age. In the above excerpt from the report *Steel forms a better future*, a wide range of the everyday application of steel remind us that without them we would forfeit modernity and return to pre-modern chaos. The text continues by stressing that it is difficult to find any human-made object where steel has not played a part in its production through industry processes. In an interview a SSAB employee articulates a similar reasoning when I ask her if her lifestyle is dependent on steel and mining:

But I wouldn't see it that way, I wouldn't manage without food, without a roof over my head, without being able to get myself, or the children to school, those

things I can't do without, but it also somehow requires steel or the mining industry then. (GS3)

Steel affects the very basic foundations of survival; access to food, shelter, and family relations. Without mining and the steel industry none of it would be possible. Jernkontoret has launched a marketing campaign with the hashtag #benefitsofsteel, wherein applications of steel in everyday lives are highlighted. Some examples here are: Swedish steel for boats makes our oceans cleaner, or the medical precision wire in pacemakers saves lives. "Many hearts in the world are beating, thanks to Swedish innovation" (Jernkontoret 2021f). We could not build our societies without steel, nor care for the planet. Elsewhere, the need for steel is stressed as accompanying us throughout our and our children's lives, "from the very beginning", expressed alongside an image of a couple looking at their foetus on an ultrasound (Jernkontoret 2016). In fact, hope for wellbeing in the future as triggered through extraction is often performed through the presence of children. In various strategy videos imagery of children accompanies voiceovers narrating the role of mining for our societies, and elsewhere also green steel production as a sustainable improvement to processing. A child learns how to ride a bike in the sunset, paddling toward the horizon while a determined voice tells us, "Our society depends on mined material" (LKAB 2022e). A group of girls are running through a meadow, again while the sun sets on the horizon. A boy looks ahead in anticipation out of a train window (H2GS n.d.). A local Jokkmokk resident reflects on the importance of Swedish mining to meet our needs:

Everyone wants cars and they want bicycles and snowmobiles. And yes, and batteries. So, we must increase our own, own raw materials, so to say. (MJ2)

Since we all want more, we must produce more. When I ask if he thinks there is an issue with those kinds of consumption patterns, he says:

It's up to everyone personally, I think, what you consider reasonable. I want a new car, but then I might have to check if I can afford to buy a new car first. Yes, but if I can, yes, but then I should have that opportunity, I think. (MJ2)

Consumption is here, reflective of a consumer-capitalist society and dedication to growth, conditioned on financial opportunity rather than environmental concern. In an individualist consumer fashion, if one has the means, one has the right. This mindset is also reflected in the motor-vehicle dense front yards of mining towns' residential areas that baffled me during my walks in Gällivare and Kiruna. An

accumulation of metal in front of the houses of the suburbs of the mine, motors of trucks running in the snow-covered front yards to heat up before going to work. This material accumulation performs a world of extraction, where the materials that miners draw from the bedrock, transported from the region on ore trains, often processed elsewhere, returns to the feet of the mine as an identifier and status symbol for the aligned. All these modern needs can be addressed through mining, we are told. “If you want it, we can mine it”, managing director of LKAB Jan Moström says to conclude his speech at the Svemin Environmental Summit (2022d). These needs are quantified as amounting to about 800 tons of minerals and metals during our lifetimes, all of which is provided to us by our rich bedrocks; “Almost everything you see around you in your home has a direct connection to our bedrock” (DSG n.d.). At the inauguration of the Hybrit plant, then prime minister Stefan Löfven states:

Steel, it’s the cars that are out here in the parking lot, it’s the cutlery in the kitchen, it’s jewellery, hip joints and scalpels. Steel, it’s the reinforcement in the building of the Million Program. Steel is bridges, roofs, and trains. Steel is jobs, and steel has built our welfare. (LKAB 2020b translated)

The cars on the parking lot and the Million Program housing comes to represent materializations of the benefits of alignment. Löfven makes here reference to a symbol of Swedish welfare policies in the 1960s and 70s (*Miljonprogrammet*), which was a large-scale investment in public housing construction initiated by the Social Democrats with the idea of providing affordable living for the public. As such, steel also takes on a role as a symbol for inclusion, equal opportunity, and welfare for all, as the linchpin of the Swedish welfare state. By removing the pin, the wheel comes off and the whole wagon that is Swedish welfare falters. As such, steel represents not only material goods, but also an idea of togetherness and an inclusive state caring for its citizens. It is commonly noted that iron and steel have built Swedish welfare and has put Sweden on the map internationally. Iron was the material of industrialism and “helped turn a small country on the edge of Europe into a rich industrial nation” (LKAB 2022f). In this way, mining and steel production is generally romanticized in the data when it comes to its historical implications. Prime minister Ulf Kristersson reminisces about his childhood and his father’s ties to the steel industry at a steel convention. “There wasn’t a thing in our house that was not supposed to be made of steel (soft smile, sigh, laugh)” (Jernkontoret 2021c translated). Former minister of business Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson expresses his enthusiasm stating that, “you know, I think it’s something really beautiful going down in the mountain, mine up good mineral”

(LKAB 2022b). Elsewhere he also notes that “yes, we love mines in the Social Democrats” (Aftonbladet 2021).

Our modern sustainability needs

Fossil free steel allows Sweden to reconcile its industry and welfare state persona with its environmental leadership ambitions, to address the climate crisis without risking Swedish welfare by becoming “the world’s first fossil free welfare nation” (Baylan at SSAB 2021b translated). With the phase-out of coal in the production process, iron and steel have also come to be associated with environmentalism and absorbed into the narrative of climate necessity that thus far concerned only critical raw materials. It is here sometimes argued that there may be a need to shift from a language of critical to strategic materials (Svemin 2022e) to allow for a broader inclusion of other crucial metals such as iron. Iron and steel are presented as needed not only to fulfil our modern needs, but also to save the climate. In this way, “Steel is needed more than ever and will be needed even more in the future” (Thorwaldsson at Jernkontoret 2021d translated). Steel and iron are now part of the narrative in which one is told that, “we all know that metals and minerals are the basis for a sustainable society” (Jenny Greberg, Swedish Mining Innovation at Svemin 2021b translated). Based on this, advocates of green steel stress the need for an expansion of the mining industry by stating that “the green transition means that we see an increased need for metals and minerals” (GS9). Alongside electric cars, metals and minerals for wind turbines, solar panels, electric cars, low energy bulbs, or batteries are often mentioned here. Reference is also made to calculations that a transition to net-0 and the energy transition requires 4-6, sometimes 6-8 times more minerals and metals (Svemin 2021a).

It is noted that the transition to electric vehicles and shifts to other related climate technology innovations require metals, inferring that without metals climate change remains unaddressed. In this way, it is the access to metals and minerals that sets the pace for the climate transition, and everything that is needed can be found in our Swedish bedrock (Maria Sunér, Svemin 2022d). Elsewhere, LKAB declares its willingness to provide the metals needed for the green transition, “for the electric cars, wind turbines and railways of the future, a historic investment in a zero-emission world” (LKAB 2020a). Here, the classification of green technology minerals and metals is merged with a more overarching notion of materials for a modern lifestyle, which makes mining irrespective of the material mined an essential component of environmentalist ambitions. The inclusion of iron and steel into the narrative of climate urgency has not gone unacknowledged

by Jokkmokk Iron/Beowulf Mining and the government's reasoning on Kallak. The motivation for mining in Kallak has more recently been described as the start of a sustainable value chain for green steel and in extension the green transition (O11; Thorwaldsson 2022b).

Considering modern needs, the green transition is narrated as perceived by the public as a difficult, uncomfortable change, a concern that the green steel technological fix eases. Svante Axelsson, coordinator for the state program Fossil Free Sweden states that with this growth-driven approach to the green transition “you don't have to live in a monastery” (FFS 2022a translated).

I think people are still more afraid of social change than climate change. and what does it depend on, well, the mental image of what it will be like to live fossil-free [...]. If I am to be fossil-free, it is not enough that I live in a monastery it will still be, I will still stand for 2 planets when I tap into a calculator. We have to teach and tell how we can live fossil-free in a comfortable way. (FFS 2022a translated)

Similarly, former minister of business Ibrahim Baylan states that:

The problem today, I feel, is that all too often when you point to the transition, it sounds like we are going back to the pre-industrial period. [...] Perhaps the most important thing we can do for humanity as a country is to show that it is possible to become fossil-free and at the same time improve people's lives. Increase people's freedom. Increase comfort, or whatever it may be. (FFS 2019a translated).

The change of behaviour that the green transition is assumed to require is here understood as an uncomfortable disruption of our sense of welfare, that won't do the trick either way. We do not need to renounce modernity for the sake of the climate. Instead, we can continue living comfortably with the help of emissions reduction in the heavy industry. In this way, green steel maintains the image as an essential building block for a modern life while easing our bad environmental conscience.

Hybrit produced a candleholder designed by a Swedish artist as the first product made off the first batch of fossil free steel (figure 6). Gifted to various Swedish politicians as well as Joe Biden this candleholder “symbolizes light at the end of the tunnel and it symbolizes hope” (Martin Lindqvist at SSAB 2021b translated). The emissions-fogged tunnel clears up and lets us see light again in the quest for a sustainable, hopeful, competitive future. SSAB displays the clean desirability of fossil free steel through imagery of water, a single drop running down a glass window, filling a bottle captioned “pure waste” (SSAB 2022b), reminding us of

its hydrogen-based production process. Green steel is envisioned as a material for environmentalists, it is to be desired by environmentally conscious consumers, easing fears of uncertainty. The desirability of fossil free steel for end consumers is also highlighted in an information campaign launched by The Swedish Mine, “no mines, no electric cars” (DSG n.d.). In this way, the green transition is conditioned upon mining and green steel. The only way to address the climate crisis is by producing electric cars made from fossil free steel. The environmental consumer, as such, is the automotive industry. The commercials depict a hyper-modern electric car with wing doors driving through an open pit mine, its driver dressed in what one may imagine future fashion to look like, giving an impression of a *Jetsons* episode or an 80s science fiction movie prophesy of flying cars. Fossil free steel is also stressed as being qualitatively better as well as more valuable than coal-based steel. Vattenfall promotes green steel with a video of British rapper Stefflon Don being presented with grillz in a jewellery store, while a voice-over tells us:

Many would say that gold is the world’s most valuable metal. but is it? [...] [h]umans have always made the most valuable metals into jewellery, from rings to necklaces to grillz. But what is our most valuable metal today? Is it the one that costs us the most or the environment the least? (Vattenfall 2022)

It is the hope of those spearheading the steel transition that hydrogen-based production enhances the value of steel, which is visible in reference to the competitiveness of Swedish products scrutinized by comparatively stricter environmental legislation (Emma Härdmark, Svemin 2021c). In this way, green steel is not only the right but also the smart thing to pursue. “If you want to be a bit dramatic it’s in the end about ensuring the survival of the companies while we ensure the survival of our planet” (Nordlander in Vattenfall 2020b). Decarbonization efforts are understood as a means for corporate survival. Emissions will become more and more expensive, it is here stated, which is why it is crucial for companies to partake and adopt CO2 targets. As such, companies are incentivized to transition to uphold a competitive edge amid domestic and international climate goals. This also speaks to the belief in the private sector to push the green transition in steel and elsewhere¹⁹. Politics is commonly referred to in a “it takes two to tango” metaphor (Svante Axelsson in FFS 2022b), in which the role of political leadership is to remove obstacles for swift corporate action

¹⁹ See Fossil Free Sweden’s (n.d.) roadmaps for decarbonization formulated by representatives of 22 different industries.

(e.g. smooth permit processes, energy access). The government also supports the industry transition with various subsidies such as that targeting the Hybrit project (*Industriklivet*) (Lövin at LKAB 2020b). It is often suggested that it is only with what is referred to as a customer-driven approach to the climate transition (Jernkontoret 2021b) that decarbonization can also ensure a good living standard and welfare level.



Figure 5. Vattenfall (2022) commercial “Discover what we’re doing today, so you can live fossil free tomorrow”.



Figure 6. At an information meeting in Luleå, SSAB displayed conventional iron ore pellets, steel scrap, and hydrogen reduced sponge iron alongside the above information plaque made of fossil-free steel (left) and the candle holder with the inscription “A piece of the future” made of the first batch of fossil-free steel. On the batch, there is a quote from the designer that reads: “The candle holder with softly rippled rays shining out from the lighted candle symbolizes the light at the end of the tunnel. The candle holder symbolizes hope.” (right)

There is also a sense of astonishment in the data that the shift is actually realized. Advocates recall that others have questioned it, the “steel-world” shook their heads in disbelief, doubted there will be any profit to be made here, thought the solution would be found in carbon capture and storage (Lövin 2020; Jernkontoret 2022b). The Swedish steel industry dared to do what others didn’t and is now rewarded with a global leadership position. Building new steel mills was thought of as a matter of the past, but there are now plans for two new mills in the North of Sweden. “Imagine that the steel sector would become such an industry for the future” (Jernkontoret 2021d translated), then minister of business Thorwaldsson notes. This is a “fantastic transformation” and now “they talk about Sweden as a role model” at the EU level and indeed globally (Jernkontoret 2021d translated). Showing the world that a merger of environmentalism (read: decarbonization) and competitiveness is possible is a source of pride, an opportunity for others to realize that the green transition is not only necessary but profitable, and thereby provides a comfortable alternative to the renunciation of our needs. “It’s super fun, it’s fantastic to be a part of this.”, head of research at SSAB Eva Petursson notes proudly, “I really feel that history is being written now” (Jernkontoret 2022b translated). At the Steel Day, there is agreement that “we are the coolest in the world right now” (Jernkontoret 2021b translated).

Global development needs

Another avenue of the needs-argument stresses that while we in the West have managed to modernize and secure a high standard of living, other parts of the world have not and need minerals and metals to do so. “The world needs more steel to continue to develop” (FFS 2019b). Increased mining in Sweden is presented as a way of providing for this need in a sustainable way. Increased Swedish extraction is also framed as a matter of justice, highlighting other countries’ right to develop as did we. This logic is anchored in the above assumption that iron and steel are necessary for comfortable living and welfare.

A Boden citizen working with the H2GS investment tells me that he has been very critical of mining earlier but realized that if other parts of the world are supposed to have the same standards of housing, for instance, we need more steel. Otherwise, “who shouldn’t be allowed to live in a house that lasts?” (GS10) In Sweden, we have a high standard of living, but others don’t, an LTU researcher with ties to the steel transition tells me. Others also want this good standard of living and therefore need increased access to metals. She continues to stress that

we don't have the right to tell poor countries not to strive for what we already have.

Or we tell the poor countries that, 'No, you may not develop', then we could maybe stop the increasing demand for metals and minerals. But, but, it is unreasonable, so we know that we will have to get these metals up, minerals out of the ground and process them in some way and it must be done sustainably. (GS9)

Given the developing world's needs, we have a responsibility to extract more metals and minerals. "We cannot tell them they don't have the right, but they should also be allowed" (GS6), an H2GS employee confirms.

Often, India and China, but also more vague notions of emerging markets are mentioned as examples of the rapid increase in steel demand because of population growth and a movement out of poverty:

As more people rise out of poverty, build cities, and develop their industries, the demand for metals and minerals increases. This has led to increased interest in Swedish mineral resources. (Government Offices of Sweden 2013 translated)

In fact, it is "not surprising that the use of steel rises as there are more of us and welfare increases" (Jernkontoret n.d.). Growing populations that enter modernity push the demand for Swedish resource deposits. The rising need for steel is in this way deemed an indicator of global progress and narrated as a positive trend in global development. This logic also reaffirms the West's consumption levels as the norm of wellbeing. An advocate of the mine in Jokkmokk also highlights the needs of developing countries in the context that "we will not be able to slow down our way out of this" (MJ8) and consume less because of the large needs elsewhere. It doesn't work to say that we don't need these metals, because:

We don't decide that. It won't affect anything, or I mean everyone. All of India, the whole, large parts of Asia and Africa. They want what we have. And then you need lots, lots, lots, much more metals than we have dug up so far. (MJ8)

He continues saying that given these needs we ought to take responsibility and mine these materials in the most sustainable way possible. The alternative would be metals mined in irresponsible ways since the altering of demands is unfeasible. Sweden is here imagined as a responsible miner and steel producer, while countries elsewhere are othered as a threat to global sustainability. In this way, the logic of population growth is used in an apolitical fashion as a source of climate

threat. This is widely criticized as a neo-Malthusian transfer of responsibility for environmental degradation to vulnerable communities (Robbins 2020). The fear of population growth causing climate emergencies disregards the disproportionate resource use in affluent societies as well as assumes that development follows Rostow's stages of growth modelled after a Western modernization archetype. Lop-sided resource use is in fact mentioned a handful of times in the data, although, as an expression not of a need to curb consumption but rather to increase production to ensure competitiveness and self-sufficiency. Europe stands for a large share of metals consumption globally and imports therefore much of its materials and goods. Minister of business Ebba Busch states at the Svemin annual summit that, "The EU today uses 30 per cent of all metals and minerals produced in the world but mines only 3 per cent" (Svemin 2022f translated). She continues by stressing that Sweden and the EU are today dependent on Russia or other undemocratic or unsustainable countries' mined material markets, not least when it comes to the critical raw materials needed for the green transition. These perceived geopolitical threats are narrated as targeting the domestic safety and supply of raw materials but is most clearly expressed through vulnerabilities of the internationally like-minded. Here, there is a general notion of Sweden's ability to contribute to European self-sufficiency and resilience so that "we manage to reduce our dependence on undemocratic states" (Svemin 2022f translated). Reference is commonly made to figures such as Ursula von der Leyen, the EUs Critical Raw Materials Act²⁰ and the European Raw Materials Alliance²¹, and the trust that is put in countries such as Sweden that have the capacity to contribute to breaking this unsolicited reliance on "undemocratic states such as China, Congo and Russia" (Maria Sunér, Svemin 2022c translated). More specifically, this need to increase EUs supply of raw materials is associated with Russian aggression and the Chinese domination of critical raw materials for the green transition.

The sought-after self-sufficiency in the supply of critical raw materials is narrated as a threat to the global climate in that especially Chinese dominance may hinder

²⁰ Ursula von der Leyen announced at the 2022 State of the European Union address that access to raw materials is a prerequisite for reaching the ambition to "become the first climate neutral continent" (EC n.a.), and the need for a raw materials act to ensure this self-sufficiency in supply.

²¹ ERMA was initiated in 2020 in an effort to ensure access to critical and strategic materials and reduce the European dependency on third country's raw materials. The alliance is open to stakeholders such as member states, industry actors, trade unions, investors, civil society, etc. (ERMA n.d.).

the realization of the green transition. China is here othered as unreliable in its dispersal of the materials critical for the green transition. Russia and Morocco's dominance of mineral fertilizers is raised as a threat to global sustenance and the survival of the Swedish agricultural sector (Jan Moström managing director LKAB Svemin 2022d; GS20). Amid the war in Ukraine, supply chain vulnerability is also mentioned as a risk for the iron ore supply needed for the green steel transition. Given this insecurity "in a total defence perspective", Thorwaldsson (2022) holds when announcing the Kallak decision that it is important to secure Swedish domestic supply of iron ore. The ore that exists in Kallak "plays an important role for the country's social and economic stability in times of crisis", he notes. The Kallak decision is presented as a solution for the uncertainty in material supply and for breaking the dependence on counterproductive forces (e.g. GS9; Erika Ingvald SGU at Svemin 2022a). CEO of JIMAB Ulla Sandborgh addresses a question about the need for iron ore at an information meeting in Jokkmokk:

We maybe don't want to buy from all over the world like we have in the past. But the self-sufficiency rate needs to increase. And we have a nice discovery that can be very high quality out in Kallak. So that's our why. (O11)

The Swedish bedrock offers unexplored capacities, "clearly we have the potential" (Erika Ingvald SGU at Svemin 2022a) to remedy the domestic and the international community's vulnerabilities in these times of crisis. An interviewee tells me that, "Today, you want to minimize business with Russia, so there is a huge potential here" (GS20). In fact, it would forfeit the whole purpose of green steel if we were not to use domestic ore in the production process. That H2GS were to buy ore "from Brazil or so" instead of making use of Swedish bedrock, an interviewee tells me, "That question shouldn't even exist, if a state-owned mining company takes up ore in Sweden and there is a processing opportunity near the mine" (GS22).

It all starts in the mine: A case for extraction

To realize the hope for a prosperous and sustainable future mines are needed. In fact, "it starts in the mine" (Vattenfall 2021a). Mines are envisioned as the starting point for becoming the world's first fossil free welfare nation, showing others that sustainability is compatible with economic growth, providing job security and

rural development, and advancing Sweden's prosperity and international standing. Mines are viewed as the starting point for "our journey towards a sustainable future: at a depth of 1000 meter in the mines of Malmfälten in north Sweden" (LKAB 2022f). The data suggests that if the need for mined materials is not fulfilled, we risk losing our grip on modernity and planetary survival. Therefore, "the question is not really whether we should mine and whether we should increase production" (Svemin 2021a translated), but rather where, managing director of LKAB Jan Moström stresses at a Svemin environmental conference. The answer is Sweden, he continues, given that it is here that we find the "absolute smallest environmental and climate impact" (Svemin 2021a translated). Similarly, Sweden's social justice concerns are narrated as more advanced than elsewhere. What is more, Sweden has the conditions (ore deposits, expertise, etc.) to onboard more extraction. Taken together, Sweden's assets are understood as bearing great potential for others. In fact, "Sweden's ore deposits will do the world good" (Mining for Generations n.d.). More mining and production in Sweden are here not only narrated as reasonable domestically but as creating climate benefit globally (Svemin 2021b). The products that come out of Sweden are also perceived as morally superior, as clean, and fair and therefore desirable for the environmentally and socially conscious consumer. This story is told in opposition against undemocratic, aggressive, unsustainable others, where child labour and polluted rivers await. The recipe for a sustainable future thereby reads; more mining in Sweden and Swedish fossil free steel takes market shares from unsustainably mined and produced material elsewhere, which will do the world good.

In the text that follows, I discuss various avenues of reasoning in which extraction is presented as the logical, right, moral thing to do generally speaking or by denoting Sweden as the right place for such operations.

Existing extractive infrastructure

Sweden is commonly narrated as being gifted with remarkable bedrocks and as a result an exceptional mining history with "hundreds of years of mining experience" (Mining for Generations n.d.). In fact, we are reminded that "it is important to say that Sweden is a mining superpower in the World" (Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson at LKAB 2022b). "But we have only just begun. Our bedrock contains plenty more deposits, just waiting for future exploration and development", an information platform notes (Mining for Generations n.d.). The emphasis on unique qualities of the North (mining tradition, abundance of ore,

land, and low-carbon energy, strict environmental and social justice regulations) are invoked to present it as the optimal place for socially and environmentally sustainable extraction and green steel production. Existing ore infrastructures (ore line, harbours, energy grid lines, but also ideational remnants) are referenced as once having presented an entry into modernity and opportunity to make use of the “assets” (Löfven 2019 translated) of the North. Historical hardship is here often invoked remarking the discovery and mining of resources, especially in the North, has presented a way out of poverty and starvation, allowing citizens to stay rather than seek rescue in America. Mining advances presented an opportunity for a “new future”. Earlier phases of infrastructure development are here remarked as instances of “courageous decisions based on visionary ideas” (Mining for Generations n.d.) that presented opportunities to realize the land’s potential, here notably the Ore Line (*Malmbanan*) going between the ports in Luleå and Norwegian Narvik to transport ore from the mines in Malmberget and Kiruna. Industrial remnants of past investments, or, “The historical traces of the mining industry are today valuable parts of the cultural landscape” (Government Offices of Sweden 2013 translated), enshrining the region as destined for the purpose of extraction.

This logic prevails and such industrial remnants are often referenced to rationalize further expansion of ore infrastructure investments “in the ideal location” (Harald Mix H2GS 2021). In fact, it is the “mining and metals mecca of Sweden” (Harald Mix H2GS 2021). The location of the H2GS steel mill site is so unique, “it’s pretty scary almost” (Harald Mix H2GS 2021). Former CEO Kurt Budge states that, as with real estate purchases, “it’s all about location, location, location” (Aktiespararna 2020) when referencing favourable access to infrastructure in Kallak. In the later phase of the permit process leading up to the government decision to grant the exploitation concession, proximity to the H2GS green steel project was also frequently mentioned. Favourable industrial remnants are here not limited to transport and energy gridlines, but also earlier instances of clearcutting. Forests in the area are presented as mainly plantation forests, presenting a lack of significant environmental values worth protecting (Thorwaldsson 2022b) as an argument for further extraction. Budge states elsewhere that:

Norrbottnen has been described as the breadbasket of, potential breadbasket of Europe. It has mines, it has renewable power, and it has great logistics, and Kallak sits within that ecosystem. (ProHearings 2021)

As we can see, the infrastructure relics of earlier phases of industrialization now function as stimuli for renewed extraction (GS22). Reference to the uniqueness of the North as an industry region taps into industrial remnants to present a continuation of such activities as logical. This is the case also for cultural monuments that reflect the region's supposed industry identity. The mayor of Luleå tells me in an interview that steel is everywhere in the city:

Everything from the logo on Luleå Hockey's, the hockey player is the steel man, I mean not Superman²² (laughs) Clark Kent, but our steel man. So, there is a lot of steel here. [...] and it's a very important part of Luleå. (GS16)

Reference to the hockey logo as 'our' Steelman brings the mayor's mind to Superman, illustrating an association of steel as a protective, reassuring presence. Indeed, when encountering proclaimed mining towns of Kiruna or Malmberget one is constantly reminded of mining as the perceived foundation of the societies' existence, where one encounters sedimentations of the region's mining persona in the form of measuring sticks that sense vibrations during mining explosions, monuments, and wall paintings that commemorate the mining history, cracks in houses or barred windows, fenced-in areas, houses being demolished, and billboards announcing new city areas that will be constructed by mining companies. In monuments such as 'the mine worker' (figure 7) or the constructions in the 'mine park' (figure 8) in Kiruna steel figures as a reminder of the material with which the municipality is envisioned as constructed. These sedimentations of alignment function as reminders of the pride that is to be associated with the entanglements with mining and the benefits that have come from them despite negative consequences such as the demolition of cityscapes, of all that the mine has given. As such, everyday interaction with these sediments help reinforce alignment as a natural position.

²² Superman is called Steelman (*stålmannen*) in Swedish.



Figure 7. A monument of a mine worker (the monument is called *gruvarbetaren*, the mine worker) in Kiruna made of weathering steel. (O10) According to Kiruna's municipal homepage the steel bow symbolizes the entry into a mining town, with the miner pushing ore into the town gates. The bow is shaped like a staircase, symbolizing the plateaus of the mountain (Kiruna municipality 2020).



Figure 8. The Mine-citypark (*gruvstadsparken*) in Kiruna – a former residential area that has been moved because of impacts from the mine and that has been turned into a park until it is no longer safe to be used at all, at which point it finally will be turned into an industrial area (Kiruna municipality 2021). The mine can be seen in the background.



Figure 9. Boden train station telling the history of the ore line (*malmbanan*) construction, connecting mines in Kiruna and Gällivare with the port in Luleå and the Norwegian port in Narvik. (O6)



Figure 10. A monument called the mining-oldster (*gruvgubbe*). In the foreground a stick that measures vibrations during explosions in the mine. They are placed throughout MalMBERGET and Kiruna and measure dangerous levels of vibration in proximity to housing and public spaces. (O7)

It is often argued that without mining, towns such as Kiruna and Gällivare would not exist. They have the mine to thank for their emergence, and once the mine ceases to exist, so will the town. Visiting the Kiruna mine, a guide tells us:

We don't have anybody who disagrees because this is our mother. She feeds us, she puts roofs over our heads. We do everything for this mine. (O9)

The mine takes here as elsewhere the role of the mother that provides and cares for her children, gives them a home and keeps them alive. Repaying the favour, moving the town is portrayed as a non-issue. At Svemin's environmental summit, managing director of LKAB Jan Moström was asked about rumours that the town will be moved again in the near future, to which he replied:

Actually, as a miner I hope so because that means that we have expanded the deposits so dramatically so we can continue to mine and then perhaps we don't talk about decades we talk about centuries. (Svemin 2022d)

Large deposits are here associated with more hopeful futures. The uncertainty of the composition and range of the deposit presents an allure for possibilities to come. Moving the town is thereby a symptom not of memories lost but of a possibility for survival, of prolonging one's impulse for existence. In extension, the moving of towns is also narrated as an opportunity to modernize, to build new and better. Life in such towns is believed to improve thanks to the presence of a mine.

And if you live in an old, run-down house that is poorly maintained, you will get a newly built house from LKAB, you are welcome, the key right in the hand. So, it's a huge wealth transfer. (GS20)

Another one of my interviewees tells me that he has lived in Malmberget himself and the school he went to is now gone, but:

if you think a little longer, you will get modern houses, sustainable buildings, sports halls, schools, and it is financed by the mining industry. So, you get an updated society thanks to mining expansion. (GS12)

The old and ill-functioning can be discarded thanks to the mine and the mining company's generosity, 'you are welcome'.

In reference to industry remnants, technological advances in existing industries such as steel are here perceived as a natural next step building onto traditional

strengths. “I am very proud over this, but it also feels very logical”, head of research at SSAB Eva Petursson notes in an interview with Jernkontoret (2022b translated). However, the current push for green steel investments is accompanied by worries of insufficient railway and energy power grid capacity, reflected in calls to build out infrastructure essential for the green transition. The current expansion of grid lines is designed with the goal of overcapacity, an employee at the state-owned energy grid provider indicates, since “one has to think a bit about the future” (GS19). Thus, the image of the North as an industry hub is reinforced through overcapacity anticipation in the expansion of the industrial infrastructure, which suggests an expectation of upscaling as a logical development in the region. The lack of sufficient infrastructure development is perceived as hampering further industry advancement and in extension national competitiveness on a global market. Former Prime Minister Stefan Löfven:

In Sweden, we must have a strong mining industry, we are a strong mining nation, and we should be. Since we are gifted with these assets, we should of course make use of them to the greatest extent possible. (Löfven 2019 translated)

The North is imagined as a gift horse that ought not be questioned but enjoyed. It is only logical to make use of the resources of the North through which Sweden can envision itself as a gifted nation. Prime minister Ulf Kristersson describes Sweden’s position as a leading mining nation as a well-deserved accomplishment built on historical strengths over the past hundreds of years, “don’t waste it!” (Jernkontoret 2021c) In this way, the North continues to be imagined along the lines of a “Land of the Future” (Sörlin 1988), an asset that ought to be explored, a “hard rock paradise” (Mining for Generations n.d.) full of potential. The Swedish bedrock is often described as to a large extent undiscovered in its potential, plentiful, as intriguing for investors but also further motivating state explorations. The Mining for Generations initiative presents the exceptional bedrock through the allure of natural beauty (figure 11). Rich, unexplored forests as far as the eye reaches and, in the distance, vague contours of snow-covered hills giving the sense of endless lands that almost in a Mufasa-like fashion tell us that everything that the light touches is ours for the taking. Beauty in nature is a common tool when reiterating the alignment with the fantasy of extraction for happiness, in that we can take comfort in extractive activities’ compatibility with the environment. As such, climate literacy does not have to be at odds with extractive urges. Chairman of H2GS Harald Mix recounts his experience visiting the site for the new steel mill stating, “it’s so beautiful, you know, incredible” (H2GS 2021), accompanied by a presentation showing a mountainous landscape

embracing a lake. In fact, this imagery is dominant throughout the data in stories of ore extraction. Untouched nature in the form of wild river rapids, wide, often snow-covered lands, mountains, and northern lights dominate the telling of the opportunities of ore deposits. Human interference with nature is often visible through low-carbon energy and railway infrastructure supplemented with narratives of the abundance of clean energy fuelling the green transition in the North. These visual components infer a sense of romantic tranquillity portrayed through cheerful music and sunset lighting, still lakes, lush forests.



EXPLORATION

Welcome to explore in Sweden

The ambition behind Sweden's mineral legislation is clear: Sweden's ore deposits will do the world good. The legislation provides favorable conditions for those who wish to engage in geological exploration.



Figure 11. Mining for Generations (n.d.) website, own stillframe.

Extraction for the reinvention of the North

With the green steel push, the 'unique place' argument discussed above absorbs a climate angle that reinvents the North as the epicentre for the green industrial revolution (Claes Nordmark, mayor of Boden at H2GS 2022), the green transition's Silicon Valley (GS9). This reinvention is again imagined on the basis of existing industrial infrastructures. A Boden municipal employee tells me; "This is really how we are going to sell ourselves: Come to Boden to save the World"

(GS8). In the data, I see this effort of reinventing the North through the green transition as functioning on two avenues. One, a redefinition from the centre framing the North as the region where it all happens. Two, a local push toward a new, green self-imaginary and newfound regional pride through increased ownership of industrial processes.

Illustrative of the first avenue is the government coordinator for industrial investments in the North Peter Larsson's visual impetus to the importance of the region. He flips the map of Sweden around to present the North as the new South. In this way, the North becomes "the engine for all of Sweden" (Claes Nordmark Boden municipality 2021c translated), its new financial power hub considering the investments that currently happen under the umbrella of the green transition.

If we take the development problem in the world, then it's North-South that stands for a certain perspective in which the South has difficulties and the North is rich, and in Sweden we have lived with the reverse perspective. (Peter Larsson at Jernkontoret 2022a translated)

The parable of the Swedish North-South power dynamics with that reflected in global politics is indicative of the state awareness of the core-periphery relationship that has resulted in much harmful distributional difficulties and in part, as we will see, a sense of no alternative when it comes to mining in the region. The green investments, he tells me in an interview, will also lead to the region's increased attractiveness and stimulate relocations to the North. "Because big investments get follow-on investments of various kinds" (GS21). People will be drawn to the North because of green industry investments, which will solve the periphery's demographic issues and help it grow. Thorwaldsson proclaims during an interview with LKAB that, "The future in the North of Sweden is so bright, you need to have sunglasses when you go to the North" (LKAB 2022b). The green rearticulation of the mining mecca comes here with great enthusiasm from the centre of power. A Swedish energy grid employee is also enthusiastic about the implications of the new investments for the North:

As a Stockholmer, I think that it is, it is good that these communities can sort of flourish a little again, it's in some way like a settler spirit too, like, positive. (GS19)

Commonly people that relocated and established agricultural settlements in Sápmi referred to as settlers (Swedish: *nybyggare*) starting in the late seventeenth century as a result of the state's financial incentives. Incentives included "freedom from taxation for 15 years and lifetime freedom from conscription to the army"

(Ojala and Nordin 2019, 107). The state decrees for agricultural relocation resulted in new land use regulations that had consequences for Sami access to land. The above notion of the settler spirit reinscribes a positive sentiment of new beginnings to the figure of the settler. New investments in the North are here, again, viewed as opportunities for progress, hopeful futures.

The second avenue of reinvention of the North is a push from the ‘periphery’ for a new, green image. There is enthusiasm even here about the chance to distance oneself from the dirty, polluting aspects of industry while at the same time being able to retain mining and steel companies’ cherished presence in the region, “keeping this important engine here” (GS16). The self-identification as a heavy industry hub can now be channelled into notions of a green industrial revolution that allows for a natural continuation of industry expansion, reawakening the North as a green industry cluster. The mayor of Luleå:

In our region we have always produced steel. [...] Steel from Norrbotten has previously been known as a quality steel, and we are very happy from now on also to be known as green steel. (Carina Sammeli at H2GS 2021 translated)

The region is already known for its high-quality steel and has all preconditions to slightly alter its identity and become a green steel hub. Where else if not here, many of my interviewees tell me, would the green transition be possible, again referencing existing infrastructure and embodied industry mentalities. “Yes, the conditions are quite fabulous” (MJ8). There is a sense of pride in referencing past accomplishments that now allow the region to claim a green leadership position. The sense of pride is also triggered by the international attention directed toward the region as an opportunity to take a role in “saving the world” (GS5). During interviews, local politicians and company employees displayed enthusiasm about various public figures such as Joe Biden and Ursula von der Leyen’s acknowledgement of the green transition “up in the North” (GS14). That “global green eyes [are] looking North” (Luleå Business Region n.d.) gives the region a sense of accomplishment and purpose in playing an important part in addressing the climate crisis. A Gällivare politician smiles saying, “imagine that little me is actually part of this, in all of this, I am here and change history, to a better world” (GS14). This expression of pride and gratitude of playing a part in the green transition is often-recurring in the data. When accounting for one’s pride, actors often refer to the vast scale of investments. “Yes, it’s incredibly fun. I’m overwhelmed by this, it’s so big” (Boden municipality 2021a translated), Boden’s mayor says in a municipal information video. Gällivare politicians tell me it’s

“Crazy, crazy numbers” (GS15), it’s almost difficult to imagine how many zeros there are, how much money that is and how long it will last. Again, we can see the association of mining and steel investment with a hope for long-term continuity, in which the fear is comforted that mining companies that have been present for a century may disappear. It’s almost like they are on drugs, they tell me and laugh, recalling a municipal meeting in which an unrelated investment did not get a lot of attention:

A 5 billion [SEK] investment, in any other place, it would have been, you know, like cake at the town hall. But here it’s completely, like crazy. (we laugh) (GS15)

The push from the ‘periphery’ to reinvent the region also takes the shape of a longing for increased local ownership over a greater share of the value-chain and self-sufficiency to create more revenue in the region. The region’s positioning in the value chain today is primarily in extraction and export of raw materials and steel rolls sent for further processing to plants further south, while the green steel investments have come with company promises to process on site.²³ This is narrated as an opportunity triggering a belief in a positive future (GS4, 10, 11, 12). Owning larger parts of the processing industry is a way of breaking with the region’s dependency on state distributed aid and grants and instead steering their own ship to build a “rich life here” (GS22). Local ownership is also narrated as a possibility for long-term planning, and even, as a chance to diversify local economies while at the same time being able to trust the continued presence of mining and steel actors (GS14, 15). Rather than exporting the region’s resources there is now the possibility to make use of them closer to home while continuing to contribute to the state treasury. An LKAB employee tells me:

There has been a dream in the ore fields for a long time, not to send away the iron ore [...] those who have dreamed of this should be pleased now. (GS20)

What has long been a dream can now be accomplished with the green steel transition. When it comes to diversifying local economies, there is a clear awareness and occasional concern that the mining and steel industry is an overly dominant workplace and source of revenue. The new processing and green steel investments are here narrated as a chance for spill-over effects. For instance, the

²³ The HYBRIT consortium produces fossil free steel with hydrogen in Gällivare. H2GS uses the same technique on its site in Boden. SSAB has plans to move the rolling of steel to Luleå to save the energy of heating the steel again at the Borlänge site. LKAB has plans to produce direct reduced sponge iron rather than selling iron ore pellets to their customers.

large amounts of excess heat from the new production process are envisioned as an opportunity for the self-sufficiency in vegetables and other farmed goods through large-scale greenhouses and fish farms. So, “next time you come up, maybe you’ll eat a tomato or a giant prawn from Gällivare” (all laugh; GS15). Excess heat may also be used to build tropical water parks, create a more attractive and diverse region, a “tropical bubble” (GS14). An industry cluster that is self-sufficient and creates spill-over effects that result in a growth spurt for the region, “That would be cool” (GS22), one of my interviewees tells me while guiding me toward an excess heat-driven test green house. In this way, green steel raises hope in the North of breaking the dependence on the South and ultimately its periphery status, re-taking power in the core-periphery dynamic and renegotiating a perceived lack of self-determination.

Extraction for social justice

As a motivation for increased extraction Swedish mining is often referenced as socially more sustainable than activities elsewhere. Here, reference is commonly made to occupational safety and workers’ rights as well as child labour laws. The image of mining is often tainted, it is argued, and envisioned through conditions of early industrialisation as dirty, dangerous, and dark mining shafts. This is stressed not to be the case in Sweden anymore, but indeed elsewhere, which is why mining should expand domestically. Director of the environment at Svemin Kristina Branteryd stresses at their Environmental Summit that it has been a long time since children were “doing the job in our mines”, but still people:

[...] think that the mine is the worst thing that ever can happen to the locals to the region to the nation to EU and to the world because the understanding is not there. (Svemin 2022d)

There is a lack of knowledge and understanding in that critics of mining have failed to grasp the improvements of the mining industry, comparing it to a faraway time or place. Also, advocates of mining in Jokkmokk stress that “we have a bit orderly conditions in our mines too, compared to other countries” (MJ2). Not only is Swedish mining fair to its workers, the strong permit legislation is invoked as giving Swedish mining an edge also in a justice perspective. It is stressed that industry expansion would surely proceed faster in less democratic counties, but this also comes with the downside of rights violations. An interviewee tells me:

I mean, China is the biggest steel producer today, right? And that's (laugh), there you have, I think that these consultations, they wouldn't even understand what we mean (laugh). (GS19)

China's market edge is construed as a risk for undemocratic permit processes. In this way it is often suggested that decreasing China's share of material output and instead extracting and producing more elsewhere would benefit social justice globally. Narratives of Swedish mining present themselves as exceptional by spatially distancing the extraction in-house from socially unsustainable and exploitative practices in undemocratic contexts. Former minister of business Ibrahim Baylan makes a similar reflection in a parliament debate on the Kallak decision that:

The examples of unsustainable mining in the world are unfortunately far too many. From time to time, we read in the newspapers and the media that child labour is used, rivers have been polluted or workers have been exploited. I am therefore pleased that these investment plans exist and that there are major plans to expand mining operations in our country. (Baylan 2020 translated)

Child labour, worker exploitation, and environmental degradation are lumped into a joint threat perception of unsustainable mining, where we read or hear about these things that happen in a faraway land. Expanding mining "in our country" contributes thereby to social justice globally. "It feels really bad" (GS9), an interviewee tells me, to know that metals are extracted where there is child labour and environments are destroyed instead of expanding operations in Sweden. Given our needs for metals to build modern lives (GS20), there is not really another alternative than to expand extraction here if we don't want to have the impact of mining in China or Congo on our conscience (MJ10).

Extraction for employment

There is unwavering hope attached to extraction as a source of welfare and wellbeing. Most visibly, this story is one of employment. Mining is narrated as a workforce-heavy industry which creates welfare in the countryside and in extension stimulates the national economy. In the same way, we are told that the green steel transition is done "for future generations and their jobs" while a baby's hand clutches a mother's finger (LKAB 2020a). The mining and steel industry is envisioned as Sweden's backbone, as keeping Sweden alive, as its heart or engine from the local to the national level (Mining for Generations n.d.). Welfare

provisions are discussed as conditioned upon extraction, and the perks of the social welfare system indeed as starting in the mine. An interviewee tells me that his father has worked as a miner, “and like the whole family worked in the mine too”, and having grown up like this, he has “seen, well, the welfare a mine gives” (MJ8). Employment is also one of the main arguments behind the final government decision to grant the Kallak permit among all stakeholders. Well-paid jobs in a mine are noted as preventing local citizens and their children from having to move. This would bring to a halt a demographic downward spiral, secure municipality funds needed to finance social services and result in a more attractive municipal district. A Jokkmokk residents tells me:

The mine’s meaning for society? Yes, it is primarily job opportunities. [...] that we can probably keep the young people here, and they are the future. [...] And with that follows that they have children, and they might stay there too. Perhaps the society grows back a bit, the residents, because now it is unfortunately a constant downward trend. (MJ2)

In fact, the North of Sweden has a relatively low unemployment rate, which at a central level is referenced as an indicator for the success of industry development (Thorwaldsson 2022a). Locally, however, a lack of available employment is narrated as remedied by the extractive industry, which ignites hope for a better future. Lingering at the town’s café confirmed that this sentiment is well established. The mine is a must, without it, it’s over, and there is no future here, workers on their morning breaks tell me. There won’t be anything left if the mining project is not initiated, I am told, “There are no jobs here. Or, there are jobs, but if you want to make something of yourself, you have to get out of here” (MJ7). The mine takes a saviour-role in this form of imaginary of the future, a condition for the good life. There are also noticeable normative assumptions of valuable employment, equating mining jobs with having made something of oneself. This is reflective of the pride associated with the region’s historic label as a mining and steel hub. The immersion in the extractive order is here noticeable in the status associated with mining jobs, which manifests itself in the constant visibility of workers attire in public spaces, moving and taking up space with ease (Ahmed 2007), indicating familiarity and embeddedness in an extractive space.

Climate urgency & extraction for the environment

I have in the above text already discussed the emphasis on material needs for the green transition as they are outlined in the data. I will now turn to a wider discussion of the sense of urgency through which the green steel transition is narrated, as well as the proclaimed need for extraction to make such a transition possible. Toward the end, I will turn to a discussion of biodiversity and recycling, which are integrated aspects of the linear story of alignment.

There is unanimity in the data regarding notions of the severity of the climate crisis as “the greatest test of our times” (LKAB 2020a) and a proclaimed necessity to address it. We have to act quickly, because “the planet is on fire” (Henrik Henriksson, H2GS at FFS 2022a translated), “the hour is late on the planet” (FFS 2022b). This story is told alongside imagery of bleached coral reefs, changes in the arctic, wildfires, and extreme weather events. Reference is made to the scientific state of knowledge (GS21) and climate goals such as those enshrined in the Paris Agreement telling us what is wrong, but “You don’t get well just because you know you are sick. We need medicine, we need concrete solutions” (FFS 2022b). The mention of solutions is in the Fossil Free Sweden informational video supplemented with a shift in imagery from a single dead tree in the desert to the sun coming through clouds above calm ocean waves. An LTU researcher tells me that the transition to green steel is not something we do for fun:

The green transition is, after all, it’s something that we have to manage, humanity has to face it, if we are to have (laughs), have a planet left. I see it as something that is very urgent. (GS9)

The survival of the planet is here conditioned on the green transition in general but specified through the production of green steel. In this way, climate urgency is narrated as addressed through the technological advances in steel production and heavy industry emissions reduction. There is a temporal aspect to this sense of urgency in that the burning planet must be treated with appropriate medication (read: green steel) as soon as possible for a successful recovery. “We need to be bold” if we want to address this challenge (Anna Borg Vattenfall 2021b). Technological innovation is, in fact, enacted as a corner stone of this change, as we can see in CEO of Vattenfall Anna Borg’s statement accompanied by piano music:

The next generations deserve a sustainable environment just as much as any of us do. Therefore, we must keep sustainability in our hearts and innovation in our minds. (Anna Borg Vattenfall 2021b)

Climate urgency and our responsibility to act quickly is here as elsewhere related to future generations, their survival, and right to inherit an intact planet. Children – interviewees own and imaginative – are invoked as the personified recipients of this sense of obligation. Climate urgency is informed by the insight that if we do not act, future societies will be “increasingly difficult for our children and grandchildren to live in” (Göran Persson at LKAB 2022c translated). We must make it possible for ‘our’ collective children and grandchildren, that they can “also in the future use steel in society-building”, which will have a “crucial importance for the climate” (Göran Persson at LKAB 2022c translated). The green steel transition manifests a “promise to our children that the climate transition is possible” (Annica Jacobsson at SSAB 2021a translated). There is a sense of pride invoked in fighting for a better world for one’s children, in handing it over in a better shape. The CEO of H2GS states in an interview that: “I want to be able to look them in the eyes when they grow up and say, ‘I tried as well as I could’” (Bodenxt 2022 translated). “If this is the start of a fossil free world”, and if we want a modern society, a Gällivare municipal employee tells me, then the choice is very easy, “then we should be part of this journey to pass on something better to our children” (GS13). The green steel transition is also narrated as an opportunity to create a hopeful attitude among children and young people “who only get to hear about misery, misery, misery”, and solve our “mental issues” of resignation (Axelsson at Svemin 2022f translated).

We are part of the problem – and the solution

This sense of climate urgency starts in an admission of wrongdoing from the mining and steel industry, “we are part of the problem” (LKAB 2020a). Steel production especially is narrated as a historically dirty industry responsible for a large chunk of Swedish and global emissions. But as we recall, “the world needs steel” (Martin Lindqvist SSAB 2020). A Hybrit information video tells us, “Steel production accounts for 7 per cent²⁴ of all emissions. That’s too much. But we need steel, so we need to find new ways to produce it” (Vattenfall 2019). Given its traditionally emissions-heavy production, “steel – or rather the production of steel – also threatens our way of life” (LKAB 2020b translated), former prime

²⁴ This number varies between 7-10 per cent in the data.

minister Stefan Löfven notes at the inauguration of the Hybrit plant. Löfven corrects himself in that steel is not in fact the problem but rather the coal-powered production of steel. Stripping it off its fume-tainted overtone steel can continue to function as modernity's building blocks, as fossil free steel. The mayor of Luleå tells me that today, she sees the factory smog from her house:

I have to wipe the black coal from my outdoor furniture because it's actually a dirty industry, so even if it is a few kilometres away, it is polluting Luleå. And I do realize that my children inhale it every day. Clearly, but we have accepted it because they are such an important employer and such an important engine in Luleå. (GS16)

The solution that is presented to “enable us to both curb CO₂ emissions and keep building our modern societies” (Vattenfall 2020a) and “become part of the solution” (LKAB 2020a; 2022f) is a shift to hydrogen for increased domestic steel production and more mining in Sweden. The hydrogen-based steel production and its potential to curb Swedish emissions by 10 per cent (Martin Pei SSAB 2018) is narrated as “impressive, this is the future”, former prime minister Stefan Löfven stresses at a visit to Boden (Bodenxt 2021b translated). In an LKAB information video that narrates the shift from problem to solution, we are shown a map, with the camera lens zooming quickly toward Sweden and right into a mining tunnel, shifting to an image of sponge iron and the caption “our sustainable future starts in the mine” (LKAB 2022f). What is more, as perhaps Sweden's “most important export product” (Axelsson FFS 2022b) there is a hope to inspire others to realize that economic growth and fossil freedom are compatible trajectories. Exporting this realization may result in a common race against climate change “that we can win together, that's my hope”, the national coordinator for Fossil Free Sweden declares. As a more marginal storyline, it is also stressed that Sweden's investments in the domestic steel sector could be scaled up and its technological solutions adopted elsewhere, creating a much wider environmental impact.

As we have seen above, it is believed that through the mining of resources the climate emergency can be averted. Climate change is envisioned as necessitating an unprecedented amount of metals and minerals for electrification, electric cars, wind turbines, solar panels, etc. Swedish extractive industries are enacted as environmentally benign, a place where the environmental legislation is among the strictest in the world (Emma Hårdmark, Svemin 2021c). It is often noted that this has resulted in a competitive edge in the global market and a head start in advancing the “green industrial revolution” (Svemin 2022b translated). It also

spurs the ambition of being an “environmentally smart role model” (Svemin 2020 translated) that “help[s] meet the world’s need for metals with the least possible impact on people and the environment” (Business Sweden 2016). Not acting upon this self-inscribed leadership responsibility but being passive when the “planet is on fire” (Henriksson H2GS at FFS 2022a translated) is narrated as morally shameful, not to expand mining where these practices are most sustainable (GS20), to import “cheap and dirty made products from other countries” (then minister of trade Hallberg Jernkontoret 2020 translated). “We can’t put this on anyone else and say, ‘no, we don’t give a damn about running this, we import everything from Congo or something else instead” (GS9), an interviewee tells me. “What kind of solidarity with nature and people is that?”, an LKAB employee asks me. Since we are an environmental front rider, “let’s make use of what we have in the ground here in Sweden” (GS20). Increased extraction and production in Sweden is good for the global climate even if it were to result in increased emissions locally, since:

Fossil emissions are global, and every time we can extract in Sweden, compared to all other mines in the world, we do it with less carbon dioxide impact, because we are good, and we are efficient. (Thorwaldsson at SVT 2022 translated)

The same goes for green steel, that “when we increase our production in Sweden, we save CO₂ somewhere else, or so” (GS19). This supply and demand logic of a perfect market assumes that increased production of what are perceived as sustainable materials would displace unsustainable products elsewhere so that:

[...] volumes that are sustainably produced would come to the world market. So, from a global perspective it is more sustainable to have a mine in Kallak and get less production from China, for example. (GS9)

More extraction in Sweden signals thereby an ambition to ease climate impacts elsewhere by assuming responsibility as an environmental leader. The Kallak project becomes here a proxy for global sustainability, since the mine in Kallak “would be the most modern and sustainable iron ore mine” (GS9), the “world’s best open pit mine” (Ulla Sandborgh CEO JIMAB, O11). More mining is needed to address climate change, former CEO of Beowulf Mining Kurt Budge reminds us, “We as a mining company are just playing our part in trying to make that happen” (SR 2022a).

Climate versus biodiversity loss

In the above solution proposed to address the climate crisis there is prominence given to carbon dioxide emissions over other impacts such as biodiversity loss as the source of environmental concern. In fact, biodiversity is largely absent in the story of the aligned. This is evident not least in the reiteration of extraction and the safeguarding of the resource-heavy economy, emphasising technological solutions that allow for continued comfort (FFS 2019a; 2022a) over changed consumption patterns. Taken together, climate trumps other environmental concerns:

The goal that we have is, everybody wants (laugh), so that, it's like the overall thing to remove carbon dioxide emissions, is kind of overriding everything else. (GS3)

In fact, biodiversity and emissions reduction, which are commonly referred to as key pillars of the environment (Rockström et al. 2009) are in the data construed as opposing forces. I am told that “green stands against green” (GS23), meaning that biodiversity concerns are viewed as potentially standing in the way for climate action and industry investments aimed at curbing emissions. An employee at the Norrbotten county administration tells me that biodiversity loss and climate change are two important challenges that, however, sometimes require difficult prioritizations (GS23). An LTU employee notes, “It is of course a bit easy that everything else somehow is like being pushed aside if you have a threat like the climate threat hanging over your heads” (GS9). In one of his first outings as then minister of business, Thorwaldsson states that “sometimes, the best for the environment actually comes into conflict with the best for the climate” (Jernkontoret 2021b translated). He continues, the speed with which climate neutrality targets are approaching calls for alterations to the legislations that make it easier “to actually balance environment and climate against each other” (Jernkontoret 2021b translated). His predecessor Annie Lööf agrees and clarifies that the environmental code has not kept up with societal and technical development and must be “modernized” (Jernkontoret 2021b translated). The environmental code is often cherished for being ambitious (GS24; MJ2) and facilitating a competitive advantage that has made the green steel transition possible. It is, however, also critiqued for being outdated and hampering swift decisions on climate-relevant investments. It is also noted that investments’ societal benefit (*samhällsnytta*) should be considered in permit decisions (GS20). Today, assessments are too biased toward “the immediate neighbourhoods and a single species or a single biotope” (GS20) and fail to acknowledge climate or

economic value. Elsewhere, the climate is prioritized by arguing it is an umbrella issue that would also imply positive ripple effects for other environmental issues such as biodiversity. “The climate is lifting all the other issues”, it is here stated, “but the speed where we need to act on the climate change is much more important now than all the other issues” (Svemin 2022e).

In the idea of “green against green”, reference to biodiversity is commonly merged with “local nature”, which is, as we shall see in the next chapter, narrated as an obstacle for green growth in the form of a recurring ‘not in my backyard’ (NIMBY) critique. Biodiversity is here narrated as pieces of local environments that must be sacrificed for the greater good of the climate, where “we have to accept that it will look different” (GS6). This equation of biodiversity as limited to small-scale local nature is also often individualized. The impact of biodiversity loss is here presented as a sacrifice that an individual resident must accept for the sake of the global climate and societal benefit. A wind turbine that casts its shadow on someone’s lawn or a mine that cuts off riding or walking tracks are here balanced against an emphasis on planetary survival (GS6). Biodiversity loss is in this way packaged as absurd when it comes to “what’s at stake”, to a great extent disregarding the threat of biodiversity loss to planetary survival.

Still, biodiversity is not entirely absent but has in fact recently been addressed as a matter of crucial importance. This is motivated by “irrefutable evidence that loss of biodiversity is just as great a threat to our planet as climate change” (Svemin 2021c; translated). The ambition is here to contribute to biodiversity net gain, with a focus at restoring land and nature post-mining. A reoccurring notion is that mining cannot establish just anywhere, but only where there are ore deposits, meaning that an impact in nature where ore lies is unavoidable. While there is a sentiment that mining activities generally can coexist or be synchronized with biodiversity, there is also clarity that where there is a hole in the ground, there is no biodiversity during the mine’s life span (GS20). Instead, we have a responsibility to minimize impact, compensate the loss of biodiversity elsewhere (GS6, 20), and “prepare for the day when the land is to be returned to its natural state” (Svemin 2021c translated). This strategy is referred to as “mining with nature”, what is presented as a symbiotic relationship in which we “just borrow the piece of land that we use and then give it back to nature” (Maria Sunér managing director, Svemin 2021c translated). Despite the admittance that harm will be done, the story is interestingly told with imagery of untouched environments, clouds reflecting in still lakes that lie among mountain chains, a bee collecting nectar, an undisturbed bird eating a worm, a fisherman walking

through a lush green meadow, a shift to a mining tunnel and bird-eye views over mining pits adjacent to mining towns, mine workers chatting. The idea of mining with nature is illustrated through a frame of a zoomed-in hand grasping and picking a cloudberry, a vague hint of snow-covered mountains blurred in the background. The cloudberry is a common berry of the North, which insinuates where this sustainable form of mining may take place. The imagery of the berry being picked also suggests nature feeding us, a closeness to and dependence on nature, living off its resources. The berry as a proxy for ore alludes further to a sense of renewability and abundance, in that, that which is being picked can be restored. The berry a small impact in the vastness that is the North.

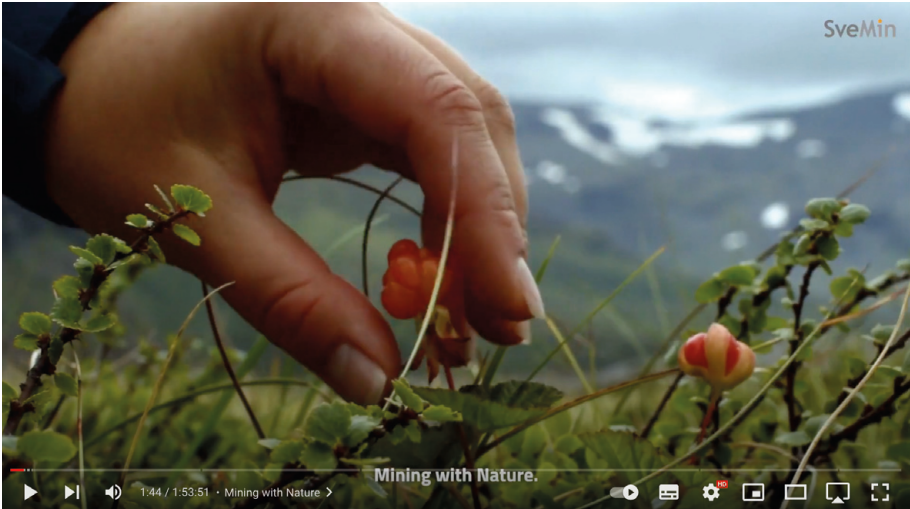


Figure 12. Svemin information video Mining with Nature, played at the Svemin Environmental Summit (Svemin 2022d).

Mining activities are often imagined at great distance from natural values. Information videos shift from lush nature, undisturbed by human impact, right into the safe compounds of mining tunnels, giving the impression that these two realities are coexisting without each other's interference. Drilling for resources is depicted as if unnoticeable above ground, as happening far under the earth's surface, with the camera frame quickly descending from greenery (LKAB 2022e; 2022f). The idea of harmonious coexistence of nature and extraction is also upheld by reference to the vastness of the land in the North. Coexistence is embodied in the merger of Sweden's industry persona and the common emphasis on its exceptional greenery and treasured closeness to nature. The data envisions

the need for extraction here through imagery of hikers, campers, people walking through meadows or alongside mountains, or reference to the joy of walking in the forest to “pick our lingonberries and pick our mushrooms and live and fish and it’s fantastic” (Thorwaldsson at Jernkontoret 2021b translated). For Jokkmokk-based advocates of mining the good life is leisure time, spent with family and in nature, walking in the woods, hunting or skiing (MJ2, 4-6, 10). There is a general emphasis on working to live, not living to work (MJ2), which is also stressed in information marketing campaigns by Svemin on the perks of employment in mining. “If you like to hike, ski, and just enjoy everything that nature has to offer”, it is stated in an information pamphlet “then the mining industry is definitely something for you” (Svemin n.d.). For example, working in shifts is a great way to allow for time in nature, and the payday can “offer slightly more high-quality entertainment than many are used to” (Svemin n.d.), accompanied by an image of a coffee can boiled over open fire by a still lake.

Recycling is not enough: The need for virgin ore

It is stressed that Sweden’s recycling industry is technologically advanced and world leading. Recycling is an important part of the Swedish mineral and metals supply and ambitions to reduce emissions (Jernkontoret 2021e). Both Hybrit and H2GS plan to use about 50 per cent recycled steel in their production (O4). Steel is an especially suitable metal for recycling purposes and its qualities as a 100 per cent recyclable material is widely praised.

Steel can be used over and over again. Steel lives forever – Like Beyoncé. [...] Without recycled steel, no Tesla, no bicycle, no space travel. (Jernkontoret 2017 translated)

Despite the superstar-like qualities of steel, “the need for steel is greater than the supply of scrap” (Jernkontoret 2021e; also GS3, 5, 6, 9). There is vague notion of a very distant peak-steel future that may happen at some point, while reinforcing the notion that for the foreseeable future we will be dependent on ore-based steel production (SSAB 2022a). “Fresh” steel from “virgin” ore (GS6) is needed to make up for the lack of material that is currently in circulation. Given Sweden’s high level of recycling, the development potential in this sector is also narrated as negligible compared to the increase in demand. Also, steel products are narrated as sturdy, of high quality and therefore as having a long lifespan (Jernkontoret 2021a). This is positive in principle, but also means that much of the material thus far produced is bound up in important infrastructure and other constructs

of our societies, “the Eiffel tower for example” (GS9), which gives us less input for the recycling industry and an even higher emphasis on “fresh” ore for steel production. An interviewee tells me that it is of course very important to increase the lifespan of the products that we use but, “It is also a disadvantage then to use things longer, then there is less to recycle as well” (laugh, GS9). As such, the idea of using materials longer is still compartmentalized into the rationale of consumption and growth. Of course, it is important though recycling will not still our rising needs and has to be coupled with increased raw material extraction. This logic of an increased need for minerals is also convenient for the Kallak project, which has been used to motivate the permit decision in favour of the mine (Thorwaldsson 2022b). The managing director of JIMAB holds that when it comes to recycling “we can do that too”, but it is not enough for everything that we need:

Because we switch out cars, many for electric vehicles, have mobile phones that we change often, we have power lines that are being built, wind turbines that need to be built. All that requires more metals. So, we must mine the fine deposits we have. (O11)

Taken together, it is important to discover new ore and mine the deposits that are already known to address the current raw material shortage (Svemin 2014) that threatens the ore supply for the steel and green steel industry, and all that it implies for societal development and the global climate.

Summing up: Docility in alignment

As I have elaborated in great detail in the theory chapter, I suggest that alignment with the fantasy of extraction functions on the level of fantasy (Žižek 1997). This means that the aligned are motivated to stay in line because of the idea that extraction will lead to happiness in the future, if only one desires right (Freud 2004, 16; Lacan 2008). I will now turn to a theoretical discussion of the empirical analysis presented above in which focus is given to the regulation of the desire of the aligned, asking how the body politic is incentivised to stay in line. As such, this analysis sets out to answer the first research question; How is the alignment with the fantasy of extraction upheld and reiterated? I also analyse how extraction is performed as the object of desire, and the sense of happiness that is generated by way of aligning with the fantasy. The next chapter deals more directly with

obstacles to alignment, the discomfort that such obstacles may trigger, and how the aligned deal with this sense of discomfort. In this way, the next chapter discusses the second phase, if you will, of the regulation of desire – fleeing discomfort or the messiness that is dismissed by enforcing linearity in alignment – while this chapter focuses on how the linearity of alignment is upheld by the body politic seemingly self-governing (Foucault 1979; Freud 2004, 79–82) to stay in line.

Extraction is throughout the data reiterated as the happy object, attached with happy associations such as employment, climate action, and demographic growth. I will start the below discussion by recounting the ways in which extraction is reinforced as happy. An overarching mechanism that seems to uphold alignment is the notion of no alternative. This is an emplotment design that is reoccurring throughout the data and that is intertwined with other performative designs and will therefore be discussed as such below. I have identified six additional performative designs through which I see the line to be governed and held straight: (1) an assurance that happiness is just around the corner, (2) invoking fear of loss of a given lifestyle if one were to lose sight of extraction, (3) referencing legacies of past extraction, (4) referencing urgency, (5) claims to truth and rationality of the line, and (6) a quest for conformity in the community of the aligned. Lastly, I will discuss the inaccessibility of alternative desire lines and objects of desire that result from incentives toward docility. Here, I suggest that what lies beyond the line is out of reach to formulate and envision as desirable, in which a sense of no alternative to extraction cancels out other paths. But first, let's recall the ways in which extraction is stabilized as the object of desire.

Fantasmatic articulations: Happy associations with extraction

The object of desire, identified as extraction, is attached with various happy associations that indicate an affective investment in extraction as leading to happiness. The body politic reiterates the fantasy of extraction by emphasizing the affective association of the happy object (Ahmed 2010). When envisioning a happy future, the aligned are sure that “it starts in the mine” (Vattenfall 2021a). Extraction is throughout the data imagined as bringing “amazing futures” (Isaksson Vinnova at LKAB 2022a), where happiness is suggested to await at the end of the road in the form of prosperity, social welfare provisions, and employment, rural development, positive climate futures that need not compromise comfort, Sweden's international competitiveness, self-sufficiency, and geopolitical security. For instance, extraction is envisioned as historically

happy, as having resulted in the economic development that facilitates today's modern lifestyle. Earlier periods of economic growth are referenced to suggest that trust in extraction was the wise choice then and is so now. Social welfare provisions are also referenced as conditioned upon extraction, for instance by associating social welfare housing programs of the past with Swedish steel (Löfven at LKAB 2020b). Extraction is envisioned as generating employment in rural areas, where the industrial development associated with extractive activities is understood as a sign of hope for countering demographic outward movements. In this way, the happy associations are also indicative of a sense of lack that informs the fantasy of extraction, suggesting it can be filled by desiring appropriately (Lacan 1993; Zevnik 2017).

The green transition and a positive climate future are also associated with requiring extraction. Here, decarbonization efforts are associated with an increased need for metals and minerals that are argued not to be in circulation to a sufficient extent and therefore need to be extracted. More extraction in Sweden is associated with an opportunity to advance geopolitical security through self-sufficiency and breaking with dependency on untrustworthy others. The opportunity for increased self-sufficiency is also envisioned on a local level, where the green steel transition is understood as a way of localizing processing and ownership. Municipal actors associate the expansion of industrial activities related to the green steel transition with a bright future with large-scale greenhouses, fish farms, and tropical water parks operated with the excess heat from hydrogen-based production (GS14, 15, 20). Extraction is in the data also romanticized and attached with love (Jernkontoret 2021b; Svemin 2022f) and a general sense of enthusiasm. Especially when it comes to political actors, such expressions of love clearly are strategic positions that signals continued political priority toward favourable mining conditions, but they are also an affective investment in extraction as it indicates desirability and outlines extraction as the object worth pursuing. In this way, alignment with the fantasy is upheld by reinforcing happy associations, inferring causality (Ahmed 2010b, 28; see also Žižek 2016, 57) between extraction and the various benefits listed above.

Not only that, alignment is upheld by inferring that without extraction crisis, death, deterioration awaits. Overall, the data displays clear sentiments of extraction being the only valid alternative there is. This sense of no alternative takes different shapes that all centre extraction as the only path ahead. There is no other way to transition, no other way to upkeep standards of living, nowhere else but here. Increased extraction is the only way to address climate urgency through

decarbonization and expansion of the steel industry. It is the only way to ensure the survival of the periphery through the employment and tax revenues it generates. More extraction in Sweden is also the only palpable way of envisioning a future in which child labour and poor environmental practices can be countered elsewhere, to go forward rather than back to the Stone Age, and to provide a good living standard for future generations. This path of no alternative presents extraction as at the end of the line, in an affective motivation to stay in line. Stepping astray, leaving the path is narrated as forfeiting the chance to reach the goal, in an either-or fashion sacrificing happiness and treading instead toward planetary decay, the death of the periphery, unemployment, children moving and leaving for the opportunities that cities yield, a Stone Age-like standard of living, child labour and polluted rivers elsewhere. Docility in alignment, then, promises stability and security, in that following the line of extraction will guide those that abide to the object of desire. Misalignment instead, is associated with a series of undesirable consequences (Zevnik 2017). As such, there is indeed an alternative, but it is one the aligned ought to fear. This incentive to practice *docility* in alignment is in the data triggered by an either-or dichotomy in which extraction is attached with “pleasurable associations” (Lacan 2008, 63) envisioned as granting a hopeful future, while the absence of extraction and stepping out of the comfortable confines of the line equals death, darkness, dystopia. Docile alignment is in this way a means to distance oneself from various risks that are imagined as luring beyond the line.

1. Invoking temporality: Happiness awaits around the corner

There is frequent reference to the future and future generations, which is indicative of the tendency to see happiness as a position in time that can be achieved once extraction as the object of happiness is pursued correctly. As such, happiness is narrated as a potential that can be fulfilled if we stay in line and desire right. It is “just around the corner” (Ruti 2017, 2), situated at a temporal distance (Ahmed 2010) and achievable on the condition of extraction. This temporal dynamic helps uphold alignment by way of ensuring that the reason why the region does not flourish yet or that people are still moving elsewhere to find jobs is because the necessary level of extraction is not yet reached but can be in the future.

When envisioning such a happy future, children are frequently used in corporate information campaigns about green transition efforts in steelmaking. They are shown running toward a sunset or looking out of a train window in excitement

(H2GS n.d.), signalling an orientation toward something promising. In rural discourse, children are also an important discursive component of motivating docility in alignment. Here, the primary alignment mechanism is fear of losing children to cities and in extension taxpayers to finance the municipal budget. The mine is here presented as the only chance for the next generation to stay (MJ4-6).

The hope that is placed in extraction for a happy future is by local actors of the North informed by reference to past expansion through romanticized reminiscing of what has been and inferring that nothing else that may give hope happens in the region. The romanticized past is noticeable for instance in references to previous demographic peaks that resulted from extractive industry establishments such as waterpower in Jokkmokk. Since then, “everything has gotten way worse” and the society is imagined as deteriorating in the absence of extraction. Before, you could go out dancing and meet people at the local pub, but “today there is nothing” (MJ14). Flourishing pasts and the joys of increased supply of services in demographic growth are associated with industry expansion. As such, the potential initiation of new extractive activities presents a hopeful return to past glory. The mine is a must, locals keep telling me, “otherwise it’s over” (O13). In the same way, the initiation of the new steel mills is met with joy that “something is happening” (Boden municipality 2021b translated). Past hopes for a steel mill in the 80s (*Stålverk 80*) are now replaced with green steel enthusiasm (GS16; MJ9), a logical extension of a deeply enshrined industry identification. The expansion of mining pits in Kiruna and Malmberget are narrated as an impetus of hope, equating the survival of the mine with that of the towns. As we have seen above, the mine “is our mother. She feeds us, she puts roofs over our heads. We do everything for this mine” (O9). It is often invoked that towns like Kiruna would not exist if it weren’t for extraction, and if extraction were to disappear, so would the towns. In this way, survival is strongly associated with the prevalence of extraction. Moving mining towns comes with a sense of sadness, with pasts and possible futures devoured by mining pits, but also with expressions of hope, in which a larger deposit is understood to prolong industry presence, survival (MJ8). Having to move out of the way of the deposit is narrated as something people ought to be happy about since they can exchange their “run-down house” (GS20) for a modern one (GS12).

2. *Invoking loss: Backwardness & fires in caves*

Alignment is also upheld by highlighting the supposed consequences of stepping out of line. As embedded in the extractive order, western demand and

consumption levels are narrated as equating a modern lifestyle, welfare, and wellbeing. The alternative is presented as a deterioration into backwardness, having to give up comfortable lifestyles. If we don't extract, "we would sit in a cave and make a fire" (GS3). People will not stop using steel, so a change in lifestyle and consumption is not an option, "it's not going to happen". "If we want to continue using mobile phones, we have to take up metals" (GS25). The general perception among advocates of mining and green steel is that extraction equals progress, growth, moving forward. Restraining extractive impulses means stagnating, regression. The standard of living "we have worked up in the world" would be wasted if we decided to retract (GS6), capitulating all progress that has thus far been made. The general sentiment is here that, "either you go forward, or you go backwards" (GS2), with the idea of forward progression equated with economic growth. The dark path of retracting backward is one we logically ought to fear, in which a transition that does not abide by market logics will require of us to live in a monastery (FFS 2022a). The green steel transition, then, calms this fear and ensures us that we can continue living comfortable lives (FFS 2019a). This either-or reiteration of the extractive order does in fact present an alternative, but an undesirable such, an illogical, self-destructive path to pursue. Surely, we could choose to renounce the delights of the world if we find regression, poverty, darkness, death to be more desirable than progress. The invoked linearity toward extraction is reinforced by making only alternatives accessible that require a temporal backward movement on the existing extractive line, rather than a dismissal of the line altogether. Carving out alternative desire lines that allow movement elsewhere and explore non-extractive objects of happiness is made inaccessible through the dichotomy of regression and progress, in which stepping out of line is imagined as the dystopian alternative to extraction.

3. Invoking alignment sediments

As I have discussed earlier, I read extractive desire as a predefined path that suggests how one ought to desire to arrive at happiness. As such, it is a prescribed fantasy regulated through the rules and guiding principles of the symbolic order (Ahmed 2006; Foucault 1979; Lacan 2008). The line that I have paralleled with cross-country ski tracks presents the most comfortable way ahead, where staying in line allows ease of movement. This pre-defined or pre-paved quality of the line is in the data especially evident in reference to the region as a space that for various reasons is optimal for extractive activities. Earlier instances of industrialization and their legacies in the form of statues, information plaques, the materials used in architecture, industry actors' visibility in the towns such as at sports events (GS16;

O2, 6, 7, 10). But also the quantity of clear cut forest areas, industrial sites, infrastructure, spaces dedicated to energy generation, and mining pits pose reminders, they tell stories if you will, or perform the fantasy as something reachable, something natural and familiar. These sedimentations of alignment are productive in their shaping of space and minds alike, forming the ways in which one can move and narrate the present and future. Such sediments of alignment are discursively invoked as an edge for the region, shaping it into the right place for an expansion of industry operations, the “mining and metals mecca of Sweden” (Mix H2GS 2021). “We have steel in our DNA, because we have always had steel” (GS16). The North is not only narrated as the optimal place for extraction but it’s natural beauty is also inferred as a motivation for extractive expansion; “it’s so beautiful, you know, incredible” (Mix H2GS 2021). The imagery used when reiterating the extractive potential of the North suggests lush abundance, greenery as far as the eye reaches. The imagined virginity of the land becomes an incentive for incisions. The aligned reference an industrial ecosystem that is already in place and makes for a smooth expansion.

4. *Invoking urgency*

Alignment is upheld by way of inferring that increased extraction in Sweden is morally and environmentally virtuous, the right thing to do, invoking a sense of urgency for extraction. The linear sense of no alternative is here reiterated when invoking the environmentalism and social justice dimension of increased mining in Sweden and the expansion of steel production in its new hydrogen expression. As we have seen, mining expansion is presented as the environmental and fair alternative to dirty and undemocratic activities elsewhere, where children work in mining pits and industries pollute (GS2, 9, 21; MJ10). There is an urgent need to expand operations in Sweden to shield children elsewhere from work in mines (Baylan 2020; Svemin 2022d; GS19). In Sweden, there are also consultations in place where a country like China “wouldn’t even understand what we mean” (laugh; GS19). When it comes to social justice, the access to just and sustainably mined material is also stressed as important for global development. Not extracting in Sweden is equated with limiting poor nations to reach Western-style levels of prosperity (GS9, 10; MJ8). With population growth, it is argued, “they want more and more stuff, and that will make it so demand rises” (GS5). It is not our right to determine who is “allowed to live in a house that lasts” (GS10).

Not taking one’s responsibility as a leading mining nation and placing production instead in other countries would mean that it “might not have been as clean”

(GS5). As such, expanding extraction domestically is the only responsible way to still our modern needs. “The alternative we have is that people stop using steel. That is not going to happen” (GS3). Because of our needs, curbing production levels or rethinking consumption is not an option, which leaves us with producing as much steel as environmentally friendly as possible – in Sweden. When it comes to the decarbonization of the steel industry, we need to act quickly because “the hour is late on the planet” (FFS 2022b). We are sick and need medicine, solutions to save the planet (FFS 2022b). There is a strong sense of urgency in that “we kind of have to” if we want to “have a planet left” (GS9), otherwise “we let the climate go loose” (GS6). Reference is here most directly made to the steel transition away from coal. However, I want to stress that this line of reasoning goes in the data hand in hand with a discursive push for increased extraction as needed to fuel such a transition. As such, addressing climate change is presented as possible only through technological solutions that decarbonize the heavy industry, together with an increase in production that is believed to take market shares from dirty, unjust industries elsewhere. Here, climate crisis narratives are merged with corporate survival strategies.

The electric car is used as a proxy for positive climate futures, in which the conscious consumers aids in saving the world without jeopardizing their high standards of living. “No mines, no electric cars” (DSG n.d.), which means in the resource-heavy articulation of environmentalism no green transition. With the affective investment in extraction, it is in the data made clear that it is not about the *if* of extraction, but rather the how and where. First, it is here established that the North of Sweden is the optimal place for increased extraction and steel production. Second, the aligned insist that the problem of climate change will not be solved by consuming less but consuming different products. Consumption plays an important role in this vision of the green transition where the individual consumer is presented as a beacon of hope, as hip and cool (Vattenfall 2022) if they consume consciously and desire green steel cars. High demand is in this sense of environmentalism indeed desirable, “If you want it, we can mine it” (Jan Moström at Svemin 2022d). As an alternative we can surely, “get rid of all the emissions in the country the day after tomorrow”, if we are willing to “shut down everything”, the former minister of business notes, but “the problem is that it affects the other part, that we also want that people can live a good life, a rich life” (Baylan at SSAB 2021b translated). In this way, the alternative to the market-driven green transition is imagined as incompatible with the good life and elsewhere comfortable living. Stepping out of line is presented as a state of uncomfortable vacuum that one ought to fear (Zevnik 2017).

Many of the aligned reiterate the need for increased extraction as a given to still these needs. As we shall see in the next chapters, some aligned express this need for extraction in a more reluctant manner and reference excessive material use as questionable but difficult to avoid. When I ask critics of mining, *killjoys* if you will, about the need for mines, they often respond by uncomfortably pointing to their phones or computers. Commonly, this uncomfortable stepping in line or reluctant alignment is accompanied by calls to review consumption patterns and our resource heavy lifestyles. Often, there is disapproval expressed over Swedish consumption levels requiring four planets. In docile alignment, actors are more comfortable in referencing needs. Though, even here, consumption is problematized by some, but alignment is reconfirmed rather quickly by focusing back on needs; it may well be that our iron and steel demand is too high but slowing down won't do the trick. Instead, we must produce (environmentally and socially) better steel. As the story goes, we need steel to uphold our standard of living, help others acquire the same level of advancement as we enjoy, and save the climate, and therefore we need mines, so the story goes.

5. *Invoking rationality*

Another incentive for alignment noticeable in the data is an emphasis on logic and rationality. For the reasons discussed above, advocates of mining and green steel suggest that alignment with the principles of the extractive order ought to be an obvious choice and the only reasonable alternative. This is articulated through phrases such as “of course” or a reference to “facts”. It is articulated as a given that one naturally ought to align if they do not wish to forfeit their own and society's chance to a prosperous future, welfare, and a successful green transition. “We have to” (MJ2) extract more to make this future possible. The linearity of the rearticulations of alignment helps imagine a path on which the one leads to the other. For instance, we have certain needs that must be stilled to ensure modern and sustainable living, but since recycling is not enough, we need virgin ore. Iron and steel have facilitated modern living, so, if we stop extracting others cannot modernize as did we. Swedish mining is more sustainable, so it should be expanded to do the world good. If linearity were to be broken, one risks losing sight of happiness. Invoking rationality, then, functions to regulate transgression by imposing recklessness upon those who fail to desire right, the Other. The imaginary of the Other is here only a vague idea that can be fathomed through the description of the Self. In the next empirical chapter I discuss the regulatory power of the imaginary of the Other as the one that obstructs the path toward happiness, the obstacle.

More extraction is important to fuel the decarbonization of the steel sector, which is a green transition effort that lets us “live fossil-free in a comfortable way” (Axelsson FFS 2022a translated), it is the logical thing to do (Eva Petursson at Jernkontoret 2022b). By way of decarbonizing the steel industry, the body politic distances itself from the industry’s negative implications, which makes an upscale of green steel production not only unproblematic but also logical. It is stressed that in traditional production processes, “we are part of the problem” (LKAB 2020a), which is a negative association that is dismantled with the shift toward hydrogen. It is not steel itself, but coal-fuelled production that “threatens our way of life” (Löfven at LKAB 2020b translated). All of this presents the shift to extraction for green steel as a logical conclusion. For regional actors, the problematic effects of industry pollution such as the dust on patio furniture and children breathing soot (GS16) can now be left behind without forfeiting the joy that the industry is envisioned to bring. The soot that the engine of Luleå exhales upon the town through its industry chimneys was a necessary evil and constant reminder of the trade-off of keeping the city alive. It is a “matter out of place” (Douglas 2003) in a residential safe haven of patio furniture and childhood ease. But the charcoal also becomes the material layer that claims the city as its own, reminds its citizens that this is an industry town, which is embodied with every inhale as a natural part of oneself and the next generations of industry workers. Envisioned as an unhealthy substance, however, the green steel transition manifests an opportunity to break with the burdensome layer of dirt and create “a cleaner world, a greener world” (GS14). The aligned are comforted by the green steel transition in that it prevents them from being abandoned by the steel industry and mines that are seen as the engine of the region, their “mother” that cares for them (O9). In this way, making space for the green steel transition is the rational thing to do, “because it means so much to us, plus we can save the world at the same time” (laughs; GS5).

Not aligning or misaligning is presented as a result of miscalculation or ignorance. The aligned insist that “we all know that metals and minerals are the basis for a sustainable society” (Jenny Greberg at Svemin 2021b translated). The role of metals and minerals in sustainability and elsewhere in modern living, is common knowledge of which all are or ought to be aware. Alignment is commonly incentivized noting that “that’s just a fact” (GS9), insisting that those who do not realize and internalize these facts are situated in a state of ignorance, they are in the dark beyond the comfortable confines of the line. Stepping out of line would, as such, be an irrational move since the line constitutes the path of the enlightened. As I will discuss in detail in the next chapter, lack of knowledge about

the importance of mining, metals and minerals is presented as an obstacle to happiness, or the modern and sustainable future envisioned through extraction. For instance, director of the environment at Svemin Kristina Branteryd notes that for her, maybe the most difficult thing to handle is ignorance (Svemin 2021a). At Svemin's environmental summit she explains to attendees how she usually goes about encountering sceptics:

'Dear, if we don't have mines you can't eat, you have no shoes, and you have nowhere to stay'. So, this is really serious, we need mines and you here in the room, for you it's so obvious that we do need mines, but it's not obvious for everyone. (Svemin 2022d)

The aligned realize what the misaligned do not. They must be told, they must learn what they fail to understand. Elsewhere, actors note that those who are aware must "teach and tell" (Axelsson FFS 2022a translated) those who don't. The 'dear' above indicates a sense of belittlement of the misaligned that fail to enter the sphere of rationality. Here, information campaigns that inform the public about the value of extraction are designed to help people step in line, very much for their own good so that they can have shoes and somewhere to stay, or elsewhere, enjoy the modern way of life generated through extraction – charge their electric cars, camp with loved ones, play charades with their family. Those that do not abide by the idea that extraction leads to happiness are here understood as standing in the way of their own happiness, but in extension also of the imagined community since 'they' must learn that 'we' need mines to be happy. Othering functions here to infer that if they (the irrational, uneducated) were to fail to join 'us' in the position of rationality, they may hinder us to accomplish happiness.

6. Invoking conformity in community

The last incentive to stay in line is a sense of community in alignment, which relates to the above notion of the 'we'. I have introduced the aligned as a body politic that forms a line in anticipation of the attainment of the joint object of desire. The order functions here to arrange actors into a line to ensure order rather than chaos through integration into a community (Freud 2004, 99). Integration ensures the conformity, purity, homogeneity of the line (Douglas 2003; Puwar 2004; Lacan 2008, 241), it ensures docility. Stepping out of line, then, means leaving the protective, comfortable embrace of the community behind. Desiring right means desiring the same object.

This community of the line is indicated through ample use of proprietarian language in the description of the end goal of extraction, but also the risks that await if the joint goal would be abandoned or jeopardized in other ways. ‘We’ need to extract to ensure that ‘our’ needs are met, otherwise, ‘we’ will return to the Stone Age, or watch while the planet is burning. Community is invoked in the description of the object and the path that we must stride to arrive at the object, but also in the consequences that await ‘us’, jointly, if we fail to stride the path. In this way, again, breaking linearity and forfeiting conformity in alignment would risk the happiness of the community. The sense of community is also invoked when articulating the assets that Sweden has to its disposal to realize full enjoyment (Stavarakakis 2007) comparatively better than other communities. ‘Our’ rich bedrocks, mining history and expertise, and existing infrastructures are assets (Löfven 2019) that we ought not let go to waste (Jernkontoret 2021b; LKAB 2023). There is a sense of exceptionalism and benevolence imagined in this community of the aligned, envisioned as environmentally and socially considerate. The ‘we’ is operating for the wellbeing not only of the own but also of other communities by onshoring more extraction and ensuring that poor mining practices are displaced elsewhere, and that through our doing the global climate can flourish. Not taking on this responsibility would mean that other, “undemocratic” (Busch at Svemin 2022f translated) mining nations would be able to keep harming the global climate and employ children in their mines, or that untrustworthy countries such as China can control the advancement of the green transition through their market domination. Reference to the Other as undemocratic, as countering the quest for justice and sustainability as an aggressor functions to strengthen the position of the self as benevolent (GS9). The community is further kept in line by ample reference to ‘our’ collective children and grandchildren (LKAB 2022c), in which desiring right and supporting the quest to extract equals fighting for our children’s futures. It invokes a sense of pride in the community in that our desire allows us to “look them in the eyes when they grow up” (Henriksson at Bodenxt 2022).

The inaccessibility of alternative lines

As a result of the schemes discussed above that function to uphold alignment stepping out of line to search for alternative objects of desire is rendered inaccessible, needless, and indeed a rather frightening undertaking (Zevnik 2017). We have encountered either-or dichotomies of extraction equalling progress and prosperity while stepping out of line means chaos, claims to rationality, and

community coherence. The comfort of the line ensures the aligned that stepping out of line brings various hazards that one ought to avoid. By incentivising alignment, the order keeps us from looking around and makes alternative lines inaccessible. I will illustrate this through the example of alternative green transition pathways.

Throughout the data, environmental action is narrowly defined as emissions reduction, which actively limits the imagination of the aligned when it comes to alternative futures. Decarbonization of heavy industries is presented as “the only way to achieve large-scale impact on climate change and to enable fossil free living within one generation” (Vattenfall 2020a). Also, as we can see above, the aligned are sure that either we stop using steel altogether, which would place us in a cave making up fire, or we extract more in Sweden where it is produced without any negative impact worth considering. Either we have steel and iron and can therefore live modern, green, and healthy lives, or there is no steel and we will spiral our lives into chaos. There is throughout the data no reflection on moderation that would grant a debate about the ‘needs’ themselves, whether they are reasonable and our resource-heavy living compatible with planetary limits to growth. Alternative transition pathways that rather accentuate the need to scrutinize modern needs, consumption levels, resource-heavy living, biodiversity loss, and the market-based definition of wellbeing are inaccessible, forging docility in alignment for those that do not want to risk planetary decay. Environmental concern that goes beyond emissions reduction and for instance toward biodiversity is not part of this alignment either. Such notions do not seem to fit the growth-induced decarbonization efforts that uphold extraction as the source of future sustainability and wellbeing. A broader definition of environmentalism as biodiversity loss is even presented as standing in the way of realizing the industry-driven green transition, a “green against green” (GS23) in which climate action ought to be prioritised. Rather than seeking out alternative desire lines that may be able to accommodate both biodiversity and climate as compatible aspects of environmentalism, concern for biodiversity is here presented as selfish, as an unwillingness to sacrifice “local nature” or accept a shadow from a wind turbine on one’s backyard for the sake of saving the climate (GS6). Biodiversity is as such individualized, packaged as absurd in the larger scheme of things and as an issue of backyards.

The emphasis on decarbonization in transition efforts and the equation of emissions reduction technology with environmentalism makes it possible to envision a future of extraction as lush, green, untouched, preserved. The quest for

an expansion of extraction is in the data illustrated through images of bees collecting nectar, vast landscapes, berries being picked, and a shift into a mining tunnel that is seemingly at a far distance from the nature with which it is imagined coexisting harmoniously (LKAB 2022e; 2022f; Svemin 2022e). By imagining compatibility of extraction with pride for Sweden's natural environments the aligned need not reflect on the preferability of the one versus the other – extraction or nature. While counterintuitive on first sight, the reasoning indeed makes sense. It is sustained by the idea that Swedish extraction perceived as environmentally benign is a prerequisite for saving the world given its relative assumption of purity. With the equation of environmentalism as extraction a future of mining is a green future. It allows for the coexistence of a perceived closeness to nature with an embodied mining persona. Imagery of meadows, untouched forests, bees and birds, lakes and mountains can be depicted as residing on the surface, with the mine hidden away below ground, at a safe distance, functioning as the engine that keeps the greenery alive. This idea neglects associated impacts of extraction and therewith forecloses the necessity of alternative paths to happiness.



5. DISCOMFORT IN ALIGNMENT

In the second empirical chapter, I engage with the discomfort of the aligned and the obstacles (Ahmed 2010) they may face in their alignment with the fantasy of extraction. I am here interested in the performative expressions and themes with which the aligned engage that seem to provoke an alteration to the linear alignment of the body politic in a way that requires a reaffirmation, or potentially a dismissal of an orientation toward extraction. As such, I explore the second research question; How is discomfort productive in disrupting extractive desires? This chapter discusses discomfort in the alignment with the dominant order, when and how such discomfort becomes visible, what it does, and how the aligned address it. The ways in which discomfort is addressed – fleeing or lingering in it – is indicative of its potential to trigger sustained change in the regulation of desire toward extraction. This chapter also speaks to some extent to the first research question in that alignment also is upheld and reiterated through the imaginary of the Other, the obstacle, as disturbing the affective investment in the project of extraction and troubling the stability of the fantasy. I will return to both research questions toward the end of this chapter.

As the above discussion of modern needs and the joy envisioned in extraction indicates, the root of discomfort lies with the inaccessibility or absence of minerals and metals. As we shall see, since happiness is associated with extraction failing to extract constitutes an obstacle to the good life that. The performative reiterations of the good life as requiring unearthed materials – through the proxy of playing games with our families, camping in nature with loved ones, charging our electric cars – at the same time constructs an alternative reality that lacks metals and minerals as dire, dark, void of joy in all its forms. The discomfort is taking the shape of negative emotive responses such as fear of being transported back into the Stone age, into a society in which life is difficult and modern appliances that

make our lives more comfortable are unavailable. Since an increase of steel production “forms a better future” (Jernkontoret n.d.), a downscaling offers only a gloomy, uncertain tomorrow. Since our dependence on steel is understood as unwavering, even the roof over our heads, or being able to bring our children to school (GS3) is threatened without trust in the steel industry. The need for steel is commonly associated with infrastructures such as bridges and housing, essentials for our daily lives, as well as health care appliances such as pacemakers or ultrasound machines that help us monitor a foetus’ health, or modern necessities such as computers and phones. The alternative is uncomfortable, one without shelter, an unconnected society without communication opportunities, essentially death. As we have seen, defeating child labour, rights violations, and environmental harm in undemocratic states is also conditioned on an upscaling of iron ore extraction and steel production. A future without green steel is one of climate crisis, in which we haven’t taken responsibility for next generations. Happiness is presented as starting in the mine, which suggests that without the mine, happiness is obscured.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the aligned find comfort in linearity, in the fantasy that happiness is trapped below ground and trusting that it all starts in the mine (Svemin n.d.). The linear alignment with extraction is visible in uninterrupted performative reiterations of the extractive order. Though, among the aligned there are also instances of discomfort in performative deviation from linearity, or moments where linearity falters. In this chapter, I analyse these instances of discomfort and the obstacles I have identified on the linear path toward extraction for happiness. I understand obstacles as the themes that are introduced into a plot that make the gaze ahead toward extraction more troublesome as they present ruptures or discontinuities (Andrews and Bamberg 2004b, 5; Tamboukou 2015, 37) in the coherence of linear, causal emplotment (Somers and Gibson 1994, 59) presented in the previous chapter.

Ruptures in linearity emerge when absences in a linear plot are inquired, when material reminders such as deforestation on a planned steel production site is encountered, or when participants themselves divert from linearity and introduce other themes that risk threatening coherence (Patterson and Monroe 1998, 329). Discomfort may in the data take the shape of discursive ruptures such as stutters, expressions of uncertainty such as ‘well’, ‘but’ ‘ehm’, pauses, embodied discomfort such as altered posture, exhales, or sighs, leaning back, looking away, slapping one’s thigh, and code overlaps with expressions of frustration or other affective responses to obstacles to the project of extraction. Obstacles may force the aligned

to examine the obstacle, reject it to reinforce linearity (reluctantly or by staying in line in a docile manner), or else draw into question the plot given the incoherence that the obstacle caused (stepping out of line). Elsewhere, obstacles may reinforce the fantasy that extraction results in happiness by way of attaching the cause of unhappiness to the presence of the obstacle, suggesting that happiness could in fact be achieved if it weren't for the thief of joy that is the obstacle (Stavrakakis 2007). Some obstacles are incorporated more easily into the linear story of extraction for happiness, wherein interviewees address and overcome them on their own accord. These are already represented in the previous chapter and deal with the alternative of recycling and the steel industry's emissions. Here, reiterations of comfortable alignment are practiced habitually, responses to the obstacles are performed harmoniously, uniform: (1) Recycling is an important avenue of decarbonizing the steel industry, but it is not enough, and 'we' need virgin ore to still 'our' modern needs, and (2) the steel industry's traditional production method is dirty, which makes us part of the problem, but now we become part of the solution with the shift to hydrogen. Another such example is the question of the permit process that is perceived as unnecessarily sluggish, risking Swedish iron ore and green steel leadership. While responses to such obstacles are integrated components into the plot, other obstacles seem to disturb alignment with the fantasy of extraction more gravely, tapping on the shoulder of the body politic with a more disorienting intervention and triggering a less organized response. An example here is the question of Sami rights vis-à-vis industry advances.

The most frequent sources of discomfort that I have identified are lengthy permit processes and other regulations, Sami peoples or lifestyles, nature, not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) 'nay-sayers', environmental and Sami activists (especially non-local protesters), and clumsy leaders. These themes are performed as obstacles that are treated as placed in the way of the aligned, they are situated between the aligned and extraction. They are addressed when asked about the risks they envision for a hopeful future or emerge at later stage in conversations. Often, the themes that are treated as obstacles are missing from the linear storytelling of the fantasy, only to be introduced by me for the sake of discomfort. A second set of discomfort in the data are not presented as obstacles per se but rather undesirable effects or impacts of extraction that cause a sense of instability in alignment with the fantasy. Rather than being placed in their way by me, various material encounters, or themselves as a notion of disturbance, especially local interviewees introduce messiness and ruptures into the plot by laying bare their discomfort with certain aspects of industrial expansion in the North. Here, the most common

avenues of discomfort with the impacts of extraction are changes in the natural environment, unwanted impacts on societal structures, and a fear that the region continues to be used as a resource colony. In cases of an exposure to obstacles, the aligned display discomfort in the form of annoyance or frustration that something is placed between themselves and happiness, others seem to be uncomfortable with the incompatibility that is sensed between the allure of extraction and the questions raised by the encounter with the obstacle. For instance, some of those that are generally aligned display discomfort about Sami rights recognition amid the land intensive green transition. Still, most commonly, the aligned seem to deal with discomfort by way of dismissing the obstacle and returning to comfort in linearity. When it comes to other sources of discomfort that emerge as a result of extraction and that are not generally framed as obstacles but rather negative impacts of extraction (incisions in familiar environments, the moving of cities, etc.) participants display instead a sense of uncertainty in alignment. Extraction is here still fixed or reaffirmed as the object of desire, but alignment is to some degree *reluctant* with participants maintaining a degree of discomfort in alignment.

In the text that follows, I deal first with themes that are framed as obstacles that are placed in the way of the aligned and turn then to themes that are treated as negative consequences of extraction. I want to stress, however, that this division is to some extent simplified. For instance, there is nuance among the aligned, not all of which portray the Sami or biodiversity as obstacles to happiness. These nuances are raised in the discussion. Still, this division functions to highlight the general tendencies through which the aligned deal with discomfort in alignment.

Discomfort in facing obstacles to happiness

In what follows, I discuss obstacles that are constructed as standing in the way of happiness. As introduced above, these obstacles cause a rift in linearity and I examine whether they trigger an examination, reaffirmation, or possibly a dismissal of one's orientation. The themes that are framed as obstacles to the attainment of the object of desire and that I identified in the data as most frequently disturbing linear comfort are (1) sluggish permit processes, (2) Sami rights, (3) NIMBY, (4) protesters and other critics, and (5) clumsy leaders.

Sluggish permit processes

One of the most frequent expressions of discomfort involves sluggish permit processes related to the initiation of mining but also other industrial processes wherein land use shifts (e.g., energy gridline development or steel sites). Prolonged permit processes are in the data commonly associated with fears of jeopardizing Sweden's reputation as a favourable investment destination and with its mining and industry leadership. Permit processes are referred to as creating problematic uncertainties for advocates and critics alike. Even if you are against a mine like Kallak, surely you would want a faster decision instead of dwelling in uncertainty for years (GS20), I am told. More recently, permit processes are referenced as risking the green transition and Swedish competitiveness, allowing others to overtake Sweden in the race to becoming the world's first fossil free welfare nation. Kallak is treated as a worst-case example of the shortfalls of Swedish permit regulations.

International investors do not dare to invest in Sweden anymore because of long permit processes, it is often stated. This relates to Sweden's plunge in the international ranking of favourable mining policies (Fraser Institute 2020). A Jokkmokk resident tells me, "It's a shame that we drop in the ranking, but that's a lot thanks to Kallak, because it took so long time" (MJ2). Approaching the decision in March 2022 frustration about Swedish legislations had become a common ingredient also of Beowulf's narrative (Aktiespararna 2020; ProHearings 2021). According to former CEO Kurt Budge "if you have done the work you should get the permit", but indeed, "Sweden has been looked at as a very challenging place to do business" (Beowulf Mining 2018a). In fact, the government coordinator for industrial investments in the North Peter Larsson (GS21) tells me in an interview that the government's decision to grant JIMAB/Beowulf Mining an exploitation permit was a matter of symbolic importance, demonstrating government intent.

GS21: It feels like, when it comes to deposits, this was probably not the most prioritized one, but there were others that might have been given priority in this.

G: And still the decision was made the way it was?

GS21: Mh, mh. Yes, well, sometimes you must, it's a lot of signal politics in these things, but.

G: What kind of signal do you think this has given?

GS21: [...] If you were to reject this, people would continue to say that, yes but ‘we will not be able to do anything in Sweden’. So, the government was jammed.

Similarly, an SGU employee notes at a Svemin seminar that “there is big potential in the ground”, but “we don’t make use of this potential at the moment” (Svemin 2022a). Investors don’t dare to engage, “it’s a little bit like playing roulette when you go in with an application”, she continues. Interviewees raise concerns that mining and other projects are discontinued when “investors don’t find Sweden as interesting” (MJ8).

Permit processes are also narrated as obstacles to climate urgency. Managing director of LKAB Jan Moström notes that “in times when we will need more of our products” (Svemin 2021a translated) it is problematic that permit processes are unpredictable. Communicator at Hybrit Development Åsa Bäcklin at a breakfast seminar organized by the Gällivare Business Agency:

Many are allowed to have their say, and they should be allowed, but it can sometimes feel like it can be a little sluggish and a little slow, when at the same time you see that the climate is running. We must try to catch it. (Gällivare Business Agency 2020 translated)

A green future is discursively placed on the path toward extraction, but unapproachable given the barriers of sluggish permit processes disallowing advancement to “catch” the climate. That many have their say is desirable but is also presented threatening to climate action. As discussed in the previous chapter, the environmental code (*Miljöbalken*) is referenced as especially hampering, with its excessive emphasis on the environment standing in the way for industry decarbonization. Biodiversity is important, but “we as a country must make sure to make that journey [toward zero emission] possible” (Jernkontoret 2021b translated), former minister of business Annie Lööf notes at Jernkontoret’s steel day. Concern for the environment is viewed as conflictual with climate ambitions, green stands against green (Thorwaldsson at Jernkontoret 2021b; GS23). Biodiversity has become a discomfiting matter in growth-based decarbonization efforts that require land for its expansionary design.

The aligned are certain that permit processes must be altered (MJ3). Most commonly, it is stressed that permit processes ought to be made more efficient by considering the overall societal benefit of investments. First, it is presented as counterproductive that green advancements such as the H2GS site or energy

gridline expansion required for the green transition are hampered by placing them under the same scrutiny as other industries, where “I want to destroy the world AB” (GS24) would be treated the same as green industry actors²⁵. Second, decisions on mining and industry permits often falter on unbalanced concern about a single protected plant or biotope. An LKAB employee notes that it is not that it should be ok to start a mine anywhere, but where benefits outweigh harms. Today, too much weight is given to local intrusion in biodiversity, tourism, or reindeer husbandry, “and so you say no” (GS20). Instead, when considering overall societal benefit it should be recognized that reindeer husbandry, for example, is strongly impacted by climate change, he continues. In this way, local impact ought to be weighed against the global climate in an overall assessment of the societal value of investments. Here, it would be more sensible for example to compensate for a mine’s local impact elsewhere and secure the “economic, social, and the climate benefit” (GS20) of the mining project.

The above discussion of permit processes is commonly associated with difficulties in the handling of competing state interests (*riksintressen*) on land where industry expansion is planned. State interests refer to mapped out areas of overlapping land use categories that are deemed as valuable for the state (e.g., minerals and metals, reindeer herding, national defence, or nature conservation). The aligned often hold that there is nothing that speaks against the coexistence of these interests (GS5; MJ8). This trust in the symbiosis of overlapping interests is also a clear component of the government’s Kallak permit decision. The decision specifies that a number of conditions (e.g. provision of truck transport for reindeer, restoration of land post-mining) will allow for reindeer herding to be carried out continuously alongside mining (Thorwaldsson 2022b). These solutions designed to uphold the idea of coexistence are by Sami representatives (KJ20, 27, 30) critiqued as flawed and insufficient quick fixes that neglect more structural problems, and as incentivizing even further industrial expansion through the North (KJ20, 27). However, some local industry advocates are more attentive to the flaws of the notion of coexistence (discussed in more detail in the next chapter) and mention that balancing state interests in fact is a difficult undertaking (GS11, 12). “So, what is most important then?”, a Gällivare municipal politicians exhales in frustration, “it’s not that easy” (GS14). This emphasis on the need of weighing

²⁵ The government commissioned an investigator to assess the appropriateness of a fast-track for green investments (*grön gräddfil*) in 2018. The investigator concluded that priority procedures for green activities would not result in a more efficient permit process (Government Offices of Sweden 2018).

interests against each other suggests that mining and reindeer herding are either-or activities and that one must be prioritized over the other. While there is discomfort displayed in reindeer herding and other alternative land use that may stand in the way for industry advances, interviewees also express discomfort in the either-or reality of the permit process (GS4).

The Sami

The construction of the Sami or Sami claims to land as obstacles for mining and the green transition is frequent in the data and deserves thorough examination.

Sympathy in principle

Commonly, a journey into discomfort among mining or green steel advocates starts with my inquiry: ‘Do you understand those who are critical against mining/industry expansion?’ Most often, the initial response is affirmative, “yes absolutely, I do” (MJ1). Interviewees note that they are content with the fact that in Sweden, there is freedom of speech and opinion, and they would not want that to change (MJ2), “that would be horrible” (MJ1). The expression of sympathy with those opposed is mainly directed toward local citizens that are impacted by transport infrastructure, dust or noise pollution, and Sami reindeer herders. Interestingly, (especially non-local) protesters are rarely included in this sense of empathy, nor are Sami livelihoods and culture more generally. When it comes to reindeer herding, however, interviewees situated in the North display a general understanding that industry advances such as mining or wind power have an impact. Some interviewees even reference the cumulative effects (Kløcker Larsen et al. 2017) of investments including water and wind power, infrastructure, mining and forestry (MJ3, 8). Sami representatives are recalled noting that investments are like 1000 needle sticks, one won’t hurt, but 1000 will kill you (GS20). Historically, there was not enough knowledge about cumulative pressures, an LKAB employee tells me, which “could be an explanation for the fact that things have continued” (laugh; GS20). But “LKAB stays within its fences” and the Sami think that “LKAB is doing right by [them], but of course, it would have been better if [we] were not here” (GS20). The uncomfortable acknowledgement that mines may affect Sami communities as one of 1000 needle sticks is calmed by an assumption that underground mines are delimited by fences, limited to a mining tunnel (figures 13-15). This reasoning displays backtracking on the notion of cumulative pressures, and that LKAB as an established actor has shown respect and is accepted by the Sami peoples. The

possible exaggeration of acceptance and downplaying of the impact of underground mining is an interesting response to discomfort in that it in fact displays insufficient acknowledgement of cumulative ripple effects of mining, despite the initial acknowledgement of this very dynamic. Here as elsewhere, a mine is narrated as if presenting a single impact only, delimited to a tunnel entrance leading to a hidden-away deposit. Indeed, upon entry through the gates of the Kiruna mine one may encounter the sensation of being swallowed whole by a beast or whale that closes its mouth behind you, entering a new world altogether (figure 13, 14). Descending in the mining tunnel beyond already exploited land masses and in the paths that were dug to follow the riches of the deposit may enforce the idea that the life that is left aboveground is sheltered and unaffected. However, the impact of open pit and underground mining travels far beyond the gates of the mining tunnel, which is evident in the moving of cities in both cases where the ‘mother’ has come to swallow what lies above. Also – and this should be realized with reference to cumulative pressures – a mine requires infrastructure to transport the unearthed materials, which often cuts through important land areas, feeds cityscapes that take up land, and is one node of a web of industry structures that reach far beyond a mining pit. Still, and this will be discussed in greater detail below, mines are performed as unproblematic relative to the wide areas of land in the North.

Actors in Luleå and Boden express general importance of and concern about Sami rights elsewhere such as in Jokkmokk (GS10, 11, 12, 16), while not extending such reflections inward on possible historic or current impact within municipal boundaries. Among municipal actors, Gällivare-based interviewees express the greatest concern about Sami rights in light of mining, which is not surprising given their large mining sector overlapping with multiple reindeer herding communities. “Interests push from all sides”, Gällivare politicians tell me, “And they are like ‘ok, but what do we do now? My reindeer is used to walking there, and now they want to put a mine there?’” (GS14) Reference to dialogue is the main defensive response, though, acknowledging to a greater extent than do corporate actors that there is only so much one can do to accommodate reindeer herding. “It’s not like just telling the reindeer (laugh), ‘yes, but go there then’” (GS15), a municipal politician tells me. He continues saying that “it is not as simple as just saying, compensation and new land (sigh)”.

The reindeer industry and the reindeer herding community say that ‘it is not possible to replace us, reindeer do not eat money, it, it doesn’t work no matter how

much you give', so that's where we must work on trying to understand how these interests can go hand in hand and enable the green transition. (GS13)

Despite the insight that compensation and other efforts are not sufficient, the general idea seems to be that there is a good relationship between the municipality and the Sami communities, which aids in providing solutions for the difficulties of industry expansion (GS13, 14, 15). Taken together, various expressions of empathy for impacts on Sami livelihoods and lands are countered by returning to the importance of mining and finding solutions to accommodate the one while prioritizing the other.

When actively asked about the Sami, some interviewees acknowledge their long presence and land use in the region and recognize industry investments as an external imposition on traditional land use customs. Of course, Sami people should be able to protect their DNA, a Boden municipal employee ensures me, "But, how, because it is, I mean land use is needed for so many other things too, so" (GS8). This is a complex issue, I am told (GS14, 15). A national energy grid employee, located in Stockholm, relates the lack of accessibility of land to historic wrongdoings that now come back to haunt industry interests. People are angry and protest because they have always been pushed aside:

(sigh) Yes, but like, if we had had a nicer handling of the indigenous population historically, maybe we wouldn't have had these protests with the mines now. [...] If you had had a better history in Sweden, maybe, the Sami would, like, also understand better and be able to take in the importance of the green transition and so on. I think we really have history against us, and we probably need to do better. (GS19)

Green industry expansion is described as hindered by past wrongdoing that disallow the Sami to grasp the importance of new land claims. With a "better history", the green transition would have been easier to pursue in the North. Historic harms are also acknowledged in a name collection for the Kallak mine. Here, empathy with Sami frustration is granted in principle, while concluding that Swedish rule must be followed:

Sure, we know that Sami culture is in sync with nature in a completely different way than the rest of Sweden. Sure, we have a certain understanding that the Sami people think that the "Great Swede" will come and take their land. [...] But for now, Swedish rule prevails in Norrland/Lapland/Jokkmokk. (Zachrisson 2013 translated)

One of my interviewees, a Luleå business agency employee who works with industry establishments, raises a more deep-rooted personal struggle that causes discomfort vis-à-vis the Sami rights debate. He tells me that he would be allowed to vote in the Sami parliament elections before noting his ambiguity toward mining. He reminds us of the by now well-known line of reasoning, that we should take responsibility for our mineral supply rather than importing from South America but, “The people who know reindeer husbandry best are, after all, the Sami, not the government office, it is that simple”. (GS4) When introducing Sami rights to the debate, “it’s really tricky” (GS4). Even where there are personal connections, interviewees stress that they have actively tried to distance themselves from ambiguity for example by not taking a stance in the Kallak case; “I have chickened out” (GS4). In notions like these, discomfort is noticeable in an escape, in opting out from expressing opinions. In rare instances like this, investments are noted as risking to cancel out Sami traditional livelihoods (GS 13, 14). While alignment is not entirely embraced here, other industry advocates reinforce the line by proclaiming that coexistence between mining and reindeer herding surely is possible if one tries, if there is a will (MJ8, GS5) given the vast land areas that are available in the North (NSD 2021).



Figure 13. Approaching the Kiruna mine entrance by bus during a tourist tour. (O11)



Figure 14. Descending into the mine.



Figure 15. Kirunavaara, LKAB mine from the edge of the old city centre. Overlooking the mine is the 'mine-citypark' (gruvstadsparken) with information signs about the mine in a reuse of space from which the city was moved out of the deposits way. (O10)

Questioning the Sami agenda

I now turn to five avenues of discomfort or frustration that I have identified in the data through which the Sami are presented as an obstacle. The Sami are framed as an obstacle in the data by noting frustration (1) over a perceived unclarity as to who is Sami and who therefore is entitled to rights, (2) over the status of reindeer herding as a rights issue rather than an industry, (3) that reindeer herding does not provide an inclusive alternative to industry expansion, (4) that

Sami do not realize that they also need mines, and (5) over the amount of land claimed under the Sami flag.

First, interviewees question who even counts as Sami when dismissing various indigenous rights claims. A Luleå-based mining and green industry advocate asks:

I mean, when does one start to count as indigenous anyways [...]? I mean, if my, my family has lived in a village in Sweden for 500 years, I mean if you are, are you indigenous then, or, or should you have lived for 800 years or should you have, what? (GS2)

Unreflective of the colonial component of indigeneity, there is a sense of injustice expressed through exclusion from the category of Sami. On a local level the obstacle of Sami rights is frequently addressed by noting that ‘we’ also have to survive, or we all have to fit (MJ2, 3). A Luleå resident tells me that a friend of his wanted to build a cabin in the woods, but was denied permission in reference to reindeer herding; “if he has 1500 square meters of land, will that, will that really interfere with reindeer herding?” (GS2) At the Jokkmokk café, a local tells me that he is not allowed to fish wherever he pleases or be in the mountains because of reindeer herding (MJ4). Another one sighs in frustration noting that ‘we’ are not allowed to build a cabin in the mountains or hunt unlimited amounts of moose, but ‘they’ are. A local Jokkmokk resident recalls that he applied for a job at a local museum but was turned away because he doesn’t speak a Sami language. Trying to make me understand he notes, ‘but that’s like I don’t get a job in Malmö because I don’t speak Scanian’ (MJ11). This inherently flawed comparison of a Swedish dialect and an Indigenous language indicates both an ahistorical dismissal of Sami rights and a sense of discomfort with a perceived omission from the rights that they envision indigeneity to entail. The frustration over the perceived exclusiveness of Sami-ness also takes the shape of a dismissal of the Sami identities of others; one interviewee calling them “sidewalk Sami” when noting that someone is not in touch with their culture (MJ4), or “wannabe Sami” when expressing scepticism about a Sami bloodline (MJ14). A once vocal advocate of the mining project in Kallak reflects on two members of the Sami resistance noting that, “They are as much Sami as me, zero and nothing” (MJ14).

The second way in which the Sami and Sami lifestyles are presented as an obstacle for industry expansion is the notion that reindeer herding should be treated as an industry rather than a rights issue. For example, one of my interviewees tells me that, of course the Sami should also be able to live their lives; “But I mean, all of Sweden’s reindeer industry, it generates roughly as much as an ordinary ICA

[grocery] store, right?” (GS2) In this way, reindeer herding is often evaluated based on its monetary contributions to society. While this reoccurs in some of the interviews and is also evident in the terminology used throughout the data (*rennäring* rather than *renskötsel*), this is especially evident in my talk with an LTU employee (GS9) who expresses visible frustration and irritation when I ask her if she had followed the Kallak debate. She tells me that she understands that there are a lot of emotions involved but holds that the debate is being complicated by ‘the fact’ that concepts of indigenous rights and reindeer herding as a business (*rennäring*) are confused. She notes that many non-Sami are involved in reindeer herding and that this equation therefore is not factual. She tells me, “when you talk about indigenous rights everyone immediately reacts with, ‘No, of course we can’t violate indigenous rights” (GS9). But instead, she insists that it is a question about weighing one business or industry against another.

And then it might be that one industry is more important than another. It may be that in this case it is more important with, with sustainably produced iron ore than with, than reindeer industry. But the problem is that the discussion is not industry versus industry, but indigenous rights, and that is a completely different issue. (GS9)

Stripping reindeer herding of its cultural implications as well as the colonial imposition that have resulted in its confinement, reindeer herding is being limited to an industry that has to be measured as such by its monetary revenue with other industries. Clearly, pushing reindeer herding into the confines of a business is a battle lost when forced to outcompete the mining industry.

A third avenue off obstacle-making is the notion that reindeer herding is not a suitable and inclusive alternative future. Interviewees raise this concern when reflecting on alternatives to mining and industrial expansion, stating that; “what should we do instead so that the society survives? Everyone cannot work with reindeer herding after all” (MJ8). Interviewees express frustration over Sami and activists who “try to bring this to a fall”, standing in the way for the mining project in Kallak without providing alternatives, “and I think that is terribly irresponsible from the no-side” (MJ8). Sami peoples bundled together with environmental activists are here presented as privileged positions to hold, while others struggle to secure “regular, real jobs” (MJ8). This privilege of reindeer herding, then, is portrayed not as a real profession but rather a leisure activity:

It is a type of hobby activity. I know it’s a, a culture we have that we must be careful about. But it’s still a hobby, and now we’re talking about survival, and it’s

like, somewhere you must be prepared to maybe move a little bit and be prepared to compromise. And not just say no, no, no to everything. (MJ8)

The Sami are presented as obstacles that only say “no, no, no” and are not prepared to comprise, “move a little bit”. It neglects the ways in which Sami have been and continue to be moved and are trying to adapt their lifestyles out of the way of industry expansion. It presents the Sami as stubborn obstacles that risk others’ survival. As is the case with the tendency to compartmentalize reindeer herding as an industry the downgrading of Sami livelihoods as hobbies helps elevate the status of “real jobs” in the mining and steel industry. The result of the comparison of profitability as a means of determining value is that the Sami logically ought to surrender their claims over land for the benefit of more profitable industries. As an extension of this reasoning, I am often told that reindeer herding is not even an alternative for Sami peoples. “How many reindeer herders are there in Jokkmokk that can make a living on reindeer herding alone?” (MJ14), I am asked by a local mining advocate. That Sami work in mines seems to be utilized as a performative reiteration of the importance of mining rather than as indicating the inability to uphold indigenous living as a result of historic intrusion on Sami lands, or highlighting the harm that jobs in mining as the only alternative presents to Sami peoples’ self-identity, which are perspectives that are often raised by Sami activists (KJ20, 29).

This brings us to the fourth instance of obstacle-making, the notion that Sami are reliant on employment in mines (GS11, 12, 14, 15; MJ14) and on sustainable mining to ease impacts of climate change (GS20). An LKAB employee tells me that many reindeer herders work in the mine and can continue with reindeer herding thanks to this flexible and well-paid job (GS20). Interviewees stress that the Sami and their reindeer herding paths are strongly impacted by climate change (GS20), thereby presenting the green industrial transition as necessary for shaping a more tolerant environment for indigenous livelihoods. Also, the Sami are referenced as needing mines for their modernized reindeer herding practices. They use snowmobiles and helicopters, I am told, and surely, they would not want to return to traditional reindeer herding on skis.

There are no Sami who raise their hand and says, ‘well, it’s better for the environment that I don’t drive snowmobile and quad bike, so, so, I’m going back to skiing’, nobody wants that. (MJ2)

A fifth avenue of obstacle-making is a reference to a supposed inappropriateness of large land areas dedicated to indigenous peoples, and their unreasonable

demands for land in an area where many interests ought to coexist. Some actors display discomfort with this exact statement, noting that the assumption that everything goes in the large land areas of the North is a misconception from the South (GS14, 15). Others again manage Sami claims by suggesting that the land required by mining, green industry or private interests is trivial relative to the vastness of the North. Three men that spoke to me at the Jokkmokk city café agree that industry impacts forests and waterscapes negatively, but when I ask them about the mine in Kallak they shake their heads, that is such a small piece of land (MJ11-13). An LTU employee tells me that “Sápmi is like 1/3 of Sweden’s surface, or maybe it is even more than that”, before noting that she hikes in Jokkmokk and the nature is fantastic, “but I also know the mine would take up an enormously small area of this region” (GS9). When I ask an H2GS employee about mining and Sami peoples, he is visibly irritated asking, “do we want mines somewhere, is anywhere ok, and where is it ok in that case?” (GS6) People say that mines impact the reindeer, he says while hitting his thigh in frustration; “is the reindeer this incredibly inflexible (laugh), or what?” He hesitates and corrects himself noting, “maybe that’s how it is, and, in that case, it may be really bad to have a mine just there”. The frustration over Sami claims to land is also evident in a name collection written by local Jokkmokk residents:

In a municipality that consists of about 68 per cent national parks or nature conservation areas and the rest of the land reindeer grazing land, it is difficult to find space for anything at all. So, our thinking about reindeer husbandry is that it too must develop together with society in general. (Zachrisson 2013)

Here again, we see the supposed need of the Sami to adapt to and accommodate other interests. The reasoning surrounding Kallak often arrives at an argument of vastness of land, suggesting that coexistence ought to be possible where there is space available. In the government decision to grant a permit, the concession area (the mining pit) is presented as very limited, accounting for only 0,5 per cent of the land of the Sami reindeer herding community in question (Thorwaldsson 2022b). In this reiteration of mines as single-impact entities, the decision to grant an exploitation permit is motivated by pointing to a “relatively small area” vis-à-vis its “potential to generate significant socio-economic positive effects” (Ministry of Business 2022; translated). Critics are reminded that an exploitation concession such as in the case of Kallak does not take into consideration land use beyond the concession area, which means that transport of ore and other ripple effect pressures are subject to inquiry at a later stage when an exploitation concession

already is awarded (Thorwaldsson 2022b).²⁶ While adjacent deposits are referenced as an opportunity to increase the project's lifetime and generate greater societal benefit, they are not taken into consideration as a possible impact in the initial permit decision. This procedure misrepresents the impact of mining at a specific, delimited place, and decisions are taken on an incomplete basis.

Mines are also in more general terms quantified in this way. The land that is occupied for mining is ridiculed as laughably low, negligible. "Mines take up 0,02 per cent of Sweden's surface – golf courses take up 0,07%" (Svemin 2022b; also Beowulf Mining 2014). An LKAB employee tells me that the mining community tries to remind people that there are only twelve mines in Sweden today; "It is not like Sweden is covered by mines" (GS20). This quantified story of the negligibility of mining is again detached from the web of ripple effects created through mining. Also, quantifying mines and their impact relative to Sweden in its entirety misrepresents the proportionately dense occurrence of mining in the North.

Solutions: coexistence, survival, and sacrifice

Actors seem to have different coping mechanisms when it comes to ascertaining alignment, refocusing extraction as the object of desire, and fleeing discomfort. Where they acknowledge Sami presence, some actors suggest that there are opportunities to aid Sami reindeer herding communities for example by GPS tracking reindeer movement relative to investments (GS20) or dialogue (GS6, 21). One interviewee notes amid an inability to harmonize extraction and Sami rights that he distances himself from voicing opinions in the Kallak case (GS4), effectively fleeing discomfort by disengaging. The current CEO of JIMAB notes that, "I believe a lot in coexistence, and through good dialogue we will arrive at good solutions together" (Sandborgh 2022 translated). Others again seem entirely distanced from Sami rights concerns, effectively silencing the matter. Taken together, these flights from discomfort propose coexistence (O13), vaguely put, as the solution that ought to be pursued.

Some actors deny Sami presence and thereby clear away any hint of the Sami obstacle. Beowulf Mining has done so by wondering 'What local people?' (Tuorda 2011), when asked about the impact of the mine, pointing to an image of vast

²⁶ Limiting concern to the concession area is also interesting in light of a government statement on a different planned mine in Storuman, where minister of business Ebba Busch noted that state interests for the whole area, not only the deposit should be taken into consideration (SR 2023).

and supposedly empty land. Even in interviews, Sami concern often enter the stage first with my inquiry into obstacles to mining or the green transition and is not initially part of linear alignment (as illustrated in the previous chapter). More centralized and corporate mining actors such as Svemin, Jernkontoret, LKAB, Vattenfall or H2GS seem to refrain from including direct reference to Sami peoples in their official storytelling. Instead, occasional imagery of reindeer or the Akkats waterpower plant²⁷ that indirectly hint to Sami presence is integrated into video material that narrates grand futures of green steel and mining. An H2GS promotional video shows a reindeer herd running through snow-covered land accompanied by the voice-over; “We have set our sight on Northern Sweden to be the accelerators of green steel. Based on its wealth of fossil free energy and iron ore” (H2GS n.d.). Matching an assumed abundance of iron ore with an imagery of reindeer effectively erases Sami presence as an obstacle for the green transition in its entirety. Telling a story of mining or energy infrastructure alongside imagery of reindeer and Sami art reinforces the idea of harmonious coexistence by suggesting that green industry expansion does not demand scrutiny of the Sami rights question, it is indeed a non-issue. The image of the Akkats power plant coloured in Sami symbols while narrating efforts to transition away from fossil fuels not only erases the historic implications of earlier energy infrastructure expansion but also places the Sami within the green transition, as a beneficiary of climate action. As such, despite its severe impacts on Sami livelihoods waterpower is used as a proxy for environmentalism and Sami rights.

Coexistence is often referenced to signal the need to transition toward green energy, and to mine more in Sweden to allow for more sustainable mining globally. Local voices seem to be motivated by another sense of urgency, noting the importance to get along for local survival. Sami rights protection and peripheral survival are here placed at opposite poles of an either-or spectrum, either the Sami are granted access to their lands or municipal districts in the North survive. Jokkmokk residents note that given that the mine won’t have a big impact (MJ4-6) municipal survival should be prioritized. In this way, residents suggest that too much consideration for Sami rights also stands in the way for local employment opportunities and sustenance (MJ2, 11-13). This sense of opposition and no alternative seems deeply rooted in rural frustration and causes antagonism between local actors. Most commonly, the source of such sensed lack of alternative is not associated with broader political dimensions and the state’s regional politics.

²⁷ Built between 1969-73, Vattenfall has received criticism for decorating the waterpower plant with Sami art and symbolism of cultural and religious importance (Aftonbladet 2005).

Instead, polarization is spurred, and interviewees seek the opportunity for their own sustenance in the delimitation of the others'. "If we want to be able to keep living here," an employee at a Jokkmokk-based company tells me, "we have to sacrifice something, a bit of land for the mine and for transport lines, and so on, yes absolutely, and we will have to get along" (MJ8). Another Jokkmokk resident is sceptical toward the impact that the mine would supposedly have on reindeer herding, assuring me that reindeer herding has not been "knocked out" anywhere else either. "We have to be able to live, us who live here" (MJ3), he says. A Luleå-based interviewee notes that it is about finding "compromises and solutions and see to it that we can live in symbiosis so that one, one shouldn't need to have a mining industry that just completely kills a minority" (GS5). It all has to happen side by side, he continues, and that requires a willingness to compromise from all sides. This solution of compromise through dialogue, vaguely put, is here and elsewhere often presented as a matter of willingness, motivation, or making an effort (GS21).

The above reference to functioning coexistence elsewhere is another common line of argument. Local actors reference mining hubs such as Gällivare and Kiruna, or more vaguely the Ore Fields as havens of symbiosis, places in which all diverse interests blossom alongside each other. "It has to work, of course it works, but, but, there has to be the will" (MJ8). "Of course I believe that it can be reconciled, I mean, it works everywhere else, so why wouldn't it work here?" (MJ3), a local Jokkmokk resident and JIMAB employee ascertains. "They have been at it for over 100 years," and since then, we have "become better and wiser", a LTU employee ensures me, "so I am absolutely sure we can find solutions for coexistence" (GS9). Similarly, a former Jokkmokk politician is certain that reindeer herding can exist alongside mining with reference to Gällivare:

If we see objectively, it is so, because it exists in other neighbouring municipalities. So purely matter-of-factly or logically, it exists. But then, because evidently there is reindeer husbandry in Gällivare municipality and in Kiruna municipality. (MJ1)

The above reference to objectiveness ascertains the path toward extraction as one of rationality, and obstacles that may question its linearity as irrational, emotional, ungrounded. The sheer existence of reindeer herding is in such an argument commonly treated as an absolute, a 0 or 1, wherein the presence of a reindeer herding community is heralded as a success for the idea of coexistence. Of course, this line of reasoning fails to account for the difficulties of municipalities such as Gällivare or Kiruna, in which their "blooming" (MJ3) qualities may be

overemphasized. Reindeer herding is in these areas of high industrial exposure also highly pressured, even if it has managed to persist. I am during my fieldwork frequently told that racism against Sami is peaking in mining municipalities (KJ26, 27). During one of my café visits in Gällivare I happened upon a group of miners on break, who loudly expressed positive sentiments about a newspaper article about a reindeer killing the day prior. I suggest that the ease with which matters of racial violence were being discussed is indicative of a harsher climate than in more careful expressions of opinions in Jokkmokk or elsewhere. The day after this incident, I recalled it to a former miner in an interview. She responded by exhaling in frustration and noting that this is in fact normalized discourse; ‘Now you are really starting to get it, this is exactly how it is’. She continues with a pained expression; ‘That’s what you do here – when you are angry at the Sami you kill reindeer’ (KJ25). Despite this romanticization of mining towns as blooming hubs of coexistence promising a more hopeful future interviewees don’t usually fall for my provocation when I note that I like Jokkmokk better than Gällivare or Kiruna. They do too, they tell me (MJ2). “Not so many people want to live in mining towns. Most want to work there, but not live” (GS10), I am told.

NIMBY

We have already in the previous chapter briefly encountered the obstacle of not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY), where I discussed tendencies in the data to dismiss concerns over biodiversity in critiques of mining or green industrial investments as negligible and trivial in light of the global climate, that “local nature” is insignificant in efforts to “save the world” (GS5). We must be willing to “sacrifice” a little for the greater good. Not willing to make this sacrifice, then, poses an obstacle to various industry and mining advances such as those conducted under the banner of the green transition (GS9). This debate of sacrifice reaches far beyond an individualized ‘backyard’, of course, and includes the mountains and forests of the North that are crucial environments not only for reindeer herding and other Sami livelihoods, but also for large-scale biodiversity protection. The NIMBY classification effectively scales down the envisioned impact of (green) industry expansion as well as the size and severity of the sacrifice needed.

As I have hinted toward in the discussion of Sami obstacle-making, interviewees usually tell me that of course they understand that people don’t want to have a mine behind their house, or a shadow of a windmill on their backyard (MJ1). It will be a big change for people (GS3). Surely, it is not so nice to “encounter a lot

of mining trucks and shit” (MJ8), or to have riding tracks and local environments impacted by a new steel mill (GS6, 11, 12). Usually, interviewees note that people want these investments to happen but preferably somewhere else (GS3, 23). People think, “what a fantastic thing, [...] but does it have to be this close to our house” (GS6), a H2GS employee tells me enthusiastically. Nonetheless, we must accept that things will change (GS19), I am told, “nature will be destroyed where a windmill is erected [...], or where a mine is opened, or where a transport line is drawn so that a mine works” (GS20). We have once accepted everything that has built our high living standards today and that has also impacted the environment – roads, airports, harbours, cities, energy lines in the forest, waterpower, nuclear power, the H2GS employee lists. And now, “There are more things that we will also have to accept, or else we have to accept that we let the climate go loose” (GS6). That’s what is at stake, he continues, but it is up to everyone individually to decide if there is “a limit somewhere where you say that ‘now, it is not us who solves the climate issue for the world, it has to be done somewhere else. I want my nature instead” (GS6).

A sense of selfishness and passivity is alluded in reference to those not willing to make a sacrifice for planetary survival. The responsibility of saving the climate by sacrificing backyards in Norrbotten also includes reference to child labour elsewhere (which we encountered in the previous chapter). It is easy to forget that some of these metals are taken up by “this 12-year-old in Kongo” (GS2), a Luleå resident reminds me, “if it is not on our backyard”. On a local level, this urgency to sacrifice is expressed as a matter of survival; “If we want this society to continue on living and get a chance to develop, well, then we probably have to be ready to sacrifice something too” (MJ8; also MJ3). Denying a project that may cause local intrusion is again described as selfish, “you cannot only consider what’s best for you, I consider the survival of the entire municipality” (MJ2), a local resident who also risks dust pollution from the Kallak projects tells me. “What’s the point if you cannot keep living here, if there is nothing left” (MJ2). A Luleå municipal politician notes that people accept impacts that they deem valuable. In Luleå, the steel industry has been a heavy polluter and has negatively impacted local environments as well, “and people have thought that it is worth it because it gives something” (GS16). Of course, there is a big impact on “certain groups”, another Luleå resident admits, “but then there are so many other positive aspects” (GS5), placing the greater benefit of the whole against the sacrifice of the few.

Strange types, protesters & nay-sayers

While Sami and local concern is often met with an expression of at least initial sympathy in principle, protesters broadly speaking (including Sami, local, and external protesters) are denied such empathy. Again, there is reference to freedom of expression inherent in a liberal, democratic society (GS7; MJ3) where “you have to be able to speak your mind” (MJ2), but frustration is expressed in a less filtered way against the obstacle of anti-mining protesters (Beowulf Mining 2014). Physical protest as a way of voicing one’s opinion is in the data often rejected as counterproductive, as “destroying” (MJ8) or “sabotaging” (MJ3) for others who are trying to build something. For instance, former mayor of Jokkmokk reacts to a recent protest noting in a radio interview that “I think it is actually terrible that people stand in the way of hundreds of jobs” (Bernhardsson 2020 translated). The bodies of protesters present a “matter out of place” (Douglas 2003; see also Ahmed 2007), they are seen as space invaders (Puwar 2004) entering spheres that are sensed as holding the potential of extraction, of progress. The notion of standing in the way of progress by dwelling on the land points to the ideas enshrined in the land, as already manifesting a future mining site. Protesting is presented as an obstacle to progress, often by placing it opposite a more civilized and less aggressive expression of opinion in the form of dialogue, pleading one’s case in conversation. Protests are instead perceived as triggering societal ruptures and polarized societies (GS6). Seeking dialogue is reiterated as allowing for all sides to be heard, which Sami representatives critique as negligent of true Sami concerns. Protesters are narrated as irrational in their resistance to progress – making use of the materials mined and wanting the perks while not being willing to make the sacrifices. They “have their phones, they have gone there with some kind of transportation, like, they are part of society and make use of it” (GS6). Being part of society is here presented as accepting the terms dictated by the extractive order, and therefore having to be docile rather than creating discomfort for the body politic.

External protesters or nay-sayers that have travelled to Jokkmokk cause the most irritation among my interviewees, both for local and regional actors. I am told that the faith of a mining project and in extension the survival of a local community “shouldn’t be decided by those who really don’t have anything to do with it” (MJ14). A Jokkmokk-based JIMAB employee tells me that it destroys for those who live there when “people come and say how we are supposed to live” (MJ3). Among external forces that express unsolicited opinions UNESCO’s statements about Kallak is mentioned; “They don’t care at all about the conditions

here” (MJ1). There is also ample reference to Greta Thunberg’s travels to Kallak and her physical, vocal, and financial support to Jåhkågasska reindeer herding community. “She doesn’t even know what she is talking about”, an LTU employee tells me, “there is no way to take out iron ore in a more sustainable way than what they would do in Kallak” (GS9). Another shakes his head while introducing her name and exhales “oj oj oj” (MJ8). There is also frustration expressed over the Swedish church’s disapproving statement on mining in Kallak (MJ1). The Green Party both locally and nationally is referenced as having postponed mining advances in Kallak. The obstacle of the Green Party is expressed as having contributed to a polarized debate locally (MJ1) and as having resulted in a government deadlock on the permit decision on a national level (Beowulf Mining 2018b; MJ8). The Green Party’s environmental as well as Sami rights concern is framed as problematic, as putting the breaks to industry developments and the happiness they promise. Before his entry into office, now Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson promises the steel industry that; “When we have won the election, the Green Party will not be able to kidnap Swedish industrial policy” (Jernkontoret 2021b translated).

Protesters are envisioned as especially bizarre individuals. For example, an estimated 1000 protesters (SVT 2019) participated in a ‘Rainbow Gathering’ in 2019; “A lot of funny people”, “bare-chested ladies”, and people who sang and danced are recalled. And of course, they had to do their business out in Kallak, you can imagine what it looked like there (MJ14), a Jokkmokk resident tells me. He recalls an incident while he was driving through town and noticed something peculiar; “But what the hell’ (laugh), there was a man standing there full out naked. I couldn’t believe my eyes and almost drove in a ditch [...] But there were a lot of those strange types, yes” (MJ14). Of course, you are allowed to protest, another Jokkmokk resident ensures me, “but now it has become excessive, I think, when they start digging themselves in and chaining themselves to excavators” (MJ2), preventing people to do their jobs.

Protesters are also often presented as saying no and standing in the way as a matter of principle. An LKAB employee is visibly irritated noting that reference to mines is used by the environmental movement and Sami (MJ1), “people dislike mines, it’s like, emotionally it’s easy to think, ‘ugh, mines are dangerous, yuk, mines. There are those damn mines again” (GS20). Here as elsewhere, emotions and reference to a lack of facts are invoked as a way of suggesting protesters are unfounded and biased. In this way, protesters are narrated as “making it difficult to hold a grounded debate” (MJ1). Saying no to mines then, is not a substantiated

activity, but rather a matter of principle. After all, there are only 12 mines in Sweden (GS20), an LKAB employee reminds me. Protest narratives are full of lies, fabrications, and exaggerations (MJ2, 3, 14), I am being told; “at least people can stick to the facts that exist and not sit and invent a ton just to destroy” (MJ3). Similar frustration is expressed by an H2GS employee who stresses that protesters are not credible because they simply find joy in saying no to mines for the sake of it: “Wonderful, we can go out into the woods and say no. Oh, how much no we will say’ (slaps thigh), [...] I wouldn’t even bother to have a dialogue with them” (GS6). He continues to say that the spirit seems to be that “we shouldn’t have mines anywhere in the world. Is that how we shall have it? Do you want to have electricity? Do you want, like (slaps thigh), what do you want?” A Jokkmokk resident expresses a similar sense of disdain: “It’s so easy to stand on the barricades and just yell, and rant, but [...] what should we do instead? Don’t just say no, no, no” (MJ8). “It’s attention they want”, another Jokkmokk resident tells me, “and they get it” (MJ2).

When referencing the emotional rather than factual motivations of protesters, critics of mining and industry expansion are described as holding an antiquated view and knowledge about mining practices (GS20; Svemin 2021a), being uninformed about whether or not recycling alone would cover our needs (Svemin 2022d), or about the ways in which land can be restored post-mining rather than leaving behind a “poisoned desert where nothing else can ever live again” (GS20). While mining may still be dangerous for environments and people elsewhere this is no longer the case in Sweden, I am told. These are “prejudices” (GS20) about mining that must be addressed by informing the public. Although, Svemin’s energy expert Hanna Stenegren expresses frustration over difficulties to communicate “fact-based arguments” to critics:

It is very difficult to reach people with these factual, fact-based arguments when there are very strong emotions that prevail, often based on ignorance or accidents that have happened somewhere else in the world. (Svemin 2021a translated)

Similarly, Director of the Environment Kristina Branteryd stresses to her “friends” in the room at Svemin’s Environmental Summit that:

If you need mines, you, if you understand that my friends, you have to talk with everyone around you because we need a larger understanding of this, because this is the ground for all knowledge. We must understand we do need mines. (Svemin 2022d)

Individual Sami protesters are often referred to as frightening, radical, and aggressive. Protest is rarely specified as relating to Sami or other forms of resistance but is instead most often vague toward its participants or directed specifically toward external actors. When this is specified, interviewees name specific Sami individuals and their protest activities rather than referencing the Sami resistance in collective terms. Their purpose is to “destroy” (MJ8), an interviewee tells me when he recalls an information meeting with Beowulf Mining during which a Sami protestor held an “aggressive” monologue directed toward Kurt Budge. Other participants were silenced with fear, he tells me, that was “nasty” (MJ8). He continues by recalling Sami activists “dressing up”, painting their faces, climbing on cars, knocking on windows during his meetings; that was “really unpleasant” (MJ8). Another local remembers a protest stating, “it looks like some guerrilla group is coming, everyone with rifles hanging around them” (laugh) (MJ14).

Clumsy leaders

When asked about factors that may hinder the green steel advancement or mining in Kallak, interviewees recall statements made by corporate and political leaders that have problematized debates. Locally, mining advocates often recall JIMAB front figure Fred Boman as “clumsy” (MJ8) or “an idiot” (MJ14). Also, Beowulf Mining CEO Clive Sinclair-Poulton’s inquiry ‘What local people’ is an oft-cited remark. Such statements are noted as having “destroyed” things, where leaders that took over had to clean up the mess (MJ8). “He was not smooth at all, that guy” (MJ2), a Jokkmokk residents recalls Sinclair-Poulton, “but I mean, he is right, nobody lives there” (laugh). Here, discomfort is placed in the frankness of Sinclair-Poulton’s widely critiqued statement rather than with its content. It is a statement that has given fire to the resistance, rather than one that must be debunked. People “won’t let go of this, the rhetoric is still there” (MJ8), an interviewee shakes his head in frustration. Beowulf made a “catastrophic” entrance that resulted in an unfavourable local climate (MJ10), another participant recalls. An LKAB employee tells me that Swedish mining actors have worked hard to address distrust, build acceptance, and ensure their respect for local matters. Clumsy statements such as ‘what local people’ are here presented as jeopardizing that suggested acceptance; “Many dislike mines and find it difficult to accept mines. We must be alert and do everything right. You can’t behave (laugh) badly” (GS20), he tells me. In fact, interviewees often note that there is a greater sense of security and acceptance when it comes to the activities of already established actors

such as LKAB and SSAB. Compared to international investors, who are throughout the data narrated as less trustworthy as well as drawing revenues out of the country, these industry veterans have been visible in the region for decades and are narrated as invoking a sense of stability and long-term economic stimulus (GS11, 12, 14, 15, 16; MJ8). Interestingly, even those critical of profit leaving the region southward (MJ2) and of mining altogether (KJ7) note that Swedish companies are despite their negative impacts to be preferred to international investors.

Another instance of clumsy leadership that interviewees often refer to is former minister of business Karl Petter Thorwaldsson's admittance of love toward mines. "Ministers maybe don't need to say that they love mines" (GS20), a LKAB employee laughs. A local Jokkmokk resident tells me that sure, you can love mines, but while in office a politician "cannot be like that", they must listen to locals (MJ14). Again, the discomfort does not seem to be triggered by the content itself, but rather the implications of a statement like this for the acceptance of future industry expansion.

Discomfort about negative impacts of extraction

While the above discussion deals with envisioned obstacles on the path to extraction, the aligned also display discomfort with the consequences of extraction. It emerges in the data relative to impacts of extraction on the physical environment, and on society generally speaking (rather than specific impact for instance on the Sami). Both critiques are anchored in an overall sentiment that the North is treated as a resource colony for the South. I will treat the environmental and social impact that is envisioned in extraction one by one, but first, some words on the notion of the resource colony.

Discomfort about being rendered as a resource colony

Many express discomfort about environmental and social changes noting that the North functions as a resource colony for the South, with transport lines extracting the riches without necessarily generating much local wealth. In this way, the North "becomes a pantry where others come and get things" (MJ2). The financial disassociation of the state and the poor distribution of mining revenue to the North is referenced as hampering regional development (GS8, 11, 12, 13).

Instead, poor social service, mainly healthcare provision is referenced to illustrate the lack of local benefit of extraction (GS7, 10, 11, 12). Elsewhere, reference is made to material changes – natural resources are being depleted, rivers swallow their surroundings when power plants force them out of their natural routes, forests disappear (GS10; MJ12). Another problematic aspect is the “moving of the pens” (read: decision makers) further and further away (GS22; also MJ8), where company headquarters such as that of Vattenfall is placed in Stockholm; “that makes it easier to make crazy decisions that are counterproductive for societal development” (GS22). Here, interviewees are adamant that a higher level of processing in the region would replace the extract-and-export manner in which resources in the North are handled today (GS6, 20, 24). The advancement on the value chain that is envisioned in the green steel transition promises a distancing from the region’s perception and use as a resource colony and brings instead hope for more ownership of decision-making and benefits of industry expansion (GS10). Thus, the solution that is proposed does not necessarily break with the orientation toward extraction but highlights ownership of processing.

Others mockingly refer to realizations in the South that the assumed energy abundance will not be accessible for export southwards, “oh no, they will use the energy up there now, how will it go for us?” (GS11) The South is understood as more dependent on the North than vice-versa: ‘If you were to build a wall across Sweden, you would see where the claw marks are’ (MJ9), a Boden-based truck driver tells me and laughs. There seems to be frustration over a misrecognition of the North’s contributions to Swedish welfare and progress (GS10; MJ1). For instance, a former Jokkmokk municipal politician is clearly enraged about the lack of recognition of the waterpower created in Jokkmokk that feeds much of the green expansion (MJ1), but still, Jokkmokk is not mentioned as a contributor to the green transition.

Others again are more careful with this critique; “well, it’s ok to banter in the coffee room (laugh) about these things” (MJ1), and surely one could discuss different models of distributing mining revenues, but “I have a bit of a hard time with this whining to the state that, now you have to come and pay” (GS4). Either way, the mining industry and other industrial investments are necessary to maintain functioning demographics and societies, actors state when reinforcing alignment. It doesn’t matter how much money regions earn from industry projects, it is here stated, if people keep moving out. “It is not specifically constructive to sit at home and be angry that we did not get 400 million” (MJ1), a former Jokkmokk municipal politician tells me. Others note that while a

different distribution model may be desirable, this is being discussed and dismissed on a national level from time to time (GS12). Also, what would a small municipality such as Jokkmokk do with all the money from waterpower expansion, for example (GS11, 12, 14, 15), actors note seemingly discouraged to hope for changes in state policy. Still, industry expansion would maybe be accepted to a greater extent if profit was more visible locally (GS14, 15), I am told. This reasoning is reflected in current discussions on a national level (Ministry of Climate and Enterprise 2022), although, it is critiqued by Sami representatives as creating even stronger incentives for municipal actors to welcome extractive investments (SR 2022b). When I raise this critique in interviews, some participants seem to backtrack from the idea of monetary incentives, noting instead that, “this should have happened a long time ago” and support should be directed to already existing rather than incentivising new industries (GS22). Still, the discussion about the resource colony displays interesting insight into the mindset of the aligned that use the notion of the colony without necessarily referencing colonialism as referring to impositions of Sami land and people. The notion of the resource colony also does not seem to trigger an inquiry into a downscaling of extractive activities, but rather interrogates the lack of benefit that materializes locally to make up for negative environmental and social impacts.

Discomfort with environmental impact

I discuss here the discomfort expressed by participants about environmental changes, incisions in ‘virgin land’, and the definition of what constitutes ‘green’.

Residents display clear discomfort relating to changing material realities because of industry expansion. This most often became noticeable during the fieldwork in instances of physical or narrative exposure to these exact material alterations, such as a visit to the new H2GS steel site, trucks carrying timber, or my inquiry into disappearing cities or land needed for green industry expansion. A Boden Business Park employee is visibly ambiguous about the investment when guiding me to the steel site, which was then in early stages of construction, entirely deforested and with trucks evening out the soil (figure 16). When we approach the highest point from which we see a seemingly never-ending area dedicated to the green steel project, he prepares me that, “Soon you will have a nice view, or nice and nice view, damn I don’t know. At least you get a view of what’s going on. Pretty sick view for someone who grew up here” (GS22). Once we arrive and step out of the car, I ask him what he feels when looking out over the site. He looks out over the vast deforested area upon which machines move in the far distance to even the

land for construction. He responds, he grew up on the other side of the hill, biked here on school trips and “you got to look at birds and learn about plants and animals”. Engaging with the land triggers memories about his prior bodily experiences that are now disaggregated alongside the forest. “Yes, well” he laughs, “it is mixed feelings, but, but I am, I know that, if you want to do anything it will leave an imprint” (GS22). He continues noting that he thinks it’s a shame with deforestation, but if it contributes to regional development, it is more acceptable. While he is critical about the material changes that industry expansion cause in the region, green steel promises more ownership locally:

If this results in us increasing the degree of processing of the ore that is mined in Norrbotten and it gives more jobs and it creates a, it reshapes steel production in the world. Then I can take it. [...] Then I can accept it, but without it, it would have felt damn hard. (GS22)



Figure 16. H2GS steel site to the left, after deforestation. Machines such as the one on the far left side even the ground.

The idea that whatever you do would impact nature is reoccurring in the data (GS6; MJ5), and commonly used as an argument for expansion. Sitting at the Jokkmokk city café, the conversation about impacts is initiated by a timber truck passing by and one of the citizens noting jokingly though with irritation, “Ah well, so I can’t walk in the woods today either” (MJ12). While they brush off the potential impact of a mine in Kallak, there is general admittance that mining impacts the environment. “It is a hell of an intrusion in nature” (MJ13), one of them mumbles. Another refers to another project as a ‘nightmare example’, in which the company exited in bankruptcy and restoration was left to the

municipality, “that looked horrible” (MJ11). Locals in Boden express their concerns about the steel site’s impact on their accessibility and enjoyment of local environments and risks of noise and dust pollution (Bodenxt 2021a). Some municipal actors acknowledge the impact of the scale of the investments on the physical environment, referencing an unprecedented energy demand, where “you understand that it’s not just ten wheels that you put somewhere” (GS14).

On occasion, corporate and government actors also acknowledge the impact of mining and industry expansion. Often, this is expressed in the likes of “we should also be honest with, well, of course it is a huge encroachment on nature”, and in extension “we are part of that chain too, absolutely” (GS6). “One shouldn’t lie”, former minister of business Karl Petter Thorwaldsson responds to an inquiry about the local environmental impact of the green transition in a TV interview, “of course it will have a big impact” (SVT 2022 translated). Sure, there will be a hole where you open a mine, an LKAB employee explains, but it doesn’t mean that all nature will be destroyed for all eternity. But once you close a mine, you can restore the land, and this is a requirement that is placed on mining companies by law, he assures me. “Of course, there will be a huge impact when you open a mine, and we must be honest and open about that. There will be zero biological diversity (laugh) as long as the mine is in operation” (GS20). The reference to a mine resulting in zero biodiversity is met with a laugh, indicating rupture in comfort, which is restored with the very notion of restoration of land post mining. The perks envisioned in mining legitimize a cancelling out of biodiversity in its entirety. “There is always risk”, a Luleå resident working in the transport industry tells me, but “we cannot live in a world without risks, if we don’t want to go backward” (GS2).

Incisions in virgin land

There is a distinction in the data wherein interviewees display a stronger sense of discomfort when it comes to investments in what is referred to as ‘virgin land’ than expansions of existing or earlier infringements in nature. Some advocates relativize the impacts of green steel contra mining in Kallak, noting that breaking open virgin land in Kallak would resemble opening pandora’s box, like a first domino piece that leads into the untouched mountain areas of the North. Surely this steel mill is “less controversial than a mine in the mountains” (GS6), others suggest in more vague terms. Instead, areas claimed by earlier industrial expansion are to be preferred. Existing industrial infrastructure is constructed as a justification for further expansion. The H2GS site is narrated in such terms (GS6,

10), even though the actual steel site has been deforested and cleared for the very purpose of this new incision. The same is the case for the new HYBRIT site (GS13, 14, 15). This brings into question the definition of virgin land and exploited nature, where the data suggests that all natural environments in areas that are understood as industry prone are submerged into a conception of already explored land, based on which further industry expansion is rationalized. As such, alignment materializes in land by way of proximity for instance to other industrial sites, energy, or transport infrastructure, suggesting that the land has lost its 'virginity' status, is no longer pure. Gällivare municipal politicians tell me for instance that the new green steel investments are expansions of already existing mining activities and have therefore not caused much cautionary attention among locals. There would be more commotion if virgin nature is explored at the foot of *Dundret* (local landmark mountain), they tell me and laugh (GS14, 15).

This argument is more convincingly used as a way of promoting existing mines over new ones. Some express their scepticism about Kallak or mining expansion more generally noting that it should be reasonable to continue mining where there are already such activities in place (GS10, 13). "You should have mines, where there are mines", a Boden Business Park employee voices his scepticism against investments on virgin land. "Maybe I can't always go and proclaim this at work", he continues, "this pains me a bit to say, but I think it is wrong to put a mine at a world heritage" (GS10). Jokkmokk has already been hit hard by waterpower expansion; "One can be sad when you understand how it once was. And how it is now" (GS22). "Sweden should be able to afford to exempt certain areas from exploitation", he continues, but municipalities in the North are incentivized to invite environmentally disruptive investment that may also harm other local interests because they see little alternative. Municipalities such as Jokkmokk are presented as incapable of making long-term decisions because of their perceived lack of alternatives. For them, it is "damn tempting to get the profit in the short term and then you have wasteland", and there is nothing left "when you have taken up the ore, but you had a blast for 15 years" (GS22). While tempting, he stresses, such investments have not resulted in long-term development, where only foundations of houses remain from communities that once flourished.

The question of green-ness

A question that also seems to cause discomfort in the data are inquiries about the green label of mining or the steel transition. Many reiterate extraction as environmentally benign or friendly even after an additional inquiry. Well of

course there is an impact, but everything has an impact after all (GS6) and impact can be remedied and nature restored (GS20), I am told. Others are more shaken in their alignment, scanning the path more carefully. Instinctively, many seem to define green as renewable and note that in this view, green mining is a questionable alliance since once you extract ore it won't grow back (GS22). Others are sure that, "This is as sustainable as possible, what is our alternative, somehow? We need steel in the world, at least in the world we live in right now" (GS4). While tied to extractivism, there is recognition here that the dependence on extraction that informs the "as sustainable as possible"-motivation of extractive continuation is in fact related to an accepted status quo rather than an objective reality. It opens the possibility that alternative ways to organize reality may in fact generate a different relationality to the natural world. Alternatives that are proposed by a few of the aligned in instances of stepping out of line relate to the use of alternative materials that may be more circular (GS4), a need to consume less (GS3; GS10), and produce more durable products that last longer, reviving incentives to repair rather than discard and replace (GS10). We live in excess and should respect natural limits (GS10), a Boden resident working with industrial investments tells me. In such discussions, actors are also more sceptical of restoration, noting that much of the mining impact is irreversible (GS22). Still, even consumption-critical interviewees return to extraction as the lifeblood of the societal apparatus; "Sure, I was probably against mines altogether some time ago, but that was because I thought, maybe, that the ore would suffice" (GS10), but other parts of the world also need to build houses. Endeavours of consuming less seem to be accepted in principle even by interviewees that quickly return to the necessity to consume and extract for upholding a reasonable standard of living (GS3, 9, 11, 12). Rather than displaying killjoy tendencies, such statements work instead to reinforce the orientation toward extraction by acknowledging an issue as unsolvable, and alternatives as naïve or idealistic. An example here is an LTU employee's admittance that surely, we should consume less and increase the life span of mined materials, but then the problem with using materials longer means that they are not accessible for recycling. Instead, we must address needs in the most sustainable way possible (GS9). The dismissal of breaking with mineral dependency, effectively fleeing discomfort, quickly reaffirms alignment and safeguards the assumption of consumer-based needs. Others, like in the statement above, address such discomfort with reference to third countries' right to develop like us (GS3, 11, 12).

In this discussion of what constitutes green, interviewees and other actors introduce and address critiques of greenwashing (GS7, 20; MJ10). It is noted that

there are different degrees of green industry efforts, where there may be greenwashing on the one end of the spectrum and sincere efforts to create green value chains on the other. At the greenest end of the spectrum of steel production, you can find the Hybrit project, chief of the environment at SSAB concludes during a presentation (SSAB 2022a). Here, you find a “business that is sustainable in the true sense of the word, that is to say that it is circular” (GS20). Can a mine be green, an LKAB employee continues asking himself and responds that coal and oil will destroy the climate and is gone after it is burned, “but the iron that we mine today will be there as long as humanity is there” (GS20), attempting to present extraction as a circular and thereby green process to match his prior definition of the term. Elsewhere, mining is reiterated as green in the sense that the materials that are being extracted are absolutely necessary to manage climate change (Svemin 2021c). Not even with steel production based on recycled materials can we be sure that a process is green (GS7), I am told by an SSAB employee based in Luleå. “I mean the scrap, where has it come from, and how has that scrap been handled and transported?”, he asks. Interviewees tell me that they have come a far way, but if the whole process is supposed to be entirely green, then even their employees travel to work in green vehicles every day (GS6, 7). While SSAB is more careful with laying claim to the label of green, H2GS notes that, “in the long term it gets greener and greener, but the big step is this first step and then we think it’s green, like that, and then we can call it green” (GS6). Interestingly though, in both cases fossil freedom is the main constituent of greenness, which allows a centring of concern about the question of company travels while neglecting those related to biodiversity loss.

Discomfort with societal impact

In interviews with green industry and mining advocates, there are numerous avenues of worry or discontent with the societal impact of investments. Most commonly, they refer to the long-term consequences of the dominance of extractive industries in the region. Their expressions range from critiques of flawed social welfare provision in the North, to discomfort with the region’s difficulty to diversify and a perceived inability to build attractive societies.

As we have heard above, mining towns are often romanticized by advocates of industry expansion but are also described as unappealing places of residence (GS10; MJ1). A main source of worry is attached to the moving and dismantling of mining towns. Malmberget, once a flourishing town has been deemed to be at a point of no return because of the expansion of the mining pit, to be dismantled

and absorbed into Gällivare. While LKAB continues to market the idea of “mine and society – side by side” (figure 18), during a walk through what resembles a ghost town one is met by fences that prepare areas for demolition, barred windows, measuring sticks for determining danger zones caused by mining explosions, and bath houses and bus stations way past their glory. Walking past partly demolished houses or rows of residential areas that are fenced away are material reminders of that which is sacrificed for the mine (figure 17). Alignment materializes in the expansion of the area of no return, its accepted progression for the sake of continuation of extraction. A Boden municipal employee tells me, “I’m damn torn. Sweden needs it, of course needs mining, but, the question is with what consequences?” (GS8) Some interviewees tell me they grew up in Malmberget and their childhood homes or schools have been taken by the mining pit (GS4, 12). “Every single time I am up there, I always go up to Malmberget and see how it looks and it’s, it strains, you are pulled apart of it a little” (GS4). In a Gällivare municipal video residents of an area called Malmsta lay witness to the dismantling of the town. LKAB has deemed that the residents here are not affected enough to be included in the company-sponsored absorption of Malmberget into Gällivare. The interviewed tell stories about non-functioning electricity, brown water coming out of taps, houses shaking from nightly explosions in the mine, children worrying about the mine taking their house. “I was supposed to live there all my life, I had thought”, another notes “it is a sorrow” (Gällivare municipality 2022 translated). Others tell me that, “Right now, it is a sad sight”, “it is super emotional” (GS20), “but if you think a little bit longer, you get modern houses, strong buildings and everything, sports halls, schools, and that is financed by the mining industry” (GS12; also GS13, 14, 15, 20). In walks through Gällivare, one is constantly reminded of the value of the presence of the mining company, with information signs informing residents about urban development projects that LKAB is engaged in and finances. In this way, the sacrifice of the old tossed into the crater of the mine functions almost as a ritualistic promise of new beginnings.



Figure 17. Houses prepared for demolition, sensed as to close to the mining pit and vibrations from explosions. (O7)



Figure 18. On a walk in Malmberget. An LKAB sign reads, 'Mine and society – side by side'. On the left is the old bus station and behind it the swimming hall opened in Malmberget's heydays. (O7)

Other fears that are raised by interviewees relate to the green steel investments' pace and scale. A lot of responsibility for the planning of the societal transformation that is necessary for the green investments is placed at municipal level. This lack of state involvement is referenced as baffling when considering that the development in question is part of the national strategic plan of decarbonization (GS8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15). It's a bit "schizophrenic", I am told, "to plan for a boom but not have any money" (GS22). Still, I am assured that, "We are super happy about this" (GS14) and the investments are important for the municipalities, but it is challenging to plan locally. "Maybe we stand there in the end with an oversized swimming hall, or something" (GS15), a Gällivare politician laughs. Mostly, actors express insecurity about the resources needed for the societal transformation and the insecurity of municipal spending to yield local development. They risk building too much housing that stands empty, building too little and investments fail if workers don't find housing (GS13), or building too much for a boom that may not last (GS7). This fear is often associated with a risk of creating fly in/fly out cities, where people do not want to live and rather commute there and pay taxes elsewhere. This would jeopardize social service levels and the financing of municipal tasks more generally. These societies are described as barrack towns (GS23) or likened with Russian labour camps (GS22). "Men in group far away from home is rarely a good ingredient for sustainable city planning" (GS16), an employee at the county administrative board notes. The fear of building unattractive, hyper-masculine societies triggered by the mining and steel industry is also evident in endeavours to make more women move to industrial hubs probing "so, when are you going to move up?" (GS11) In Luleå, I am told that there have been efforts to wash away the city's industry identity to distance themselves from a male dominated sector, where only things that make a lot of noise are valued; "This is somehow how we are brought up here" (GS4). Given these efforts, it is a bit strange that "all of a sudden, it's like, 'and now, our big selling point: steel'", a municipal politician tells me and laughs, "but that's how it is" (GS16). Building too much has elsewhere led to ghost towns or city infrastructure that is demolished again (MJ1). The fear of overshooting is expressed through excitement that investments are coming, but that a municipality should be careful not to construct an Olympic village for a brief window of joy, that later stands abandoned; "after the Olympics, it dies usually and you have huge hotels, you have huge arenas that will never be filled" (GS7).

This discomfort also relates to a general discontent or sense of insecurity in the region about social service provision. It is not directly connected to mining or industry expansion, although is often noted alongside a frustration over mining

profits being pulled out of the region, not making much fiscal difference locally. How can it be, people often ask themselves during interviews, that towns such as Kiruna that have been mining hubs for over 100 years do not have maternity care? It is explained to me as a self-evident component of the way things are in the North, that you drive long distances to doctors and as a result, people risk complications or give birth on the road (GS10, 11,12, 20). One interviewee tells me his new-born had health problems, which caused worry with the closest hospital an hour away (MJ3). This discomfort extends into mining companies, where an LKAB employee suggests that it is a problem that “it is so popular right now to work at LKAB so that there are not enough teachers for the schools, nurses and doctors for the healthcare sector, police, so, you know” (GS20). It is good that they get a lot of attention for their good salaries and conditions, he insists, but this causes problems where the social structures fail. “If the schools don’t work, who wants to live in Malmfälten then?” (GS20)

Summing up: Staying & getting back in line

In the previous chapter, I have analysed the linear performative expressions of the aligned, where I suggested that a sense of happiness around the corner, fear of loss, alignment sediments, urgency, claims to rationality, and conformity with like-minded aid in ensuring docility and in foreclosing alternatives. This makes for the first phase of the regulation of desire toward the happy object of extraction. This chapter deals instead with the obstacles that the aligned face in their orientation, triggering the second phase or component of regulation: fleeing discomfort. The obstacle that comes in the form of killjoy performative expressions is understood as the thief of joy, “as if happiness is what we would have, if that thing did not get in the way” (Ahmed 2010b, 32; see also Stavrakakis 2007). The killjoy stands in the way in that they do not desire as prescribed (Ahmed 2010), which is sensed as troublesome for the unity and commitment of the aligned. Following bell hooks (1994) I have suggested that discomfort may have productive potential to trigger transformation by making accessible previously unavailable interpretive repertoire, creating opportunities to look beyond the line of extraction. Fleeing discomfort and dismissing obstacles, instead, hampers social change (Applebaum 2017; Zembylas 2018) by way of reinstating the equilibrium that is comfort in the fantasy that desiring extraction will lead to happiness. Fleeing discomfort, then, is a regulatory mechanism, a form of control (DiAngelo 2018) that ensures the stability of the line, its cleanliness, linearity, purity, order, homogenization

(Freud 2004, 38; Douglas 2003; Puwar 2004; Shotwell 2016; Lacan 2008, 241). Fleeing discomfort allows the aligned to stay in line, or else, get back in line if the line was abandoned. Elsewhere, some of the aligned may have difficulties to dismiss the obstacle altogether, which may result in its more thorough examination, a lingering in discomfort.

This chapter serves to answer the second research question; How is discomfort productive in disrupting extractive desires? However, first, the analysis below also discusses the othering of the objects or killjoys as thieves of joy. Second, I discuss the ways in which obstacles are dismissed as irrelevant, irrational, threatening, or flawed in a flight from discomfort. Third, I discuss the ways in which extraction as the object of desire is refocused, getting back in line after the previous dismissal of the obstacle. These three avenues or stages of regulation indeed speak to the first research question. I discuss here how alignment is upheld by capitalizing on the Othering of the obstacle that is the killjoy. Here, situating the source of unhappiness within the Other and dismissing it functions to stabilize the fantasy of extraction. Finally, fourth, I turn to the second research question and discuss instances of discomfort that seem more severe, where a dismissal of the obstacle does not seem entirely successful. Here, we see instances of reluctant or uncomfortable alignment that are fruitful in a discussion of the productivity of discomfort for social change toward the end of this chapter.

Upholding alignment by capitalizing on the Other

I go on to discuss the ways in which alignment with the fantasy of extraction are upheld by capitalizing on the Other. With this I mean that the Othering of those or that which is sensed to stand in the way of extraction functions as an important avenue of the regulation of desire. The physical encounter or else the idea about the Other is “instrumental in perpetuating human desire” (Stavrakakis 2007, 197) by situating the source of unhappiness in the presence of the Other. If only the Other had not stolen our chance to reach the object of desire, we could already have reached a state of full enjoyment. This conviction lets us return to the object of desire time and time again despite our inability to reach happiness. In this way, the identification of an obstacle is integral to the stability of the fantasy. Still, there is variance when it comes to the ways in which diverse obstacles figure in expressions of alignment. I start here with accounting for these variations in the data and discuss what these may mean for the productivity of discomfort.

1. Defining the obstacle: Situating unhappiness in the Other

As was discussed in the previous chapter, some obstacles to happiness seem to be rather naturally integrated into linear expressions of alignment, such as Russia and China that are referenced to indicate the need for more Swedish extraction because of the market dominance of undemocratic others. These obstacles are integral in the way that they are raised without being externally prompted and are part even of official industry and company storytelling. Obstacles such as the Sami that are treated in this chapter, however, seem to disrupt linearity and therefore create discomfort in a more serious way. This suggests that an integration of some obstacles into the story of alignment has a strengthening effect on the line even before its dismissal. Reference to Russia and China, or the general notion of undemocratic Others reinforces the idea of the Self by sheer mention of the Other, thereby bolstering a sense of membership in a virtuous community that can be confident in its orientation. Other obstacles, instead, may be less telling of the position of the Self relative to the Other. What does it mean for the aligned to distance themselves from the Sami as an Other? In fact, this can be a problematic undertaking amid a common sense of Swedish exceptionalism as embodying human rights and democratic leadership (Habel 2012). The obstacle of the Sami, biodiversity, as well as protesters seem to require an initial reaffirmation of the self as indeed following the principles of Swedish virtue, as righteous and respectful of indigenous peoples, environmental values, and principles of free speech. Failing to acknowledge this position prior to the dismissal of the obstacle risks destabilizing the line. In this way, unlike national Others, the fantasy of extraction is presented as compatible with these obstacles, however, the aligned still capitalize on the supposed irrationality of the Other. This is also instructive for the reading of the productivity of discomfort. Issues that are incompatible with the fantasy of extraction but meanwhile inherent to the imaginary of the Self present an especially intricate rupture of comfort that the aligned must navigate. Such issues seem more adapt to cause productive discomfort in instances in which the incompatibility of the fantasy with the Self are illuminated. In light of such ambiguity, it seems more troublesome for the aligned to navigate the Sami and other such obstacles given the threat that they pose to the position of the Self. As is evident in the way different obstacles are introduced into the story of alignment, these ambiguous obstacles are kept outside of view as long as possible, and trigger a more diffused, less comfortable response. As we shall see, however, this does not mean that the dismissal of these obstacles is not productive for the stability of the fantasy. In fact, the dismissal of the relevance of Sami claims in cafés in Gällivare

or Jokkmokk seem to inspire a sense of community and enthusiasm among industry workers on their coffee breaks.

While obstacles such as undemocratic others are addressed and countered in a seemingly synchronized manner, the question of Sami rights displays ample variation. While the Sami are mostly silenced in official corporate storytelling, others display physical discomfort through the slapping of thighs (GS6) or sighs (GS15; MJ11). While many utter a general idea of sympathy (GS20; MJ3, 8) most return to the object of desire after such an acknowledgement (GS20; MJ1) or note that it is a complex issue (GS14, 15). It is also visible that the matter of colonialism and the colonial implications of land conflict are missing almost entirely among the aligned, which suggests a quest for purity of the line when it comes to this trigger of discomfort. It suggests that the fantasy of extraction is incompatible with colonial harm and therefore must be kept free from this association. All these obstacles, however, seem to preserve the desire of the aligned as they are understood to function as the thief of joy, as the Other that causes the deprivation of happiness (Ahmed 2010; Stavrakakis 2007). Obstacle-making seems to be productive in reassuring the necessity to align by way of associating an alternative reality in which the obstacle has managed to sway the aligned to leave the path with dismay. The obstacle is also narrated as disorganizing the given community, causing chaos, and bringing to fall the agenda of the aligned. They are bizarre individuals, “strange types” (MJ14), uncivilized, aggressive, radical protesters that just sabotage or destroy for everyone else (MJ3, 8) and that voice their opinions in destructive ways, rather than attempting dialogue (MJ1, 2). They are troublemakers that counter the general will, they are selfish in that they prioritize their individualized interests over the benefit of the community and the climate. Obstacles are also presented as irrational, and ungrounded. For instance, protesters are narrated as hypocritical and unknowledgeable, as making use of the very mined materials that they protest. The aligned suggest that killjoys are part of the system they critique, without accepting the terms of the game.

The obstacles that are identified in the data are associated with alternative, inverse realities that seem to discomfort the aligned. Instead of happiness, the obstacles are for instance mentioned alongside Sweden losing its mining leadership and thereby welfare, forfeiting the climate for the sake of a single plant or vegetation (GS20, 23), unemployment (MJ2, 8, 11-13), not being able to hunt and build cabins in the mountains (GS2; MJ4, 14), backwardness (GS9), or polarized societies (GS6). For instance, given the green future that is envisioned in increased extraction, obstacles such as sluggish permit processes or too much concern for

“local nature” are narrated as forfeiting efforts to bring the climate under control (GS20; Lööf and Thorwaldsson at Jernkontoret 2021b). Elsewhere, Sami claims to land are narrated as excessive and hampering industrial development and its associated joys (GS20; MJ3). Sami and other activists are described as nay-sayers that cancel out the possibility of “real jobs” (MJ8) without providing appropriate alternatives (MJ1, 3), leaving societies without employment or any belief in the future. Those that stand in the way must be “prepared to move a little” and “compromise”, “not just say no” to everything (MJ8). In this way, obstacles or killjoys are presented as stubborn and difficult, as saying no out of principle (GS20), not willing to leave wiggle room for others to “be able to live” (MJ3). The same goes for the delimitation of biodiversity as small-scale, local nature as a way of individualizing the issue, presenting it as irrelevant relative to the overall issue of climate change, and requiring individual sacrifice. The obstacle of biodiversity loss is in this way packaged as absurd when it comes to “what’s at stake” (GS6). The obstacle of the Sami and biodiversity loss are placed within the notion NIMBY, merging the sacrifice of individual residents (exemplified as a shadow of a windmill on a front yard) with large-scale impacts on the land of the North.

2. *The dismissal of the obstacle*

The dismissal of obstacles is a crucial component of the stability of the fantasy and a means to uphold alignment. When faced with obstacles, there is a tendency among many of the aligned to dismiss them as irrelevant, irrational, threatening, flawed, difficult, troublesome, and selfish. I go on to discuss these defensive responses (DiAngelo 2018) to obstacles, in which a flight from discomfort is noticeable in a protection of the status quo and the epistemic comfort zone (Chadwick 2021) of the aligned.

In the previous chapter, I have discussed tendencies in the data in which an emphasis on the rationality of extraction is invoked as a mechanism of alignment. With the dismissal of obstacles as informed by emotion the path of extraction is reinforced as rational. Extraction is in the linear story of alignment presented as the only valid option to arrive at happiness, “that’s just a fact” (GS9), “objectively, it is so” and “purely matter-of-factly or logically” (MJ1). In this insistence on the obvious choice of extraction, critiques are presented as signalling insufficient knowledge, a miscalculation, or dangerous stance that jeopardizes happiness. Above, I have hinted to the ways in which protesters are dismissed as emotional and ungrounded, dismissing the validity of their concerns to an extent that one

“wouldn’t even bother to have a dialogue with them” (GS6). Most people, “reasonable people” (GS6) understand that we need mines for our everyday lives, “but it’s not obvious for everyone” (Svemin 2022d). Instead, protesters use mines because it is easy to dislike mines on an emotional level (GS20). Protesters lie, fabricate, and exaggerate (MJ2, 3, 14). They are ill-informed and hold antiquated views about mining that may be true elsewhere but not in Sweden (GS20; Svemin 2021a). Emotions are referenced to indicate ignorance, a lack of facts or bias, stressing that mining or industry critics are informed by emotional rather than factual incentives for standing in the way. Inferring a lack of knowledge defined through the extractive order is a mechanism of fleeing discomfort and dismissing the obstacle as irrational. One of the few times colonial relations are mentioned, even if vaguely by reference to Sweden’s history, the Sami obstacle is dismissed by noting they would have understood the need for the green transition if they had been treated better in the past (GS19). The fault for the assumed ignorance is placed with past maltreatment, but ignorance is inferred nonetheless, suggesting the obstacle is out-of-place. What becomes evident here as well, is that the Sami and other critics of the land-intense, biodiversity-draining impacts of the steel transition are presented as resisting the green transition altogether, as countering climate action. In this way, the discomfort inherent compatibility of the fantasy with the imaginary of the virtuous Self can be hedged by way of ensuring the hostility, backwardness, absurdity of the Other, their threatening proclivities for instance for the climate.

In the same way, the object is also dismissed by way of questioning the validity of the alternative line, or the critique that is presented against extraction. For instance, the impact that killjoys suggest that extraction has on land and people of the North is questioned by the aligned. Impact is in fact negligible (MJ4-6), and where there is impact, it is unavoidable (GS16, 19; MJ2), it is stressed in the data referencing back to the needs-argument and other discursive repertoire of the line. Ore is located where it is after all (GS6, 16, 19; MJ2), so “by its very nature, a mining company cannot move” (Mining for Generations n.d.). “If we want a certain standard of living, then it will be necessary to encroach on nature, period” (GS6). There is annoyance expressed over killjoys that do not realize that extraction is needed when they seem to claim that “we shouldn’t have mines anywhere in the world. Is that how we shall have it? Do you want to have electricity? Do you want, like (slaps thigh)” (GS6). This dismissal of critique against extraction also involves reference to protesters or Sami as dependent on mining, as using metals in their everyday lives, or being employed in mines allowing them to continue with reindeer herding (GS20; MJ14). Again, there is a

‘we’ and ‘them’ sentiment expressed, in which ‘they’ are ignorant about the needs of humanity, risking ‘our’ high living standards and chances for the good life out of ignorance or principle. Biodiversity levels are dismissed as trivial (Thorwaldsson 2022b), and land areas targeted for industrial investments as negligible relative to the quantity of land available in the North (Beowulf 6; GS20; Svemin 2022b), questioning Sami and environmental concern. Sami rights and identities are made invisible in corporate storytelling and cause general discomfort among the aligned once these are introduced. The obstacle is often dismissed by suggesting reindeer ought to be more flexible (GS20), that reindeer herding ought to be treated like a business on par with other economic interests such as mining (GS9) purely factually rather than as informed by emotions, and as such should not be given this much space since “it generates roughly as much as an ordinary ICA [grocery] store, right?” (GS2). Reindeer herding is dismissed as a “hobby activity” that stands in the way of “regular, real jobs” (MJ8). Elsewhere the aligned question Sami rights vis-à-vis other locals (GS2; MJ2, 3) in an ahistorical manner detached from the colonial implications of indigeneity. Local actors question the authenticity of certain killjoy as Sami with reference to blood ties (MJ14) or a lack of immersion in reindeer herding (MJ4), calling them sidewalk or wannabe Sami.

A popular way of dismissing the Sami obstacle is reference to coexistence. Often it is stressed that reindeer herding has survived in other mining regions (GS9; MJ1, 3, 8), referencing mining hubs as havens of symbiosis (JIMAB 2022). While the cumulative effects of the web that is industrial expansion is recognized on occasion (GS20; MJ3, 8) there is a general insistence on mining and steel sites as negligible in size and low in impact, commonly treated as single-impact entities unrelated to the rest of the industrial infrastructure. Even where cumulative pressures are acknowledged, the assertion of the line happens by narrowing down on specific investment as small-scale and environmentally negligible (GS20). There are many interests that must coexist, it is stressed, allowing for everyone to live (MJ3). Coexistence is presented as a willingness to compromise, making an effort (GS21), of adapting and accommodating diverse interests. Reference is made to the productive potential of dialogue to accommodate all interests. Again, those unwilling to compromise and make sacrifices are dismissed as selfish and unneighbourly amid the needs of others, the global climate, and child laborers in undemocratic countries (GS2, 3, 6; MJ1, 8). This flight of discomfort seems to treat obstacles to extraction not only by means of dismissal but also by absorbing the obstacle into the path of alignment, suggesting that it is unproblematic for the line and vice-versa, and thereby preventing any unnecessary deviation.

3. *Reaffirming the fantasy of extraction*

With the dismissal of the object, the aligned refocus extraction as the object of desire – in a stepping back in line if you will. Here, the regulatory power of the symbolic order becomes evident in the return to docility. After fleeing discomfort by either ensuring that the issue that the obstacle raises is complex, or dismissing the obstacle’s validity, the aligned ensure that despite the difficulties that the green transition brings, “We are super happy about this” (GS14), and the problems of extraction are outweighed by its advantages. Afterall, we are responsible to ensure fair and environmental mining supply, who shouldn’t be allowed to live in houses otherwise (GS10), without mining, demographics and employment falters (MJ1, 2), recycling is not enough, and iron is a green material with a long lifespan (GS9) without which the green transition is unthinkable (Svemin 2021c), and so on. The aligned ensure their docility by returning to the sense of no alternative. If there were no mines, what should we do instead to survive (MJ8), the aligned wonder. Extraction may leave its impact on people and the environment, but without impact, there is no progress (GS6), no moving forward, I am told; “We cannot live in a world without risks, if we don’t want to go backward” (GS2). We must make an effort, sacrifice land areas for the sake of development, and accept that things change if we want to have food, roofs over our heads, electricity (GS3, 6, 16). Many of the aligned concur that consumption levels should decrease but minimizing extraction is for many naïve or even counterproductive considering the materials needed for the green transition (GS3, 9). Instead, extraction is refocused as the happy object.

In the reassurance of the fantasy of extraction, the aligned suggest solutions to remedy the impact as much as possible rather than looking beyond the line for alternatives (GS13). Solutions include restoration of land post-mining (GS20), dialogue (GS 13, 14, 15), or sacrifice and coexistence. Elsewhere, extraction itself is provided as a solution for the impacts of extraction. Here, ‘green mining’ and green steel function as opportunities to ensure emissions reduction, which in turn would generate benefit also for Sami peoples and the environments impacted by climate change (GS20). What is more, the green steel transition with its promise of a higher degree of processing in-house is met with enthusiasm about breaking with the resource colony symptom envisioned in the extractive industry (GS10, 11, 12, 22). In this way, the discomfort that is expressed over environmental and social impact in the region can be remedied by lending hope to green extraction. These solutions effectively stabilize the line for the detriment of alternative human-nature relations. The definition of green that drives the logic of the

aligned also allows for extraction to be reinforced as the promise of happiness, even in environmentally and socially directed performative expressions.

Reluctant alignment: Staying with discomfort & stepping out of line

Some of the aligned seem to stay with discomfort rather than flee from it in an immediate endeavour to reinforce the stability of the line. As discussed, I view wading through (Boudreau Morris 2017) discomfort as a productive opportunity to transgress the boundaries (bell 1994) of the fantasy of extraction, cultivate new ways of thinking. I discuss here in more detail the productive potential of discomfort, speaking to the second research question. While there is a clear tendency to reinstate docility by focusing back on extraction as the object of desire, some of the aligned seem to have greater difficulties to flee discomfort. For instance, one of the interviewees emailed me after the interview because he wanted to discuss ways in which the “mistakes” of the past that have cast the region as a resource colony are not repeated in the green transition (GS22). The discomfort caused by the societal and environmental impact of mining is especially troublesome and led him to question the extractive impetus of the green steel transition. Though, this lingering in discomfort did not result in a dismantling of the path of extraction in its entirety, but rather, triggered an inquiry into the *how* of extraction. Nonetheless, in such instances, some of the aligned seem to wade through discomfort in a way that results in a reluctant form of alignment in which the prospect of extraction is met with a degree of scepticism.

Most commonly, reluctant forms of alignment relate to the question of the resource colony and social and environmental impact that has left its mark on the region. Some actors also seem to linger in the Sami rights issues before reinstating comfort. In either case, there is frustration expressed over either-or impasses, where Sami rights (GS4) or environmental and social values must be forfeited for the sake of extraction (GS10, 14, 15). Interviewees express a sense of sorrow about the necessity to let go of memories and connectedness to areas that are taken by extraction (GS4, 12; MJ12). Areas dedicated to extraction are discussed as losing their charm or as places in which people do not want to live (MJ1, 2) and that despite the sacrifice investments have not resulted in sustained progress (GS10; MJ2), which is illustrated by reference to malfunctioning social services (GS7, 10, 11, 12). Decisions are made elsewhere, and the region is in the hands of the South, with actors envisioning undesirable futures of barrack towns (GS23), Russian labour camps (GS22), Olympic villages (GS7) or hyper-masculine societies (GS16). The either-or impasse is also noticeable with actors lingering in

discomfort, though forcing geographic remoteness by focusing on Gállök rather than more immediate frictions in their municipalities (GS11, 12, 16). Sweden should be able to afford to exempt some areas from extraction (GS22), I am told. Some express frustration over not being able to voice opinions that challenge the order; “I have chickened out” (GS4), or “maybe I can’t always go and proclaim this at work” (GS10). For some, discomfort results in the conclusion that extraction should only be done where there are already such activities in place (GS10, 13). As such, discomfort is productive in the shaping at least of delineated zones of misalignment. For others, there seems to be discomfort involved in not being able to think outside the extractive realm, distancing oneself ideologically, but not being able to make the equation work for an alternative reality (GS4, 10). Here, discomfort is productive in the shaping of a willingness to misalign, even if there is a practical incapacity to actually step out of line.

We have had ample reference to happiness throughout the analysis and have discussed what is envisioned at the end of the path toward extraction. Although, there is a discrepancy between the ways in which happiness/welfare/the good life are enacted throughout the data. When initiated on their own account interviewees commonly refer to welfare to explain why mining and industry expansion is important and desirable. Welfare is in the data constructed as conditioned on the extraction of ore, and an increase of existing activities to uphold a certain standard of living that is understood as modern. Mention of welfare overlaps in the data with codes like ‘essential steel’, ‘growth’, ‘employment’, ‘hope in mining’, ‘innovation technology’, and ‘climate urgency’. As such, welfare is ensured through extraction, steel production, through growth and technological solutions to environmental concern, which allows for a continuation of the growth paradigm alongside climate action. Interestingly, when I question the aligned about the role of a mine in municipal development locally, they tell me it is not about the mine per se. “No, no, it doesn’t need to be a mine, no, absolutely not” (MJ8), but rather, it is about the resource base needed to build good, attractive societies, “So that there will be more than driving snowmobile and hunting moose up here. Because that’s what’s needed so people want to live here” (GS22). “It doesn’t matter what it is, if it’s steel or something else”, he continues. Similarly, in a name collection advocating for the mine a Jokkmokk citizen states that “the motor can be a mine or that Facebook chooses to build some server halls, or another big industry” (Zachrisson 2013). Although often there is no other choice, I am told. “You can’t be particularly picky”, a Jokkmokk citizen working with business investments tells me signalling toward an empty sidewalk in front of his office, “I don’t see any other options, I mean,

they're not standing out here right now" (MJ10). While extractive activities are accompanied by local fears of being exploited as a resource colony and associated with the image of environments disappearing into mining pits, the discomfort of their negative impacts are silenced by reinforcing the line as the only alternative. While interviewees express general openness about alternatives to extraction, these are narrated as absent or implausible, or also bear similarly extractive characteristics as does mining. Either way, the mining sector is commonly reiterated as the most conceivable way of creating job opportunities urgently needed for upholding an acceptable social service level. In this way, extraction is perceived as a necessity for happiness as welfare.

Here, discomfort is productive for ensuring an inquiry into the object of desire, questioning the naturalized position of extraction even if only momentarily. Moments of hesitation in line present ruptures of the fantasy that have the potential of misalignment. The notion of no alternative allows for discomfort to be overcome, however, even where locals are visibly troubled by the negative impacts of extraction. Elsewhere, this is done by focusing on technical solutions in extraction (efforts of a greening of mining or steel production) as a promise to shift away from the negative consequences of extraction while retaining its perks – the prospect of happiness. It does not have to be a mine, they note, but they are unable to identify alternative objects of desire. This speaks to killjoy interviewees' critiques (discussed in the next chapter) of the municipal governments' unwillingness to invest in alternative development projects such as tourism or Sami culture and art (KJ15, 16, 18). This also relates to a critique both among killjoy and the generally aligned about the national government's regional politics that forecloses imaginative opportunities in the North and makes extraction amid its historical familiarity in the region and the material and ideational legacies such an alluring object (e.g., GS 10).

One of the final questions I ask in interviews is, 'what is the good life for you?' Here, interviewees present a different account of what is at the end of the path toward extraction. They unfailingly shift toward an emphasis on family, friends, nature, and leisure time. When I introduce the notion of the good life, some exhale or laugh and note that it is an abstract concept, others provide a quick answer, smile, or lean back in their chairs, seemingly displaying embodied comfort when shifting away from the welfare-heavy conversations that burdened the room before, with the impacts of extraction weighing heavily on some of the aligned. It seems that the impacts of extraction that burden the path of alignment are less troublesome when focusing on the good life in its less monetized form. While

positive sentiments about mining anchor notions about welfare, these are almost entirely absent when envisioning the good life. Interestingly, depictions of the good life are remarkably similar among the aligned and misaligned. Critics make a more outspoken reference to the good life as living in harmony with nature, not taking too much from it so that the environment can recover (KJ7; KJ8), but the connection to nature is also vivid in advocates' good life. Here, closeness to nature is an integral part of good living, expressed through the joy of fishing and hunting, being in the forest (GS2), spending time with family (GS2) and their children (MJ3), often in nature. They note that the good life is also not having to worry about the small things and to find a job that you enjoy, whatever that may be (GS3), another as having a well-paid job that allows him to be out with skis two hours a day (MJ10). Others define it as requiring a good balance between work and leisure (GS21), being able to enjoy the outdoors (GS11), as peace of mind, having a good conscience and being able to sleep at night, referencing the green transition (GS12). A Jokkmokk resident and Vattenfall employee defines the good life as leisure time, "time off" (laughs; MJ2). He asks me to clarify what I mean with the good life:

G: Yes, well, what makes you happy?

MJ2: Well, for me, I work to live. I don't live to work, so it's my free time that makes me happy, that's right.

In this vision of the good life, employment is viewed in a rather utilitarian manner, allowing one to enjoy one's free time, or as a matter of necessity. It is frequently stressed that well-paid jobs in mines or other industries are facilitators of this good life – spending time with family, being in nature. A "necessary evil" (MJ10). While miners seem to be content with their salaries and name them as main reasons for their employment in mines (GS13; KJ23), a former mine worker describes his time in the mining tunnels as 'the worst job that one could imagine' (MJ14). He tells me about fatal accidents he has witnessed, and his own accident that put him in the hospital for months. At the onset of the Kallak discussions in 2013, he was a vocal advocate of the mine. In a conversation after the government decision in 2022, he tells me he is not as dependent on employment now that he is in pension age. Now he holds that a decision to open a mine in Jokkmokk won't make the difference between municipal life or death. He is sceptical and tells me that "no, currently no, I'm not at all interested in that":

Surely, we are fine in Jokkmokk, without having. But now this depends, maybe it's because I've become old and gaga. When you were in the middle of it all, working in the mine, it was about making money, working like an idiot. Then, I thought yes, there should be a mine. (MJ14)

Commonly, the desirability of opening a mine in Jokkmokk is narrated through jobs. Through the employment promised in mining, and in extension the opportunity to build a more attractive society through a bigger tax base, a society in which children are not forced to seek employment elsewhere. The above statement exemplifies a mine worker's vision of an attractive society and financial security which he attempted to find in mining during his working days, and in pension age a shift toward a view in which the good life is defined through the absence of mining. This is rather telling of an uncomfortable dependence on extraction, "working like an idiot" to make money only to be able to detach from the unhealthy association with 'the worst job that one could imagine' thereafter once financial security is accomplished. It indicates a scrutiny of an extraction-based understanding of the good life, seeking alternatives where he could not see any in his youth amid a perceived dependence on mining as the only alternative. In this case, discomfort is productive when the negative impacts no longer outweigh the personal and immediate gains of extraction, finally allowing him to detach from the fantasy of extraction.



6. KILLJOY DESIRES

In the first two empirical chapters, I have discussed alignment with the fantasy of extraction in the Kallak project and the Swedish green steel transition, and instances of discomfort among the aligned. The third and last empirical chapter explores sentiments of the misaligned and the ways in which they disobey the extractive rationale. This chapter, then, deals with transgression or disobedience rather than docility. I address the third research question; How does the killjoy defy the fantasy of extraction? In the previous chapters, I have started by identifying linearity in expressions of alignment with the fantasy of extraction and subsequently illustrated what are perceived as obstacles to comfort (e.g. Sami rights or anti-mining protest). In this chapter, I start instead with the discomfort of the killjoy. I do this not to suggest a temporal emergence of one orientation prior the other, where the story of the aligned is initially undisturbed while the killjoys tell their story against the backdrop of the extractive order. In this way, I do not read the emergence of killjoy performative expressions necessarily as *counter*-stories (Andrews and Bamberg 2004a). While I oppose the temporal insinuation of the notion of countering, anti-extractive expressions can surely be understood as marginalized by the power inherent in the extractive order. I start with discomfort because of the empirical observation that killjoys begin their stories with an interaction with the extractive order and an active positioning beyond the fantasy of extraction before drawing *alternative, killjoy desire lines*. As such, the emplotment of killjoy desire lines may emerge from absences or silences (Brown 2005, 84) encountered in the stories of alignment. Elsewhere, killjoys find space to envision alternative desire lines once comfort is ensured, once the violent force that is extraction is overcome. As we have seen in the first two empirical chapters, the aligned start instead with comfort (linear emplotment) and deal with instances of discomfort (discontinuities of linearity) once they are introduced along the way.

Much of the data in this chapter relates most directly to actors that have actively articulated their killjoy trajectories amid the planned mining project in Gállok. Most of them are members of the resistance in various ways (residents or solidarity activists). Some are also actively opposing other extractive investments in their local proximity (planned mines elsewhere) or in their related matter of interest (deforestation associated with investments or Sami rights issues more generally). In the time of writing, opposition to green steel investments is much less organized and vocally advocated. Most interviewees express their sentiments about green and other forms of extraction in a general manner. While Gállok is the main source of distress for many of the interviewees, it is presented as one impetus of a general extractive impulse. There is ample reference to industrial land use that is conducted under the banner of the green transition (wind and waterpower especially). Many interviewees express strong sentiments about the impact of the industry-driven green transition as it is felt to expand through the region, there among the green steel transition. It is here especially important to note that given the upscale in extraction, energy, and transport that are required for the hydrogen-based green steel transition, sentiments about mining and wind power expansion that are most viscerally felt by participants and therefore most vocally addressed are also directly applicable to green steel and should be read as such. Sami communities have ventured especially strong critiques about the compartmentalization of corporate and state responsibilities of land use change that has for example allowed (green) steel actors to distance themselves from concerns about mining. I argue that it is counterproductive to discuss the impact of land use changes on biodiversity and people as distinct, separable single unit impacts. Instead, industrial activities in the North are more accurately described as a web of correlating and mutually dependent incisions in land, which is stressed continuously in the data. The discussion of the two localities of extraction is therefore presented as intertwined, which is a conscious and empirically motivated decision.

Sensations of discomfort become visible in interviewees' articulation or display of a series of negative affective responses to being forced or pushed out of the way to give room for extractive alignment. This is for instance noticeable in frustration about the argument that there is no alternative to mining and industry expansion, as often advocated by the aligned, which effectively dismisses killjoy trajectories as inappropriate interventions. Discomfort also becomes visible when facing colonial power dynamics or various forms of sensed state hypocrisy. After dealing with these avenues of discomfort, I turn to instances in which killjoys step in line with the fantasy of extraction. These relate most visibly to a general sense of

acceptance of the need for mining despite their position of wilfulness and discomfort with their role as consumers in a material-heavy societal order. Lastly, I turn to alternative objects of desire other than extraction that I have identified in the data. Here, killjoys seem to orient toward post- or degrowth futures, care for nature and each other, and reciprocity in human-nature relations. I explore interviewees' emphasis on other-than-monetary values, their growth critique, and suggestion for other formulations of a green transition.

The discomfort of encountering extraction

In the encounter with the aligned or assumptions about the suggested appropriateness of extraction, those who question the happiness that is envisioned in mining, industrial expansion, and the industry-driven green transition express discomfort, broadly put, when they encounter alignment while envisioning alternative trajectories toward happiness. Discomfort may range from expressions of anger, irritation, and frustration to deep sorrow, depression, embodied pain, and psychological trauma. It may for instance be visible in interviewees' initial reluctance to accept my invitation to imagine a future in which mining has commenced in a thus far unexploited area; "I don't want to" (laughs, KJ8), "I can't even think about it, it's not in my (pause), no it can't be" (KJ2). The notion of discomfort is not meant to belittle these experiences, but rather, as I have done in the previous chapter, suggest instances in which linearity is broken. With this I mean that the killjoy that is unwilling to abide by the idea that extraction promises happiness may experience friction when facing extractive desire. In this friction the alternative desire line of the misaligned (e.g., an orientation toward unexploited nature as promising happiness) is contested, undermined, or even made inaccessible by the omnipresence of the extractive desire. In the data, this 'discomfort' is experienced by noting that alternative trajectories to happiness are being shoved aside or forced out of the way of extractive alignment. This sense of not being listened to and a lack of perceived respect is frequent in the data. I understand this to speak to the previous chapter's discussion on obstacles that must be disposed of to allow for smooth alignment. The sense of being shoved aside is associated with an insecurity about the future and affective expressions such as sorrow/pain, anger, frustration, hopelessness, and exhaustion (in descending order of frequency). It is also expressed alongside reference to the resource colony critique, greenwashing and green colonialism, cumulative

pressures, environmental and biodiversity harm, bureaucratic uncertainties, state neglect, and racism against the Sami.

In the experiences that lie beyond the path of alignment notions of death (of nature and peoples) figure prominently. In the case of mining in Gállok, Jokkmokk is narrated as a Sami cultural centre in a region in which mining and other pressures “eat away off the land” (KJ31). In the story of alignment, an opportunity lost – envisioned in unextracted ore – is referenced as carrying risk for the death of the periphery (MJ1).²⁸ In killjoy accounts, however, the mine is no longer narrated as a life-giving entity rich of opportunity, but instead, as a symbol of demise. Reindeer husbandry, ecotourism, and other traditional and local livelihoods are here presented as the backbone of Jokkmokk’s economy and identity (KJ9, 12), challenging the idea of a dying Jokkmokk that must be rescued by extraction (Märak 2015). It is stressed that compared to other areas in the North, Jokkmokk has thus far guarded itself from the harms of mining (KJ9, 18). Elsewhere, “you are quite used to the mine going first”, a Gällivare forest Sami community member tells me, “And therefore it would be incredibly unfortunate if Jokkmokk goes down that road” (KJ9). Diversified livelihood opportunities and intact natural environments are widely understood as threatened by extraction. Extractive activities pose a “threat to our culture and our existence” (KJ20), a Sami Jokkmokk resident is sure. It psychologically drains people and creates economic and existential insecurity (Blind 2022; KJ15, 16, 20). Since the threat of the mine has started lingering over local killjoy, politician Henrik Blind says he cannot be sure “if one has a future in this area, or if this is the end of our culture here”. He continues: “All that we encounter will be a big hole, a hole not only of stone and debris but also a, a deep hole of a sadness and despair that we are not granted power over our lives” (Blind 2022 translated). Similarly, a Jokkmokk resident tells me with tears in her eyes that she was pregnant with her first child when the Gállok project was first proposed:

It feels like a chain of life, and everything is so positive, and then comes this view, this view of exploitation, which I compare to some kind of Mordor, that it is allowed to just obliterate. [...] I use very strong words, but that’s exactly how I feel. (KJ20)

²⁸ A version of the text that follows in the remainder of this section is part of my book chapter “The Virtue of Extraction and Decolonial Recollection in Gállok, Sápmi”, from: *Coloniality and Decolonisation in the Nordic Region*, 1st Edition by Eds. Adrián Groglopo and Julia Suárez-Krabbe, © 2023 by Routledge. Reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis Group.

A local artist laughs in frustration noting that “Surely, Sweden wants everything to die out up here. If you look at the big picture, they would prefer that people die out here, and then you turn the North into a large industrial area” (KJ18). This emphasis on being forced out of the way by extractive alignment also becomes visible in the critique against a perceived selective interest in Sami peoples as a lucrative source of revenue for the Swedish tourism industry (KJ2), but otherwise disregarded (Märak 2015). Here, the rebel group *tjáhppis rájddo* initiated by Sami activists Timimie and Maxida Märak marched during the traditional Jokkmokk winter market, dressed in black waste bags, faces painted white and reindeer corpses pulled after them in sleds (figure 19). The march remarks the Sami as dying, the waste bags insinuate a gaze from the outside onto a people that are disregarded, disposable. The marching bodies function as reminders that—despite the threat to their existence—they are determined to walk on in the tracks of those that marched before them, preventing the land from sedimenting into mining sites. Timimie Märak addresses mining intrusions also in their performance of a poetry-slam piece in Gállok in 2013. They tell a story of a world scenic and pristine, of cherished land and white snow left dead and tainted after its encounter with extractive machines. They associate the misappropriation of land and flora with the suffocation of the Sami peoples and view attempts to divorce the Sami from their land as a threat to cultural survival. Though, efforts to displace them from their lands would be fruitless as their ties go too deep to be uprooted, inferring a union, a merger with nature. Here, Timimie (Märak 2013) is one with the land, their legs the roots that anchor them, the suffocation of the land resulting in the suffocation of their peoples. The unexploited land becomes in killjoy visions a symbol for life rather than death (KJ20). The analogy of roots as a reference to the long tradition of Sami presence challenges the idea that the Sami as traditionally nomadic can readily be relocated for the benefit of extraction (KJ 18, 20, 21, 31). Sami dancer Liv Aira also uses her body in her resistance against the mining project, claiming space by moving through the snow among trees and reindeer while her voice reminds us that a mine would be “devastating”. The threat of the mine, from which her movement sets out to protect the land, would be “a temporary game for [the mining company], a scar in the ground, in earth forever” (Aira 2022). Her body tells a story of despair, of falling, spinning out of control triggered by extractive urges (figure 20).

Beowulf Mining chairman Sinclair-Poulton’s “What local people?” has triggered a call to be seen, noting “us local people,” “we are the local people” (Whatlocalpeople n.d. translated) in attempts to “bust the myth of non-existent

locals.” On the *What local people* Facebook page, the picture that Sinclair-Poulton used when suggesting emptiness is reappropriated to reclaim and occupy that which has been rendered vacant in stories of alignment. The Facebook page also presents a collection of close-up head shots of locals assembled to function as the group’s profile picture, suggesting a unified identity looking directly into the camera lens, insisting to be seen and forging recognition where there was none granted (figure 21). The image of the seemingly vacant landscape aids in telling a story not of emptiness and absence but indeed of unyielding presence. Gállok is envisioned as filled with locals ready and waiting to burst to the forefront to protect the land from any attempts to alter and destroy it (Märak 2013). Similarly, claims to green industry expansion are critiqued as happening on land that is assumed to be empty (KJ20). A reindeer herder challenges the imposition of emptiness onto Sami land noting, “Where do they build wind power? Where no one lives. Where do I have my reindeer? Where no one lives” (KJ29). The North is said to be envisioned as a place where anything goes, a sentiment that is exacerbated by reference to the green transition. ‘Green’ is among many misaligned understood as an empty signifier used to legitimize further incisions in land (KJ20, 27).



Figure 19. Preparations for Tjáhppis Rájddo manifestation during the 2014 Jokkmokk winter market. Photo: Tor Lennart Tuorda.



Figure 20. Liv Aira's (2022) dance performance entitled Gálllok.



Figure 21. The image shows the backdrop and profile picture of the Facebook group What local people, that emerged as a reaction to former Beowulf Mining chairman Clive Sinclair- Poulton's press conference remarks.

This failure to be acknowledged by the extractive gaze is also recounted by a local resident (KJ28) walking with me in Gálllok. He notes that the cultural and environmental values of the area have been disregarded or misrepresented in impact assessments. He points to a group of birches at the foot of the lake and notes that the occurrence of birches in a confined area like this indicates rich soil, a sign that it may be here that Sami ancestors had set up camp, lived. He notes that the extractive gaze overlooked this imprint in nature, the performative expression of the land as an indicator of Sami history. Elsewhere, reminders of Sami heritage and general non-alignment materialize in Sami flags painted on stones in Gálllok (figure 22), stickers reading 'no mines in Jokkmokk', or sprayed-

on reindeer throughout town. Facing the road that has emerged in Gállok as a result of the mining company's exploratory advances, plastic foil joining two trees is serving as a canvas for one of local artist Anders Sunna's spray can paintings (figure 23). It displays a wolf in a crown and uniform embroidered with a Swedish flag, blood dripping from its claw, standing opposite a reindeer in Sami attire. The painting is entitled *Sápmi* reminding of the location of Gállok and the colonial implications of continued extraction.



Figure 22. A Sami flag painted on a stone in Gállok. (O1)



Figure 23. Spraycan painting on plastic foil by local artist Anders Sunna, located in Gállok facing the road upon which the mining machinery advanced to sample the bedrock. (O1)

Discomfort about the argument of no alternative

Many of the critics of extractivism that participate in this research display a sense of understanding of the adversaries' position (which mirrors enthusiasts' responses). The general understanding of mining advocacy is commonly followed by reference to flawed or short-sighted reasoning, that extractive advances impact nature and community negatively and displace existing values for the sake of short-lived joy. I am told that while they don't agree that extraction is the right path (KJ31), embracing industrial advances such as mining "is the easiest path you can take" (KJ18) since they can get "fast money" (KJ8). The acknowledgement of the position of the aligned is in the data most frequently associated with the question of job security and social services, as well as a recognition that in the periphery, hope is often placed in extractive investments because of false conceptions that there is no other alternative (KJ14, 27). A Boden-based activist tells me that people in existing mining towns are led to wonder, "Do we have a choice? It's the mine or nothing" (KJ17). Interviewees agree that the issue of poor access to healthcare (KJ15, 16, 21) is a real problem. "Of course, we also want that service", a local reindeer herder notes in a TV debate opposite a municipal politician, "and we also want the municipality to flourish, but not under these conditions, our existence" (Spik 2013 translated). That mines or other extractive investments are not the solution is visualized with reference to poor social service provision in established mining towns such as Kiruna (KJ21). The dominance of extraction in mining communities is referenced as causing problems rather than opportunities for municipal development. Even if there is a mine, a Boden-based activist tells me, "There is nothing else, there is no future then either" (KJ17). There is frustration expressed that mining pays so well that young people don't need to educate themselves and still have a higher entry-level salary "than their mother has gotten in her whole life as a nurse" (KJ21). Elsewhere, an interviewee fears moving to a retirement home when he gets old:

Who will work there? Why should you work there? [...] Who drives an ambulance when you can have double the money and double the time off and drive a truck in the mine. Everybody goes in the mine! (KJ19)

When it comes to social services "they have to sort things out", a Jokkmokk resident notes. "That's an answer to why one might only think short-term, because you have to put out fires, yes, because it is a crisis, it's serious now" (KJ16). In this sense of desperation, "when people almost can't take it anymore" (KJ16), the mining company is envisioned as a solution (KJ5) or "saviour for some"

(KJ16). She goes on to say that this is not a novel phenomenon, but extractive industries such as forestry have swept in like this before and people embrace them because they “are sort of trying to survive” (KJ16). The sense of no alternative is envisioned as an advantage for extractive advances to summon support, because if the situation is dire, one may wonder, “how else are we going to manage this?” (KJ16) And surely, if the municipal budget doesn’t add up, people may find the mining company’s promises alluring: “I promise a million in tax revenues’, ‘aha, well, wow” (KJ15), a Jokkmokk resident laughs. The reference to budgetary difficulties in rural municipal regions is frequent and reaches beyond mines to perceived mega-projects such as the green steel push.

In the previous chapter, earlier booms are referenced to rationalize new investments (MJ1). Here instead, the continued trust in industrial expansion to deliver happiness is strongly questioned, to a certain extent even ridiculed or dismissed as naïve. Other municipalities in which “mines popped up” (KJ13) are also referenced to stress that elsewhere, the promised boom did not realize either, “the bathhouse is still in poor condition there, the roads are still in bad shape, etcetera, etcetera” (KJ13), a regional musician tells me. When I ask interviewees why it is that people put that much trust in extraction, interviewees generally express bafflement. Interviewees reference waves of hope in timber production or waterpower expansion to deliver economic and demographic boom (KJ7, 19, 28) but that did not realize beyond a brief rise (KJ10, 14, 31). Two Jokkmokk residents (KJ15, 16) tell me that the trust in industry that is revived in the Gállok mining project is unreflective of failures of the past (KJ10). It is on par with an addictive behaviour, a drug:

KJ15: It’s, the longing for, that it will come back, that it will be like that again, getting it back, and you forget the connection that, well, what happens then when this is over? [...] You sort of forget. Yes, you don’t want to think about the hangover, but it’s that longing for the kick. And I have had such a hard time understanding that, I didn’t get it. It hasn’t worked before either, so why do they want to do this again?

KJ16: Yes, it’s naïve. [...] Yes it really is like a drug, something you long for.

The mine also reflects “a desire to get back to something that was, that will never come back” (KJ19), a local tourist guide tells me. “You dream yourself back” (KJ10) to the 50s and 60s, when people drove lowrider cars and bought caramels at the kiosk. “They don’t understand, they want to go back there, and they think the mine is the solution to get back there. But the mine is not the solution [...]. It’s a whole different society” (KJ19). Sure, for a brief period of time, “it will grow

like mushrooms from the ground – small businesses, bakeries are doing a bit better, the gas station will do a little better, things like that” (KJ14). Mining jobs will result in a temporary revenue boost of existing, associated industries, restaurants and grocery stores, and some new subcontractor companies will open up (KJ7, 19), I am told. Others stress that all in all, employment statistics “may be plus minus zero, and when the mine is done, the big depopulation starts” (KJ18). A continued depopulation in other mining towns is referenced to illustrate this point (KJ2). As was the case in the Vattenfall era, a lot of blue-collar jobs will be needed only during the construction period (KJ28). Thereafter, given companies’ automation efforts only highly qualified employees will be needed (KJ9, 10). These are competencies that are not locally available, it is stressed, given that today’s availability of high-paying industry jobs has resulted in low education levels in the region (KJ19). The only jobs that will be left post-mining will be to decontaminate (KJ18), a Sami artist is sure.

Like some of the aligned that stress that it “is somehow how we are brought up here” (GS4) that everything that makes a lot of noise is valuable, killjoys question the sense of value placed in extraction (KJ3). “What else would we live on?” – that’s so deep in our system up here. We have to chop, shovel, and blast” (KJ28), a Jokkmokk activist tells me in frustration. Given Sweden’s industry legacies, “people have been imprinted that you have to have an industrial job to have a job, this lives on” (KJ27). The trust in extraction is associated with a strong legacy of the Social Democratic party and workers unions in the region where industry takes a saviour role and is associated with a “naïve optimism about the future” (KJ10). With this trust in Sweden’s mining persona, “we are being told that, should it change, our welfare conditions will change as well” (KJ5) and “we wouldn’t have had as good a time as we have now” (KJ8). Despite this internalized notion that industry is noble people who support extraction “are at the bottom themselves” (KJ19), a Jokkmokk-based tourism guide tells me visibly frustrated, He exhales noting that the residents closest to Gállok have been promised a laundry facility from the mining company because of the anticipated extractive pollution:

‘Oh how nice, it’s fantastic’. And the worst thing, they are glad about that, ‘because we’re getting a laundry room, that’s great’. If that’s not being stupid, then (laughs). (KJ19)

Here advocates of extraction are described as reluctant to “bite the hand that feeds them” (KJ28), as “useful idiots” (KJ19) for extractive industry interests.

It is stressed that advocates' enthusiasm about employment in extraction fails to acknowledge that extractive activities cancel out already existing livelihoods such as reindeer herding and small-scale or ecotourism (KJ3, 4, 7, 9, 19, 20), "sustainable activities that do not affect nature as a mine would" (KJ3). Participants say they may understand that people are enticed by the promise of employment on an individual level (KJ7), but they cannot understand how short-term investments are prioritized over existing livelihoods, nature, and people's survival. A Luleå resident active in the Gállok resistance reflects on the proposed lifetime of the mining project, noting, "It feels so unnecessary to destroy so much for such a short time" (KJ8). "I can understand that people want to have jobs, and that they want, well. I can understand that, but at whose expense?" (KJ20), a Sami Jokkmokk resident asks.

Do my children not get to live? Isn't our culture worth anything? Should we be annihilated because you will have a job for 20 years? We have lived here for many, many 100 years, should we just? [...] That makes me see red. It becomes so clear that they have, it's in some way like they think they have the right to kind of massacre the lands, massacre people just like this (ksch sound). Like a bulldozer just running over. (KJ20)

She tells me that she feels disrespected (KJ20), that existing jobs are not counted. A mine may generate many jobs short term (KJ5, 15, 16, 19), but existing livelihoods are sustainable in the long run, I am told with reference to earlier, fleeting moments of demographic growth (KJ14, 19, 28, 31). The definition of jobs worth doing as referring solely to the industry sector has to be expanded, I am told, to include activities "that are sustainable in the long run" (KJ3). Today, Jokkmokk is a "creative place" that gives opportunities to engage in art, music, Sami craft, and other alternative livelihoods that may be more difficult to pursue elsewhere (KJ20), interviewees ensure me. Not only is extraction a destructive rather than productive or creative activity in a general sense, employment in mining also does not allow people to develop creatively on a personal level (KJ8, 18, 20). "Many dreams have died in the pit, as they say" (KJ19). A critic of extraction tells me she:

[w]onders about the people who want to work in a mine if it is really their highest dream in life, or if it is a bit like this desperate survival, quick money, ego thinking. Because maybe they would rather be bakers, painters, craftsmen, I don't know. (KJ8)

Employment in extractive industries is here described as disallowing people to realize their true wishes and potential, and elsewhere as hotbeds for destructive personality development. If one “destroys” as their profession, “you destroy the land, a place, a planet you are dependent on” (KJ18), a Sami artist tells me, you won’t be able to develop your creative potential. Relatedly, a Jokkmokk Sami resident (KJ28) tells me while walking through Gállok that he is frustrated about lacking knowledge about Swedish forestry, with people believing plantations are indeed natural forests. Instead, he stresses that the rows in which trees are planted in the extractive forestry model resemble the way in which the state would like its citizens to be, not stepping out of line, not questioning the given order, aligning if you will. This hampers creativity and imaginative capacity. Instead, natural forests are disorderly, moss takes over, a tree may have fallen and serves as nourishment for many years to come. The ordering of nature through an extractive gaze, however, precludes such productive messiness (figure 24).



Figure 24. Encountering productive messiness during a walk in Gállok. (O1)

There are plenty of mining jobs in adjacent towns, with commutes not much longer than to Gállok, I am told, “So if you want to work in a mine, you can do that” (KJ29), “It is not that far to Malmfälten” (KJ14). As a way of questioning the necessity of extraction jobs, interviewees also stress that unemployment in Jokkmokk and Norrbotten is very low (KJ29). Some would surely “move home”

again (KJ19), but mostly, interviewees envision that a new mine would result in fly in/fly out employment (KJ2, 5, 7, 9 19, 20), people working shift and living in “trailer parks” out by the pit, which would “resemble an oil rig” (KJ7, 19). People don’t want to live in mining communities, a reindeer herder tells me in reference to Kiruna and Gällivare. “People commute weekly, live in a caravan, pay taxes at home where they live”, and so value won’t be created locally (KJ20, 31). The kind of society that grows out of extraction, then, is envisioned as unwelcoming, hostile, and risking existing values to be lost. It is also described as a hotbed for toxic masculinity (KJ13, 15, 23, 28), “a miner’s culture – we do what we want, roughly, and you think you have the right to do it” (KJ23). A Jokkmokk local fears that, “well these people will need a casino and a brothel” (KJ19), he laughs. We have encountered similar discomfort about the impact of extraction among the aligned.

Discomfort in coexistence & single-impact arguments

Many note that the land and people cannot take any more incisions, that the environment and the Sami culture is threatened to an extent that new advances must be halted (KJ27). Others are more open to the idea of extraction in principle and express a general sense of the possibility of compromise, and “getting along” (KJ20) or that “everyone must fit, everyone must be able to live here” (KJ14). It is often stressed that the placement of extractive industries determines the severity of the impact (KJ7, 29). In this way, even a small incision in the wrong place could have a detrimental effect on existing livelihoods. A Sirges reindeer herder explains:

If you shoot someone with a gun, and you hit the heart, and you measure the area of that hole, and you compare it to the area of the whole body. Surely, that hole is very small. But you can still die from it, or you will die from it. So the area of the hole isn’t really relevant, but the location is what’s important. (KJ29)

Some are frustrated that their critique of specific extractive incisions is dismissed as a position of principle, “they say that ‘yes, but you’re like against all mines’, it can end up on that level” (KJ10). While mining may be less intrusive in some places (KJ7), a mine in Gállok, for instance, would cut Jåhkågasska in pieces (KJ20), and risk significant impact on adjacent Sami communities (KJ29, 31), it is stressed. Here, “there is no compromise, there isn’t, this is about win or lose, live or perish”, harmony and coexistence are inconceivable, “here, it is either or” (KJ20). She continues, “enough with consonance” (KJ20). The feeling of being

“wiped out” (KJ20) for the benefit of extraction is common throughout the data. Despite a general ambition to “get along”, participants strongly question the notion of coexistence. It is frequently stressed that coexistence is not negotiated on as equal terms as the aligned may suggest (KJ14, 20, 25, 31). Interests that misalign “don’t count when there is so much money on the line for someone who is stronger, has more resources” (KJ7), a former Jokkmokk green party politician tells me. In matters of coexistence, Sami livelihoods and lifestyles are often compartmentalized as industries on par with others such as mining, and their benefit thereby measured on the basis of profitability (GS2, 9). “We are always compared on economic terms, so that’s, of course that is an impossible fight for us to win” (KJ31), A Tuorpon Sami community member exhales. In consultation meetings, people “only understand numbers” (KJ14), a Jåhkågasska tjiellde sami community member tells me, “How much does the reindeer industry generate, blah blah, and the mines generates this many billion, nanana”. In a context in which such valuation is determined by a more powerful actor, however, coexistence is “wishful thinking”, a Sami artist is sure:

It’s almost as if you have a reindeer in a paddock and then you put a wolf in the paddock as well and tell them, you are supposed to get along and coexist. [...] In the end, the one will eat the other. (KJ18)

A frequent articulation of discomfort amid prospects of coexistence is the suggested singularity of extractive advances, both temporally and spatially. Especially Sami peoples and solidarity activists stress that extractive pressures are cumulative and cannot be adequately understood by focusing in on singular impulses. It is stressed that extractive advances such as mining trigger additional land use change for instance transport of ore and energy gridlines, investments risk creating domino effects for example in that one mine may prompt the emergence of a mining district, and new investments ought to be read as a continuation of historic industrial expansion rather than as temporally unique. It is important to remind the reader that the lines between the clear compounds of the cases and other land use changes are blurred. A Jokkmokk resident arrives at deforestation after an inquiry into mining and explains:

Well, now I bundle everything together. I don’t see the mining industry, the mine alone by itself. It’s a, it’s a cumulative effect. Everything is connected, like, it becomes one, like a cocktail of everything and in the end it’s just too much. And that, it has already been reached, that limit has been reached. (KJ20)

Participants stress that rather than treating these as single-impacts that can be isolated, they are embedded in an already existing web of pressures. In the previous chapter, we have encountered assumptions about the vastness of the land of the North as a rationale for industry expansion (GS6, 9), where mining pits or steel mills are often quantified and placed alongside the entirety of reindeer grazing lands as single-impact investments taking up a “relatively small area” (Ministry of Business 2022; translated). A Luleå resident is irritated about “this relativization where they talk about golf courses, they try to reduce it” (KJ10). Interviewees are aggrieved that even locals fail to understand this and say, ‘yes but there is so much land’ (KJ20). Killjoys stress that such arguments are flawed as they lack a holistic understanding of the land use changes that have impacted the land historically and continue to do so today. It is stressed that in the misrepresentation of extractive advances as single-impact units, company and state actors fail to acknowledge the scale of the impact of industry expansion on land in the North and in extension on biodiversity and Sami livelihoods (KJ14, 18, 26, 29). Waves of industrialization and industry investments have drastically changed the natural environments upon which Sami livelihoods depend. For instance, forest areas and with them reindeer lichen and biodiversity have diminished drastically, and herding paths have become insecure or inaccessible through water dams and infrastructure developments (KJ9, 14, 20, 27, 29, 31). Indeed, passing through the region is a constant reminder of the prevalence of extractive industries. Encountering vast clear-cut areas of land, enormous water dams, ore transports, and mines is a routine, unremarkable experience (figures 25, 26). Upon initial astonishment when entering the region by train for the first time such materializations of alignment after a while failed to turn my head. Still, persistent encounters with alignment sediments as largely normalized visual elements surely leave their mark on the imaginative capacity of potential futures.

The sheer quantity of multiple industry incisions overwhelms the misaligned. “There is so much intrusion from all sides and corners”, a reindeer herder tells me, “It turns into like this huge damn ball that rolls over you” (KJ26). These pressures include investments in mining, water and wind power, infrastructure, and forestry, but also the effects of climate change, “you name it” (KJ14). Green transition efforts are referenced as equally disruptive. “The green transition, this I can tell you, sure with all due respect”, a Girjas reindeer herder notes, “but it is the reindeer that have to pay for the green transition, it is their pasture that disappears” (KJ26). In the sum of these incisions, “you have nowhere to go.” There is no more land (KJ20). A Sirges reindeer herder tells me that even though the land is already fragmented through forestry and hydropower:

The mining company still says, ‘well yes, but you surely can put up with a mine. You don’t have any mine after all’. No but 10 per cent of Sweden’s energy is produced in these floods. And that has its effects, because the ice carries poorly, and they have dammed over land. (KJ29)

Infrastructure is another danger for the reindeer. Reindeer are wired to “walk where it is easy to walk”, which is why they may follow roads or railway tracks”, he continues. If they are threatened “they flee where it is easier to run, they don’t understand that the train will not deviate from its course.” They are genetically programmed to stay on course because in nature, “If you jump into the deep snow, you are the one that the predator takes” (KJ29).

Climate change is perceived as an “indirect effect of the exploitations” (KJ27) making it more difficult to migrate and find feed. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the aligned present green industry advances as easing climate impact and therefore as beneficial for the Sami. Here instead, they are understood as risking to trigger additional biodiversity harm. And when it comes to these indirect effects of exploitations, “who the hell sees that first?”, a Jåhkåasska reindeer herder asks:

Someone who works in an office in Stockholm? Works in the office, goes to the subway, goes home, ‘aha it’s raining’, umbrella, right? (both laugh) So they don’t see climate change like we do, us, who are out in the crass reality all the time. (KJ14)

Climate change has resulted in difficulties to read nature and animal behaviour in line with traditional systems of knowledge, I am told. “Soon, our knowledge is not worth anything, because it is not accurate anymore” (KJ14), the reindeer herder continues in frustration when reflecting on the knowledge his father has passed on to him and he passes on to his children. This re-evaluation of useful knowledge relates to climate change, but also industrial land use change. He tells me that his father taught him to anticipate how the next winter will be based on the movement of the reindeer, but now, “that’s not correct anymore, now they may move North because of some damn deforestation or (laughs), or some other hell that’s in the way” (KJ14). When it comes to climate change, rain and snowfall is now less predictable, “rain in January?”, he exhales in disbelief, “this is crazy, how the hell can it rain? It’s supposed to be snow. Well and then, the disaster is a fact for most animals.” It creates impenetrable iced surfaces that hinder them to find their feed. This has forced many reindeer herders to feed reindeer as one would domesticated livestock, which has caused frustration among some herders since it infringes on the natural movement of the reindeer (KJ29, 31). “We don’t

do it with joy and a light heart, we prefer the reindeer to graze in the forest, that's where they feel the absolute best" (KJ31). Then the snow melts much later in the year, which means that "the reindeer calf that is born around May 10, 15 doesn't have a chance to survive, it freezes to death", the Jåhkågasska reindeer herder explains, "if it doesn't freeze to death, it will starve to death" (KJ14). When the greenery finally comes too late in the year, the reindeer "eat themselves to death, because they have starved for too long", he continues and sighs.

Since land becomes scarce, reindeer may be pressured out of their dedicated Sami community areas and into adjacent lands, and then "the conflict is a fact", I am told, since you already have so much pressure on your own land (KJ14). "Now we argue among ourselves, even though we should argue with them" (KJ14), the reindeer herder exhales referencing waterpower or mining companies or else the state. The conflict that arises among Sami communities is perceived as misplaced. This is problematized as taking power from the resistance, a "ruling by division" (KJ20) where "they find it good that reindeer herders argue among themselves, because then they don't have time to argue with them" (KJ14). Instead, the source of the conflict is said to originate from state policy that has resulted in different rights recognition among the Sami (KJ18) and industry pressures. Ruling by division is exemplified with reference to the neglect of the domino pressures on adjacent Sami communities. There is frustration expressed that the three Sami communities of Jåhkågasska, Sirges and Tuorpon have previously coordinated their response, but with the permit decision there has been increasing emphasis on the directly impacted. "So right away, the project has been reduced from, as it were, the whole of Sápmi and several Sami communities, now it's about one Sami community", a Sirges herder tells me. "Unfortunately, that's how you lose, you create division in the group that is suppressed" (KJ29). It's a textbook example, he continues, "When you face a strong external pressure, you can do two things; either you stand united, fight, and if one falls, all fall. Or everyone is on their own, and whoever runs the fastest will do better" (KJ29).



Figure 25. A photo taken on a walk through Jokkmokk (Q15), taking in the loud buzzing below the energy gridlines. (O15)



Figure 26. A photo taken from the train window upon entry into the region of Norrbotten, showing the common sight of a clear-cut area of land.

Interviewees also fear that impacts will lead to a domino effect of additional pressures. For instance, requests for land for a mine may trigger further explorations and an eventual mining district. “It feels a bit like, if Gállok falls, a lot of other things will fall too” (KJ2), a Stockholm-based Sami environmental activist notes. The fear is here that once the label of virgin land is broken further expansion is less troublesome for industry actors. “It is like opening pandoras box, surely it doesn’t end with this mine” (KJ20), a Sami Jokkmokk resident tells me.

“Once they have gotten the infrastructure here, I tell you, there will be sibling mines. Just look North, that’s how it has been” (KJ14). There will be a “Malmfalten 2.0. here” (KJ31), another Sami community member fears. “If you empty a mountain of ore, then you have to move on”, he continues, “so everything gets bigger and bigger”. Comparisons are made with other municipal district in which mining already is a dominant industry to highlight not the plausibility of coexistence, but a vision of a dystopian future. Kiruna and Gällivare are described as “stone dead, there is no culture there (exhales), nothing” (KJ20).

The solutions that state and company actors formulate to ensure harmonious coexistence and reduce industry pressures are problematized as flawed, simplistic, and based on a lack of knowledge about nature and traditional livelihoods. For instance, fences that have built to keep animals off the ore train line are poorly kept and if reindeer find their ways in, “there is only one way out and that’s death” (KJ14). There is also mistrust expressed about the temporal reliability of such solutions. Reference is made to compensation efforts for past incisions that create difficulties for their sustenance today. For instance, single sum monetary compensations for the effects of waterpower expansion have left migration routes over rivers insecure or inaccessible for generations to come (KJ19, 20). Interviewees fear that the extractive thirst will not be stilled with ever more investments (KJ9). There is a sense of having been cheated, where they or previous generations may have agreed to sacrifice a mountain thinking that then, they have done their part, “but oh how we deceived ourselves” (KJ26). It is here stressed that mining advances or other additional pressures must be considered as adding onto layers of generational land use change. The Gállok mining plans are narrated as situated on top of a fundament of existing intrusions that have caused land to disappear for generations. “Haven’t we given enough”, A Sami community member exhales in painfilled frustration, “Is it not enough soon?” (KJ20) Past generations that stood against and resisted the temptation of monetary compensations are highlighted as having allowed for current generations to continue to pursue Sami livelihoods (KJ14, 19, 20). A solution such as the proposed transport of reindeer that is formulated as a condition for the Gállok decision is critiqued with reference to historic promises that were not upheld. Interviewees express concern about the long-term impact of industry expansion referencing potential bankruptcy or other changes to the ownership of compensatory measures. Beowulf Mining may for instance promise today that “you get the transport for free’, yes sure, someone surely swallows that, but in 10, 15 years, they say, ‘no now, now it’s, now we don’t transport anymore, now you are on your own” (KJ14). Another condition that was formulated for the Gállok

decision is the restoration of land post-mining. The belief that “you can quickly restore the land to reindeer pasture” (KJ21) is interpreted as a sign of ignorance, of not listening to the Sami, “you don’t know what you are talking about at all, it’s ridiculous, lichen doesn’t grow in a year”. Instead, it is stressed that extractive incisions are so severe that “it is destroyed forever” (Blind 2022 translated), denoting a bodily wound that “can never heal” (KJ14). I am told that “no, so we don’t buy that anymore” (KJ14).

Discomfort in being framed as an obstacle to happiness

In the data, killjoys also express discomfort in being presented or dismissed as obstacles to the happiness of the aligned or to society more generally put. Killjoys generally express frustration about being silenced as irrational or ignorant, as not understanding the weight of extractive activities for welfare and employment or related to other arguments of the aligned, and associating their group affiliation as Sami or environmental activists with an image of general nay-sayers, “Ah here come the Sami, the ones who always complain”, Maxida Mäarak (2015 translated) exhales in a radio interview. Not only is this dismissal associated with a lack of respect, but it is also perceived as disarming arguments and alternatives to extraction. For example, interviewees’ find that their critique is received noting, “well little one, don’t you get that we need this” (KJ8). “They like make me sound like I am stupid” (KJ8), the Luleå-based critic tells me. Critics are treated as if they “don’t understand what’s best for them” (KJ7). They are presented as “some fucking troublemaker” (KJ14), a reindeer herder tells me, “I think that is very derogatory.” For instance, amid imaginaries of the vastness of land, the aligned treat the Sami as nay-sayers that hinder progress in an unwillingness to compromise (KJ14):

Then they say, but you have so much, we just want this piece, says Vattenfall. We just take this one, says the forestry. We just need this one, says the mine. [...] And when they meet, they say, ‘the damn reindeer herder, he just whines, they slow down everything, they slow down development, yada yada. We just want this little one, what the hell, they got all this.’ They don’t see the big picture. (KJ14)

It is also frequently stressed that this obstacle-making manifests as racism, “where there are still thoughts that one group is worth more, one group is worth less” (KJ18), which is stressed to be the case especially in established mining towns (KJ9, 25, 26). The Sami are a thorn in the side of people who think they have too many rights, “you have probably seen the Sami hatred, that they shoot reindeer,

hunt reindeer, you name it” (KJ23), a former mine worker and environmental activist from Gällivare tells me and adds, ‘That’s what you do here – when you are angry at the Sami you kill reindeer’ (KJ25). They say everyone should have equal rights because the Sami “are just a made-up people, they don’t really exist” (KJ26). At least in Jokkmokk, Sami aren’t called ‘lappjävel’ when you walk down the street to the same extent as in Kiruna (Stålka 2017), a local Jokkmokk resident notes. Many people are dependent on reindeer herding in one way or another, maybe they have a friend, or they own the gas station where they fill up the quad bikes, or they have a grocery store, which creates a better mentality (KJ14), a Jåhkågasska tjiellde sami community member tells me. But still, some people are for mines just to spite the Sami, like “open the damn mine so that they move away already” (KJ19), I am told.

Facing colonial power

A frequently reiterated sense of discomfort relates to the state and its approach to the North and its people. The state is here described as a “predator” (KJ18) that takes what it desires from its dedicated periphery for the ‘societal benefit’ (discussed in the previous chapters) of the centre (KJ19, 27). The riches that are drawn from the region and made possible through colonial neglect, allow city folks that are by interviewees commonly placed into ‘Stockholm’ to enjoy their Latte in comfortable ignorance, and to think, “You have to treat yourself; I am worth this” (laughs, KJ28). It is in Stockholm that the pens reside and decide over the faith of the region (KJ28). Since the 16th century, Norrland is thought of as “their own West Indies up here, where you can go and pick everything, and that’s what they do still” (KJ18), it is “some kind of raw material warehouse for southern Sweden, and for the green transition” (KJ20). For a Sami interviewee, this mindset means that “the big consequence is that you sort of eradicate another culture, slowly but surely” (KJ27). For the region more generally, this mindset implies that environmental harm is placed within its midst while benefits are withdrawn. In the text that follows, I discuss various avenues of the felt effects of the colonial implications of extractive alignment.

Democratised colonialism & bureaucratic disarmament

In the data, especially Sami interviewees express discomfort about permit processes. In the ways in which land areas are seized for industrial investments and mining, the sheer “politics has not changed” compared to the 16th century, but have become more bureaucratic and paper-heavy, “a paper war” (KJ18). A Sami

parliament member refers to this as “democratised colonialism” (KJ27). “It looks better, but the effect is exactly the same,” he continues. Similarly, a reindeer herder asks me, “You know what it is? They always run over us, but now they honk so we have time to jump aside. Before, they just drove” (KJ14). Consultations in permit processes, while required to a different extent than before, still do not imply genuine interest in Sami perspectives, they are merely performed to be checked off (KJ27, 31), it is just a formality (KJ26, 27), “just window dressing” (KJ20). Consultations are information meetings about what will happen to the land (KJ27). Democratised and bureaucratised processes have also implied a shift from physical to psychological pressure, I am told, “to constantly break down people psychologically, with paper, and words where you don’t really understand what it is you read” (KJ18). This bureaucratisation of colonial relations is perceived as strategic to exaggerate the power imbalance, creating an additional disadvantage among groups that have fewer resources in the form of know-how, finances, and time to their disposal (KJ14, 18, 31).

Interviewees express frustration and powerlessness over the bureaucratic language that they must acquire in permit and appeal processes. “You know less when you go out than when you come in. You know absolutely nothing when you leave there, what did they say, what did they want, what do they mean?” (KJ14), a reindeer herder exhales. Dealing with an international company such as Beowulf, exacerbates the language barrier and therefore the disadvantage in negotiations further. He recalls an early meeting with Beowulf to exemplify the industry’s disinterest in alternative perspectives, “They don’t understand what we say either, they don’t even have an interpreter with them, isn’t that rude?” (KJ14) Interviewees also express frustration over the time it takes to sit in on the different industries’ meetings, and prepare for them, “which you don’t do during a coffee break”, and “we have to do it for free, while they have their full salaries” (KJ14). Having to inform yourself about the industries that put pressure on your livelihoods is noted with irony, “I have become an involuntary mining expert” (KJ29), a Sirges reindeer herder laughs. An environmental activist displays a similar frustration over her engagement, “You have to wonder sometimes, is this how democracy is supposed to work?” (KJ4) Given the piecemeal treatment of extractive land use change in the North, Sami community representatives must become acquainted with the language and regulations of all different industries and engage with them separately, which requires even more time and finances for the Sami to voice their concerns (KJ14), which gives an edge to industries in the paper war. There is a general sentiment here that to ensure a democratic process in which the Sami can voice their concerns without risking financial ruin and

leave them occupied with paperwork to an extent that time for family life and their livelihoods are diminished, state support is needed in accordance with international regulations on indigenous rights.

State hypocrisy & green colonialism

It is often stressed as baffling that Sweden has not ratified various international commitments to the protection of indigenous rights. Most directly, ILO169 (KJ2, 18, 20, 27) and rights to free, prior, and informed consent, the right to investigative resources, and veto rights are highlighted. A Sami parliament member tells me, “We must be able to say no where we see that it doesn’t work, and we should be able to say yes under certain conditions” (KJ27). Exemplified in the Gállok decision, he continues that “the government does not want to listen to people, [...] they have promised more mines, more jobs, so they must keep it. That’s more important than the environment, climate change, than the future” (KJ27). A Luleå-based activist also expresses frustration over the state’s unwillingness to listen, “it doesn’t feel reasonable, when Amnesty says no, the UN says no, the county says no, the Sami say no who live there, residents” (KJ8). With the handling of Sápmi and Gállok specifically, “we have embarrassed ourselves internationally” (KJ9), “I kind of want to resign as a Swede (laughs), I am kind of embarrassed” (KJ12). The sense of exceptionalism of Swedish goodness seems to be internalized here to some extent, causing a reaction to disengage when hypocrisy is detected. “It is extremely, extremely scary how, how economic interests are allowed to come before human rights” (KJ16), a Jokkmokk resident notes, while at the same time being internationally known for human rights leadership (also KJ2, 9, 12). “We criticise many other countries for their behaviour toward indigenous people, but here it is so very clear that, well ‘We love mines’, that’s really what it is” (KJ12), a Jokkmokk resident and Amnesty Sápmi activist tells me, referencing former minister Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson’s remarks. There is an image that “Sweden is so fantastic, that we are so damn good at so many things, and we are so democratic and think about the environment” (KJ2), a Stockholm-based environmental activist tells me. But in the end, a forest biologist mocks, “we are the best country in the world at recycling cans” (KJ3).

Sweden’s suggested leadership in environmental matters is widely criticized throughout the data. Sweden’s green transition is critiqued as prioritizing profit, failing to detach from the growth paradigm in a way that reproduces environmental harm, and disregarding biodiversity in a narrow focus on emissions reduction. Swedish environmental leadership is also critiqued as a continuation of

colonial relations, where frequent reference is made to green colonialism (KJ9, 12, 27, 28), “where they just use it as an argument to continue extracting and continue colonising” (KJ12; also Persson Njajta 2022). It is here stressed as hypocritical that climate change, which disproportionately affects the Sami and other indigenous groups, is now used as an argument to infringe more harm on their lands; “you must dig up more soil to save the earth” (Jannok 2022 translated). “The eyes are once again turned towards the North” (Persson Njajta 2022 translated). “This green, so-called green steel” (KJ9) is also frequently referenced to highlight the severity of the land use change that the hydrogen-based steel production will trigger, not least amid wind power expansion; “and the wind power lobby talks about it as if they are parks, they are not parks, they are giant industrial systems” (KJ9). This reaction to the notion of ‘parks’ is reflective of the critique of the romanticisation of industry expansion as green and non-intrusive, highlighting the industrial composition of ‘green’ energy and therefore its intrusion in land.

Interviewees interpret the blind spot of Sami rights in Swedish exceptionalism as stemming from a neglect of its colonial history. Public education teaches too little about the Sami and Swedish colonialism (KJ10, 27), I am frequently told. “The Swedish school talks a lot about other indigenous peoples of the world, but the children in Sweden know very little about us, and a lot of it is wrong” (KJ14). This kind of information control is noted as beneficial for the state to ensure that the interests in the North can be pursued. If they were to recognize historic harm, “it would cost them a lot, because then they can no longer say it’s the state’s land” (KJ29). Instead, interviewees note that focus is today placed in policies mainly related to language and culture, which are less troublesome for the state (KJ18, 27). Meanwhile, “the land question is what matters” (KJ27). Countering this neglect, colonial harm is in the data exemplified through reference to race biology, theft of land, language, and culture, segregation, and forced placement of children in nomad schools, and imposed reindeer pasture regulations that have triggered conflict between Sami communities (KJ18; Mäarak 2015). People are being taught that “we have never colonized anything, we are the good ones, that was Spain and Portugal and others [...], and people still believe it” (KJ27), a Sami parliament member sighs, and recalls Axel Oxenstierna and the mindset that “In Norrland, we have our India, if only we decide to take it’, or something like that” (also KJ10, 12). The land has been exotified (KJ10), displaying a desire to extract. “I would say that the people have not really had any major importance here, it’s the natural resources that were interesting, the slumbering millions” (KJ10), I am told, “the people have mostly been a nuisance.” A Luleå resident notes, “it is very clear, how

they have argued, and rhetorically, how they have used this end of the country in different ways” (KJ10). As such, people and lifestyles have been overlooked for the benefit of the South (KJ27), and that goes not only for the Sami but also the Tornedalians and later the region more generally (KJ10, 13).

The resource colony

As was expressed through discomfort among the aligned, the killjoy also lay bare frustration, anger, and sorrow about the North being treated as a resource colony. This theme overlaps in the dataset frequently with reference to a perceived lack of respect, a repetition of past mistakes, and historical conflicts. Here, the sentiment is that the region is emptied off its resources with lasting environmental and social harm that comes in the industries’ wake and profits and benefits not materializing locally. The environmental harm is felt ever more widely among residents, I am told, “Oh shit we don’t have any forest left’, many think, and more and more people have started to change their minds that you can really see that things are being sucked out of here” (KJ19). It is stressed that the “contributions” (KJ19) that the region makes to the country in the form of energy, ore, and timber is by the South not acknowledged as valuable and as originating in the North. An interviewee tells me, visibly annoyed, it is commonly expected of people in the North to be pleased that the state has provided jobs in mines, “but in fact, the state should be terribly grateful that they had people who were willing to do this work that has been so important for the country” (KJ13). He tells me it upsets him that “the mines are supposedly so important, but the places around them are insignificant.” Killjoys often wonder why people do not question the maltreatment of the region, “they don’t check where things disappear to or who is taking the cake” (KJ17). A Jokkmokk resident stresses, “For me, it’s incomprehensible that you don’t see that okay, we will get coffee money. We don’t draw any benefit from the investment, but we must live with the consequences” (KJ15). “Sometimes it feels a bit like we should just be content, ‘here we come with some promises about jobs and tax revenue, so just be happy and satisfied” (KJ10), a Luleå resident remarks. Another interviewee compares this required gratefulness to a violent relationship that you cannot exit, “because then you really get beaten up” (laughs, KJ20). As such, there is a sense of powerlessness expressed by interviewees in which the North-South dynamic of the resource colony is understood as a “structural problem” (KJ15) that cannot be solved on the local level.

Meanwhile, a deteriorating social fabric in industrial areas of the North (KJ13, 17) leaves its marks on the regional self-perception. The “social contract if not broken is seriously damaged” (KJ10). The region has historically been marked out by the state as an industry region for non-processed extraction and export, which meant that people did not need to educate themselves, that heavy, male-dominated professions shaped a certain culture. In that way, “they created an economic structure that we are still defined by today” (KJ10). This left limited opportunities for peoples’ individual self-determination, “and that’s when you move” (KJ28). In this way, killjoy’s express frustration about the region serving a purpose for the state that has been socially and environmentally destructive and has emptied the region, “they have taken both land and water and riches, but they have also taken the people” (KJ28). To get people to stay, there must be “hope” (KJ13), I am told, so that societies at least have a minimum standard, supply of services, and experiences. It is no wonder that people look for such hope in a large industry project “because they see no other way out. [...] And I think that’s sad. There should be tons of alternatives” (KJ13).

Interviewees problematize that environmental harm is displaced to the North. Many interviewees are here irritated about wind power placements in the region while more affluent areas seem unwilling to place wind turbines for instance along Stockholm’s coast (KJ10, 12, 15, 29) close to the consumers (KJ7), “but that’s like ‘no, but (laughs), it will disturb our view” (KJ12), or too close to people’s summer cabins (KJ29). Another interesting sense of discomfort that is visible in the resource colony critique emerges in discussions about the industries’ common promises of restoring land post-extraction, and the fertilizer used during this process. The fertilizer comes from a treatment plant in Stockholm, where “all faeces, all of Stockholmers’ faeces is processed into mud fertilizer” (KJ28) and transported “on specific poop-trains to Norrbotten. So, we export the riches and tons of money, and we get shit in return” (I laugh), a local activist tells me. This is not only a fitting metaphor for literally being shit on, I am told, but also implies that “a lot of substances that a treatment plant cannot clean away, drugs, hormones, medical residues, end up in the waterways” (KJ28). In the movie *Gällö* (figure 27), a girl asks her father, “Is this a lake?”, when passing by a post-extraction landfill covered in mining waste and mud fertilizer. In the same film, a Boliden employee is asked, “So, this is the Stockholmers poop?”, to which he responds, “This is Stockholm’s contribution to us, yes”.

On top of the harmful changes to the natural environment in the region, one must ask for allowances to keep municipalities afloat (KJ15, 16). “Allowance has

a different sound to it” (KJ15) and rather than feeling a sense of “pride about where you are from”, the mindset in the region then is “that we are a burden” (KJ19). Vattenfall has for instance paid an allowance to the municipality that is now discontinued, which is mentioned by various interviewees as laughable considering Vattenfall’s profits and the environmental destruction that has been caused. “They have massacred the lands forever and still they can’t even pay 2 tiny million [...] so that we can work and live here” (KJ20). While the interviewees are critical to new investments, there is a general sentiment that profits that have been made historically because of incisions in the North should have been distributed within the region and to Sami communities to a larger extent (KJ7, 15, 16, 20, 27). A downside that is lifted here, however, is that such distributive measures may have an alluring quality, meaning that “since you have such bad financing, you want [the investments] even more” (KJ7).



Figure 27. Imagery of mining waste and fertilizer mud from the movie *Gällöck – Kampen i sameland*.

Instances of extractive alignment among killjoys

In the data, I have identified instances in which killjoy fall into the path of extractive alignment, or put differently, deviate from their suggested desire lines. This is noticeable in expressions of general acceptance or even support for mining under certain conditions, sentiments about Swedish mining actors, especially state

actors, as somehow more desirable, as well as sentiments about the green steel transition in its extractive articulation as generally positive. These instances of extractive alignment are often accompanied by a sense of discomfort, of not being able to break with and depart entirely from the extractive rationale and its economic and societal structure.

Yes, we need mines, but ...

Many interviewees express a sense of acceptance of a general need for mines and resource extraction. This often follows inquiries on my part such as, ‘What, if any, is the meaning of mining for society today?’, or ‘Would you say that your lifestyle is dependent on mining today?’ Responses often display a sense of discomfort about trying to navigate in pre-given societal structures, or not being able to navigate according to their desires. Some interviewees tell me that sure, mines are necessary after all (KJ2, 10, 11), and it is difficult to divorce oneself from mines and metals; “As soon as you live in a house, there’s iron and copper, and everything possible, so absolutely, and mobile phones, so” (KJ17). “Now, I use things that come from mines in my daily life all the time, the phone and car, and lots of other things” (KJ8), a Luleå-based activist tells me. There is a sense of discomfort apparent in killjoys’ roles as consumers in a material-heavy society. A small-scale tourist guide counts the motored vehicles that they use for their business, “How much metals do we have accumulated there?” (KJ19) “There are metals in a lot of stuff that we use every day, cars, houses. [...] So, I am not against mines per se” (KJ4), a solidarity activist notes, and continues that there are solutions needed so that “we can continue to have a good welfare, because I also want that, I like my computer and I like my phone, I don’t want to be without it”.

Mostly, interviewees don’t oppose themselves to the existence of already established mines that have been operating for many decades (KJ6, 21) such as the Kiruna or Malmberget mine. “I realize that it is needed, maybe mines are needed” (KJ27), a Sami parliament member tells me, “The point is not to stop everything, the point is not to return to the 14th century when we didn’t have a single mine” (laughs). It is noted that the wellbeing of mining hubs in the North is dependent on the mine and fluctuation in the mine’s success, where “Everything revolves around the mine” (KJ21). Elsewhere, a former mine worker stresses that “Gällivare Malmberget would not exist if we didn’t have a mine here, that cannot be ignored, it is quite clear” (KJ23), which is a sentiment that is strongly criticized as ahistorical in other parts of the data (KJ13). “Yes we need mines”, the former

mine worker continues, “but we have to do it right” (KJ23). In this way, even in instances of alignment, killjoys highly criticize the omnipresence of these mines, their impacts on city parts that are moved out of the way of deposits, on surrounding land areas and throughout the region amid transport and other land incisions, and the increased hostility and racism that is felt in these mining towns.

Killjoys express a sense of discomfort about being forced into the confines of the extractive order and the social and economic system with which it is associated despite their wish to exit the path. A former mine worker and environmental activist tells me that her two identities don’t really go together, but as a single mother, one must find ways to earn money and provide for the family (KJ23). The same sentiment is extended to Sami people who are employed in mines. In stories of comfortable alignment, flexible and high-paying employment in mining is presented as an opportunity for Sami to continue to herd reindeer in their free time (GS20). Instead, employment in mining is here understood as a “necessary evil” (KJ18) for some and a result of generations of land use pressures that have resulted in poor grazing lands that mean that only few can ensure their sustenance and survival based on reindeer herding alone (KJ14, 29). While it is narrated as morally problematic (KJ18) that people work extra in extraction, a Sirges reindeer herder tells me that “I mean it’s hard to blame them. You must bring in money, but it is a little, I have chosen not to do it because it feels strange. I mean, but if you’ve got a bunch of kids and an angry shrew, somehow” (KJ29). Here, there is also a lack of alternative sensed, with mining jobs becoming a means to survival. A Luleå based solidarity activist reflects on this noting that, “You are dependent on what kills you at the same time. It’s terrible. Ugh. I’m getting anxiety” (KJ8). Others note that given one’s misalignment, financial means are sometimes limited, which can cause stress. “Of course, it would be nice not having to worry about money, that you could just let it go somehow” (KJ3), an interviewee tells me, “But I don’t think I would want to be rich” (laughs). He continues noting that, “I have a roof over my head, food on the table, good food that I know comes from the local area, and then yes, a good relationship with family and friends, so” (KJ3). Similarly, a reindeer herder tells me that financially, it is draining having to go through various appeal processes. On an individual level, he jokes, “You won’t become a millionaire”, “But you have a free life, and you are happy, and you are, you know. Money is a lot, but it is not everything” (KJ14).

The ‘but’ that usually follows a statement on the general necessity of extraction is introduced in attempts to discontinue instances of reluctant alignment by introducing topics that are by now familiar to us and will be elaborated in greater

detail below. Mining may be necessary, but the conditions at a given place have to be considered more carefully to evaluate if mining is appropriate (KJ4); but mining has destroyed a lot of nature, biodiversity, and ways of life (KJ4, 23) and therefore has to be the last alternative (KJ2); but “the more we can recycle and reuse, the less mines we need” (KJ23); but “we don’t need to buy new to the extent that we do today, we can do it in other ways” (KJ4); but resources have to be used in a more careful way “based on real needs” (KJ17), and so on.

The preference of Swedish and state actors

Despite the resource colony and colonial hypocrisy critique that we encountered above there is a strong sense of trust placed in Swedish mining and steel actors affiliated with the state, and with familiar logotypes such as LKAB, SSAB, and in extension HYBRIT. It is critiqued that Sweden is too liberal with international land acquisitions (KJ2, 6, 9), “that is completely unacceptable” (KJ9), “we give away the finest things we have” (KJ20). “I think it’s so damn weird” that the state does not take more ownership of mining despite the insistence that it is so important for the green transition (KJ13), I am told. The musician continues; “Sorry, I’m getting so fucking upset about this. I don’t think there is any damn reason at all that we should let foreign companies come here and mine our minerals because they have no relation to the place at all” (KJ13). International actors are perceived as especially ignorant when it comes to local needs and circumstances and as not displaying a willingness to design industrial projects that benefit the region. “We shouldn’t just let in people from the outside who come here and just screw things up and destroy, just to make money” (KJ2), a Stockholm-based Sami environmental activist tells me. “There are many fortune seekers who come to Sweden” (KJ23), a former miner and environmental activist informs me, “And then they just leave” without necessarily following up on requirements to restore land. In this way, there is a sense of distrust placed in international investors’ care for nature (KJ13, 23) and respect for local people and history. Established actors are understood as having to get the people on board and therefore keener on doing things right in order not to threaten their presence in the region in the future. LKAB is by some killjoys presented as trying hard when it comes to their local visibility, sponsoring sports teams and different events (KJ10, 21), “It’s a good company, there is no doubt about it” (KJ21). According to a former MalMBERGET miner who found work in the mine as a single mother, “They ensure that people can keep living here” (KJ23). There is no other alternative than placing trust in LKAB, she continues. International actors treat

their activities in the region instead “a bit like a casino”, a gamble (KJ19). Others again are less convinced of the sincerity of established actors. A Sami parliament member tells me:

LKAB has been around for so long, they have somehow established themselves in the consciousness. They are here. They have already been exploiting for 100 years, so that’s a little difference anyway. It’s not more positive for that (laughs) with LKAB’s exploitation, it’s not. But that there come in more, more companies that you must deal with, well. (KJ27)

LKAB and others have established a line of communication that is not a given with new actors. Also, with LKAB and their existing mines, the harm to natural habitats is already done and therefore preferable to new incisions (KJ6, 7), I am told. In line with the critique of the resource colony of the North this distrust is also articulated by noting that foreign investors would pull money out of the region and Sweden more generally. Swedish actors are here interestingly narrated as preferable vis-à-vis international investors because then at least the money goes back in the state budget, “It goes back to the people somehow, and that feels okay, I think” (KJ19). When I ask if it had felt better if a Swedish company had initiated the request for mining in Gállok one interviewee laughs and says, “I don’t think they would be stupid enough to do this” (KJ9), which suggests trust in state and national actors’ respect for local circumstances. Another interviewee tells me that “it would have felt a little less bad if the money stayed in Sweden” (KJ14, also KJ7). When I ask about the regional rather than state benefit killjoys retract somewhat noting that’s another thing altogether (KJ14, 20).

Yes, the green steel transition is good, but ...

As will be discussed in greater detail below, the green transition in general and the green steel transition in particular are by many of the misaligned referenced as positive endeavours in principle, with interviewees noting that emissions reduction in the heavy industry is necessary (KJ22, 23). Some of the generally misaligned are broadly unreflective of the impacts of green transition efforts. Yes, that’s great, they tell me when I ask about their opinions about green steel, “we need to transition to something better than we have had it thus far” (KJ23). To change the production so that it becomes as environmentally friendly as possible, “surely, that’s great, one can’t be against trying to make it as carbon dioxide-free as possible” (KJ5), an interviewee exclaims, and elsewhere I am told, “It’s necessary, we can’t continue as we’ve done, look at how much emissions SSAB

has, it's not even possible to count" (KJ7). She continues, "so we have to do something about it, and we do have that competence in Sweden as a nation to do better." Here, an unreflective positioning about the land intensity of the transition is accompanied by a sentiment of Swedish exceptionalism that we encountered in the story of alignment. Sweden's capacities are invoked to find comfort in domestic activities.

The 'but' that is associated with the general necessity of the green transition is one that initiates a growth critique. Here I am told, "But it is still the case that increased production leads to increased emissions" (KJ5). Decarbonization is very important, "but then you also have to deal with its consequences. What is good for the climate could be very bad for local nature" (KJ7), a former Jokkmokk-based politician exemplifies this with reference to the energy needed for hydrogen-based production processes. As we have seen in the previous chapter, reference to 'local nature' is a frequently used discursive tool to dismiss claims to environmental protection on the basis of a not-in-my-backyard-argument. Among the misaligned, the notion of local nature becomes instead a proxy for the importance of just transition considerations. The reference to energy needs is elsewhere less critically adopted as a necessity for the green transition, noting that, "We need wind power, we have to have it, we don't have a choice because we have such enormous energy needs" (KJ23), an interviewee sighs. She expresses frustration about the impact of these wind factories on the land, though, uncritically accepts the energy demands necessary to fuel the growth-based green transition, aligning with notions about the necessity to expand production. Others note, "I'm constantly thinking about the environment and consumption" (KJ2), but surely, one could do more. The solidarity activist voices that her family has discussed acquiring solar cells and a charging station for their leased electric car, arguably aligning with the extractive definition of the green transition that is widely critiqued in the killjoy data. As such, material infrastructures that depend on mined materials rather than emphasize a downscaling of material and energy flows – such as an expansion of wind power, charging stations, electric cars, and solar cells – serve as proxies for the green transition among some of the generally misaligned.

Misalignment: Alternative happy objects

I now turn to alternative trajectories that are proposed in the data. The promise of extraction as an orientation that brings happiness is challenged and killjoys instead perform alternative desire lines creating paths that are disregarded or dismissed by the aligned. Alternative objects of desire manifest in the data as an emphasis on other-than-monetary values and valuation of happiness, critiques of growth and alternative, non-extractive visions of economic and societal relations and relationalities to nature that break with extractive tendencies, as well as green transition pathways that break with the growth paradigm and with material-heavy living.

Other-than-monetary values & other pathways than growth

Interviewees are generally discomfited by the monetary fixation of value definitions with which they associate the extractive economy. “That’s what it’s all about right now, it’s just money that counts” (KJ26). This focus is associated with a deficit in care relations between humans and the natural world, where people “don’t give a shit” about others “as long as we can make money” (KJ26, also KJ6). People are presented as being falsely kept passive or content by their high salaries in mining and associated industries through which a thirst for consumption of SUVs, squad bikes and the like is fashioned (KJ19, 23, 28). This creates a culture in the North in which experiences in nature have a destructive quality, where relationalities to nature are purely motor-driven (KJ28). The drive toward profitability is associated with “egoism” and “short-sighted thinking” (KJ8), a kind of “gluttony” (KJ28) when it comes to resource use, which is fuelled by people having distanced themselves or lost contact to nature (KJ4, 8, 18, 28). The pursuit of profitability is also narrated as limiting peoples’ ability to notice other joys in life, overshadowed by monetary fixation. A musician displays frustration over “people being embedded” in the idea that everything must be profitable:

It’s also so damn sad, how people think you’re a hippie who says that. But at the same time, is this what life is all about? Us being profitable? I mean, that’s not what people think when they maybe live in Karungi outside Haparanda when they step out in the morning with their morning coffee, and you know the meadow flowers have hit the river stilts and there are a few mosquitoes in the air. The sun is burning. Is that when you think that now I am not very profitable, or there should be more profitability in this? (KJ13)

City dwellers are frequently referenced as distanced from the realization that we need nature for our survival (KJ18), that disrupting “biological balance” through a material-intense way of life will eventually strike back at us (KJ4). We must reconnect to nature, I am told, and dismantle ignorance to re-discover that food doesn’t “grow in the store” (KJ4), or “it’s not just opening the tap and you get water” (KJ18). This frustration is, as is illustrated here, narrated on an individual consumer level, but mining, steel production and the shift into green steel and other associated industries are commonly cited as the driver of such gluttony (KJ28). We must regain respect for nature’s limits and the insight that to ensure survival nature cannot be strained beyond these limits, beyond an otherwise inevitable breaking point. A Sami Jokkmokk resident tells me that one must be attentive, “if you have fished in a lake, and you see that the fish begin to disappear, well, then this lake must rest, or the lands must rest” (KJ20; also KJ4).

Interviewees suggest that the social and environmental crisis that they identify requires a redefinition of values. Instead of abiding by the fixation on monetary valuation of happiness, “we need care, we need love, we need food and a roof over our heads” (KJ3). A reindeer herder illustrates other-than-monetary value:

Look at the farmer, he loves his fields, and he rides with the factor, he loves that. Or if he has, he might have livestock, he loves his livestock, sheep or cows or whatever it may be. A fisherman, he loves the sea, bouncing on the sea, that’s the best he knows (we both laugh). Yes, but, and so you say to the fisherman, but damn, ‘we don’t make any money with it’, ‘yes but, it’s a life, it’s my life’. For generations, they have been fishermen for generations. (KJ14)

Interviewees question the level of consumption and material resource use that is taken for granted as an indicator of happiness in our society, noting that, “we live in a dream world that has been created with the illusion that this is how you feel well, this is how you live well, and this is how you become happy” (KJ3). Killjoys critique growth and consumption, and in extension high-paying industry employment as ventures for hope and happiness. “Welfare doesn’t have to mean that you have to change the kitchen in your house every 10 years” (KJ3), to “go to Thailand four times a year” (KJ19), make status purchases (KJ25), that “there are three or four cars in front of every house” (KJ20), or to sit in the garden and watch your automated lawn mower, “I think that’s so fantastically pointless, crazy” (KJ28). Although, the good life as defined by killjoys is similar to the idea of the good life as illustrated by the aligned where family, spending time with one’s children, and in nature are highlighted as key (KJ3, 6, 7, 8, 14). In addition, the source of joy of spending time in nature is among killjoys often formulated as

living in harmony ‘with’ nature (KJ7, 8) or as “trying to make as little damage as possible during one’s lifetime (laughs), I think that is a good life” (KJ7), and elsewhere “that we must come to the realization that we have now for so long overconsumed” (KJ20). Nature is in the “colonial view” and the “industry world” seen as a resource, a Sami parliament member tells me, “Either you exploit it, or you protect it – while we are part of nature, we interrelate with nature” (KJ27). While some killjoy interviewees also display a sense of anthropocentrism in that the severity of an overuse of resources is narrated as possibly striking back at humanity and in the end risking our survival, in the definition of the good life, nature is not narrated as consumed in the same way as is done by the aligned. It is here not only about residing in nature, but about the ‘how’ of this interaction. Of being in harmony, ‘being part of’, and ‘with’ nature. The good life is defined as not leaving a mark, or as not using nature as has been done thus far, not inflicting damage. This definition of the good life places the killjoy in closer proximity or in the midst of the environment in a critique of the Cartesian divide, which allows for less exploitative human-nature relations. At the same time, it suggests distance in that the value of nature is here also presented as one that is not dependent on human use per se. In discussions about the meaning of green interviewees tell me that “green for me is that things have their own value even if they are not used” (KJ7). In criticism of the claim to ‘green mines’, a reindeer herder notes, “if it’s left in the ground, it’s the greenest of course” (KJ31). Nature has a value even if it is “untouched by me, I don’t need to see it or be there or anything like that” (KJ7).

Killjoys critique the aligned throughout the data as being driven by the idea that consumption and an accumulation of money, luxury, and status goods such as cars and big houses will lead to happiness (KJ4, 6, 7, 28). A forest biologist tells me:

I don’t think buying things ever makes you happy. Because it’s only a short-term high and then you must replace it with something new, sort of. But it doesn’t really bring any real happiness. (KJ3)

The reference to ‘needs’, which is a cornerstone of the story of alignment is heavily questioned. Needs are presented as constructed rather than intrinsic (KJ3, 6, 8, 17, 18). Instead of happiness, this fabricated desire, then, causes stress, “people feel worse and worse” (KJ4), they are working too much and with tasks that they find unfulfilling (KJ7, 8, 23). To remedy this stress, we must identify “what real needs that the climate, the environment and people require” (KJ17). In the future,

considering the environmental destruction that is taking place, a question of needs will be entirely different, reformulated as a “need to live on the planet” (KJ18). Given this envisioned urgency, “There is really only one relevant future, and that is that we stop consuming” (KJ3), a forest biologist is sure. If this were to come true, “people would socialize more”, he paints a picture of a future in which people communicate with each other on the train rather than look down on their phones, “socialize with nature, where we can do things together”. Here, consumption becomes an unhappy object (Ahmed 2010b) with which societal deprivation is associated. The aligned are critiqued as wrongfully seeing in consumption a means to “try and fill yourself up because you lack contact with nature”, a Luleå resident is sure, “It is my feeling that the more I am in nature, the less I need anything else” (KJ8). A material-heavy lifestyle is in the data often illustrated by reference to Swedes’ average consumption amounting to four planets (KJ3, 8). Excessive consumption is here critiqued as a sense of entitlement of purchasing power, where “today, people believe that it is our right to be able to do exactly what we want, even if it affects our children and grandchildren” (KJ3). The mindset that “if you can afford it, you have the right to it” must change (KJ19), killjoys stress. This overconsumption is strongly associated with a need to alter extractive relationalities to nature; “we cannot continue to extract more things from the earth, we must reuse what is there” (KJ8). Industries are here critiqued in their “aggressive” approach to perpetual growth. A reindeer herder tells me that of course industry can be there, “it’s not about that, but it doesn’t have to be so damn aggressive” (KJ14). He questions if there is ever a stop to their growth endeavours; “Why should they increase all the time?” It is noted that “if we are to continue to have eternal growth on a finite planet” (KJ3), the need for mines is a given. But when it comes to iron ore there are plenty such mines in the North (KJ7, 9, 10, 31), it is stressed, “it is not a critical material for the green transition” (KJ9), and Sweden already provides iron in sufficient amounts to the global market; “when is it enough?” (KJ20) “How much metal is justifiable to produce?” (KJ21), another interviewee wonders. The extraction of critical raw materials is, on the other hand, accepted by many of the killjoy as a general necessity. Though, extraction is critiqued as a destructive relationality to nature even when advertised under the banner of the green transition.

Among killjoys it is stressed that instead of searching for solutions to municipal financing in extractive investments that bring in their wake destructive tendencies alternative pathways must be explored. This is in the data mainly exemplified through the case of Gällö. In line with the above scepticism about growth interviewees are critical about the sentiment of local demographic growth as an

“axiom for everything to get better” (KJ21). It is acknowledged that a certain number of residents is needed to ensure social service levels and a functioning society, “but being 15 000 is no end in itself, why?” (KJ19) Interviewees stress instead the value of resisting urbanisation trends and investing in long-term, small-scale solutions that bring sustained value to the region (KJ15, 16, 17, 19), “instead of creating employment that actually destroys their own homes at the same time” (KJ8). A forest biologist reflects similarly:

Without a mine, Jokkmokk will still live, but it won't be Stockholm, it won't be a Kiruna. But it will be a place where people can feel, 'oh how nice, I can breathe clean air, I can see free-flowing rivers, I can see living forests, I can be part of biodiversity. (KJ3)

Investments into local assets such as preserved nature, non-destructive tourist activities, and culture are highlighted as alternative pathways that the municipal leadership is said to have disregarded as carrying long term financial and employment potential (KJ15, 16, 19, 20). A local resident who previously worked in ecotourism shares her frustration about a lack of support noting, “It's like some things are not allowed to flourish properly” (KJ15). Meanwhile, the mine is pushed as that which will save them, the “drug”, the fix that people require, that we encountered earlier in this chapter. “Imagine this would be the same kind of drug”, she laughs, then the politicians would start tomorrow and “pull these projects through”, invest in low-impact projects and Sami culture. In this scenario, she tells me, “Everything is flourishing, and people would just get along. Because what contradiction could there be in that?” (KJ15) Investing in local strengths, then, is narrated as a source of hope for the future and local pride (KJ15, 16, 17). Interviewees exemplify these alternative opportunities with more support and investments in Jokkmokk as a centre for Sami culture that could be the place for the first Sami arts museum (KJ18), support for existing local companies and start-ups, and support of sustainable youth entrepreneurship (KJ19) and small-scale and ecotourism (KJ15). On a more general level, it is noted that the recycling industry deserves more support (KJ2), there is value in developing norms related to care-based trade of services within a local community (KJ12), and that care and social welfare work must gain a higher status in society (KJ13).

Reflective of the resource colony-critique, the data also displays a sense of necessity in countering a perceived centralization norm that pulls people, decision-making, and therewith power into urban centres. Regarding industry investments, it is problematised that company leadership is not locally presented, and companies

are not registered in the region, which has financial and social consequences (KJ13). The same trend of centralisation is illustrated through reference to small-scale local companies that have been sold, and processing that has been done locally before being lost to the coastal areas, southward, or to international actors (KJ19). An example of local small-scale forestry is here advocated as an alternative to large-scale extraction and export of timber. Interviewees also stress that inland municipal districts in the North and the core-peripheral divide more generally could benefit from regional offices and state institutions being placed in the region (KJ13), which also would give a signal to the region that its ‘contributions’ are valued, I am told.

Another green transition

The growth critique is stressed both regarding green articulations of mining as well as green steel and the industry-driven green transition more generally that is felt to expand itself through the North (KJ14, 17, 18, 19, 28). Instead of a mere focus on decarbonization in the green transition narrative of extractive alignment, material resource consumption and the biodiversity impact of industry expansion is highlighted in the data pertaining to killjoys. It is critiqued that climate and biodiversity are treated as separate instances that are placed against each other (KJ3, 5), when they should be thought of as interrelated. The consideration of biodiversity in the quest toward emissions reduction “is completely absent today” (KJ11), I am told. The green steel transition is narrated as a continuation of the pursuit of growth that fails to break with extractive impulses such as deforestation, mining, and wind energy expansion, and which is visible in the industry’s desire to upscale and “maximize production” (KJ17, also KJ25). Instead, a green transition must imply that “other values than economic, short-term ones must be brought out” (KJ20), a Jokkmokk Sami resident tells me. “It is still the same economic system, it is just profit as the only incentive” (KJ17), where it is about achieving the highest possible growth and revenue. “This is not the solution”, a former mine worker from Gällivare reflects upon the green steel transition, “we must change our consumption, recycle, reuse, not new holes in the ground” (KJ25). Broadening the critique toward the dominant green transition design more generally, a Sami parliament member notes that “after all, extractive investments are an environmental destruction that is not counterweighed by the fact that there are more electric cars driving around” (KJ27). Another interviewee ponders, that “today, it is trendy to drive an electric car, but maybe it should be trendy not to use so much” (KJ19). Batteries also need to be dug up, a Jokkmokk-

based reindeer herder agrees, “is that green then or did it just make things worse?” (KJ14)

The general killjoy desire line advocates instead that ore should come only from existing mines, circularity, and recycling, paired with a structural change in the economic system (KJ3, 6, 8, 17, 19, 20, 28, 29) in their reformulation of what ought to be fair and ecologically just human-nature relations. Overall, the green transition is presented as desirable in principle (KJ2, 4, 13, 17, 22, 23). Some highlight technological advances (KJ2, 4, 10) such as sponge iron (KJ13) and extraction from mining waste (KJ4, 17) formulated by LKAB and other state actors as positive steps forward (KJ2, 4, 13) if they also were to integrate structural changes. Instead, the state and industry interpretation of the green transition follows the above characteristics of growth, destructive human-nature relations, and short-sighted material overuse. In the current pairing of the green transition with economic growth principles and the impact on land that this implies, much of the green transition pertaining to steel as elsewhere is understood as a form of greenwashing (KJ17, 18, 26, 27, 28). It “is a way of defending capitalist growth by referring to the climate crisis” (KJ17). The frustration about the green label culminates in the industry’s reference to green mines (KJ5, 8, 18), “that’s a myth of course” (KJ5). This scepticism emerges for instance in relation to the discursive absorption by government and corporate actors of Gállók under the label of green, and as important for the green transition (KJ10, 19, 17, 20, 31). Ore extraction is by itself as well as when discussed as a means feeding into the green steel transition seen as an unsustainable activity given the impact of extraction itself, its ripple effects such as transport (KJ13), and given that ore is of finite supply (KJ5, 8, 20). Given its finite quality it is critiqued that “ore deposits are emptied as fast as possible (KJ28), and instead the long lifespan of existing mines and less material output over a longer period of time is advocated as desirable, also in regard to the promise of long-term employment (KJ8, 19). A local Jokkmokk resident finds that a locally integrated, long-term project is “a whole different mindset than just coming in to make money”:

If you are interested in creating jobs, as they say so beautifully, then you would do it on a small scale and aim for 140 years with 20 workers, not 14 years with 200 workers. This is, go in, dig up, sell, and out fast as hell before there is an environmental scandal. It’s completely different stuff. (KJ19)

Some stress that extraction must halt or be cut down to absolute minimum levels which means limiting the use-purpose of materials, for instance by discontinuing

the use of extracted materials for single-use items and “unnecessary” luxury goods (KJ8) and emphasizing reuse and enduring products over the mass production of low-quality wear and tear commodities (KJ19). Here, the economic market is critiqued as designed to create a continuous, false sense of needs by providing poor quality products with short lifespans. Interviewees display, as do the aligned, a sense of romanticization of past ways of life, referencing for instance grandparents that have washed out plastic bread bags to reuse. An interviewee references things in his house that he has inherited in amazement that they still function properly; a sturdy table, his kitchen, and an electric hand blender, and exclaims, “We have to start making things with quality again” (KJ19). Producers must take responsibility to produce products that last (KJ4) and when they at some point cannot be repaired anymore, they must be recyclable. Interviewees also stress that the sense of freedom or right to consume as one desires must be restricted significantly (KJ20), and if “people can’t change, they have to be forced” (KJ28). “Ban the whole fucking madness, cut back, live more resource-efficient, environmentally friendly and wise” (KJ28), a Jokkmokk resident tells me. Today, there is too much focus on “how can I continue to live the way we do today, but with a green transition?”, but people must start thinking “how can we live in a different way to minimize mining activities?” (KJ20) To achieve this, killjoys also reference the need to live more locally grounded lives, “locally grown, locally produced” (KJ20). The market critique is here accompanied by a call for system change, total societal transformation (KJ6) and an abandonment of the growth model, “the whole growth madness, everything has to be shattered” (KJ28).

The above critique of short-sightedness is frequent in the data, and often associated with future generations (KJ3, 14, 20). A reindeer herder illustrates the difference between extractive short-sightedness and long-term care and use of nature with “a fieldmouse and a hare: A hare lives for the day, but a fieldmouse collects food for storage, digs it in, so that he can live tomorrow” (KJ14). With the mindset of the hare, future generations “will only see deforested land and mines”. At the mercy of the extractive mindset of the hare that wants to accumulate profit without consideration for consequences, the future is envisioned as “dead, grey, dirty, depressing, a lot of sadness, both in the landscape and among the people” (KJ8). The meaning of green is here also commonly associated with reference to consideration about “those who come after us” (KJ14, also KJ3). A reindeer herder shares his fear of not being able to pass on his knowledge and livelihood to his children and grandchildren. He will be able to remember the time before the mine, he tells me, “But my grandchildren will never know what it was like before the mine, in case there will be a mine” (KJ14). Short-

sighted, quick profit through extraction, and extractive gluttony (KJ28) are here envisioned as destructive for future generations, with long-term management of resources, or ideally, respect for nature to the point of preservation with use of nature that is attentive to biodiversity's self-recovery before limits are reached present a hopeful future, "real faith in the future, that feels great – that version was fun to think about" (KJ8), a Luleå resident exclaims delighted after I ask her what a future without further industry expansion would look like. It is a future where one can continue to pass on values about the importance of nature and lifestyles that cherish closeness to the other-than-human rather than seeking joy in consumption and accumulation of unnecessary goods, where people can "hunt, fish, collect herbs and berries with the children, give them impressions, which I have done all along, it's very important" (KJ28). This image of closeness to nature and lifestyles that depend on it is also associated with a motivation to resist extractive impulses, so that "I will be able to sit in the nursing home and rock in my chair and say that I was one of those who resisted" (KJ14).

Summing up: Stepping & staying out of line

In the two preceding empirical chapters I have analysed linearity in alignment (chapter 4), and instances in which linearity is broken, signalling discomfort (chapter 5). I have theorized the discomfort as triggered by obstacles on the line toward extraction as the object that promises happiness (Ahmed 2010). This final empirical chapter deals with the misalignment of actors that do "not find the object that promises happiness to be quite so promising" (Ahmed 2010a, 35), the killjoy. Instead, the killjoy is trotting on alternative desire lines (Bates 2017) directed toward other objects such as low-resource-living that carry the potential of happiness. As such, this chapter serves to answer the third research question; How does the killjoy defy the fantasy of extraction?

The misaligned seek linearity in their treading of alternative desire lines in the same way as do the aligned, sensing discomfort when encountering extractive pressures, obstacles, or temptations of the extractive order alluring them to step in line. As we have seen in this chapter, the performative expressions of the misaligned start with the discomfort caused by encountering extractivism. Killjoys seem to arrive at their desire lines first after a thorough dismissal of the fantasy of extraction. Of course, this may have been different depending on the entry point of the research in question, although, I interpret this empirical insight also as an

indicator of the ubiquity of the extractive order that makes the treading of alternative desire lines troublesome, leaving only rare avenues of comfort for the misaligned. In efforts to divorce from this ubiquity of the fantasy of extraction the misaligned face ideational and material obstacles such as ideas about extraction as the only alternative, deforested areas posing risks to biodiversity, and extractive infrastructures cutting off land. In this way, I assume that the extractive rationale is facilitated by a symbolic order (Foucault 2007; Lacan 2008) that through its reach, force, and at times its allure also integrates the misaligned, overlapping with an altogether different, anti-extractive order. However, alternative desire lines that are formulated as ways out of extractive destruction signal efforts to break the regulation of the extractive order, reflecting “the will not to be governed thusly, like that, by these people, at this price” (Foucault 2007, 75).

I start here with failures to stay out of line signalling the allure of the fantasy of extraction even among the generally misaligned. I then move on to the ways in which killjoys indeed defy the fantasy of extraction centring the discomfort sensed in encounters with extractivism, move on to the ways that killjoys resist extractive shoving, and lastly, the formulation of alternative desire lines.

Failures to defy the allure of extraction: Stepping in line

The alluring qualities of the fantasy of extraction seem to sway some of the misaligned to step in line. This is noticeable in a general acceptance of expressions integral to alignment, though, most often accompanied by sentiments of discomfort. Some killjoys display an uncomfortable proximity to the idea of extraction as a prerequisite for happiness, as an unsolicited consequence for instance of financial precarity or being caught in a consumer role in a system that makes other forms of navigation inaccessible. As such, a sense of no alternative is also reiterated in stories of the reluctant alignment of the misaligned.

Following tendencies of the aligned, discomfort seems to cause either a flight (DiAngelo 2018) back into killjoy desire lines or a re-evaluation of misalignment. This re-evaluation and the associated stepping in line with the extractive fantasy is among most only partial and temporary. Extraction is here accredited as important under certain conditions, stumbling into arguments of the aligned such as a notion of needs. Some also express discomfort about not being able to break with the logic of extraction in their role as consumers (KJ19); “As soon as you live in a house, there’s iron and copper, and everything possible, so absolutely, and mobile phones, so” (KJ17). Interviewees point to their phones or other metal appliances in visible frustration when asked about the importance of extraction in

their everyday lives (KJ4). Others express discomfort about their reluctant complicity to extraction through employment in the sector (KJ23). It is a way to provide for the family as a single mother (KJ23) or to ensure one's sustenance when there is not enough land left for reindeer herding or other activities (KJ14, 29), a "necessary evil" (KJ18). Elsewhere, extraction seems to be taken for granted to a greater extent, such as in discussions about the origin of investors where many of the misaligned express a clear preference and even trust for Swedish actors despite sentiments of neglect and destruction elsewhere (KJ2, 13, 23). In this either-or discussion, extraction seems to be taken as a given. While the growth-based green transition is mostly critiqued in the killjoy data, emissions reduction through technological development in the heavy industry driven by Sweden as an exceptional actor that ought to take responsibility is by some highlighted as desirable (KJ5, 7, 22, 23). Some also fall back into the notion of needs in the transition as a way of rationalizing wind power expansion (KJ23) or acquiring electric cars and solar cells (KJ2) for obtaining a role as a conscious green consumer. While the misaligned strongly critique the sense of no alternative through which extraction is motivated some arrive at the same conclusion to rationalize their place relative to the line. Where there is a general sense of a need for mines – "I realize that it is needed, maybe mines are needed" (KJ27) – this sense of discomfort is commonly broken again by way of referencing existing mines over new ones, and that the need for the given level of extraction has to do with an inability to break with the system in place, that the greening of extraction reinforces an endeavour for perpetual growth. Still, not all of the misaligned seem immune to the ubiquity of the extractive order.

Defying the fantasy of extraction

The misaligned seem to stay out of line and defy the fantasy of extraction with a number of performative designs; (1) they envision dystopian futures by reference to historic harm and other unhappy associations with extraction, (2) they visualise a sense of community in resistance vis-à-vis a destructive Other, and highlight the necessity of withstanding extractive shoving for the sake of survival, (3) dismiss the extractive line as flawed in various ways, and (4) envision alternative ways of life, focusing in on alternative objects that may yield happiness.

1. Unhappy associations: Discomfort vis-à-vis the extractive desire line

In a general sense, the misaligned are discomforted by the impact of extractivism on nature, societies, and livelihoods. In the performative expressions of the killjoy

the harms of extraction rather than its opportunities are highlighted. Rather than identified as a happy object (as is the case among the aligned) extraction is placed as an unhappy object associated with or sticking to (Ahmed 2004) fears of demise, destruction, obliteration. Defying extraction as an object of desire, then, requires the framing of extraction as an obstacle that obstructs the path toward alternatives rather than as the thing that yields happiness at the end of the road. The discomfort that is experienced in encounters with the fantasy of extraction outweighs the allure of the potential upside of extraction to an extent that makes an integration into the community of the aligned counterproductive for the sake of happiness. As we shall see, extraction is sensed to obstruct orientations toward alternative identifications of happy objects/objects of desire.

When I ask them to imagine a future of accelerated extraction (e.g., through additional mines) interviewees are reluctant, unwilling, “I don’t want to” (laughs, KJ8), “I can’t even think about it, it’s not in my (pause), no it can’t be” (KJ2). Extraction is here articulated as a source of destruction, demise (KJ20; Mäarak 2015). This association is embodied, noticeable in notions of the death to a symbolic body, an organism that is the Sami people or land (Blind 2022; KJ29), indicating a visceral fear of encountering extractive alignment. Extraction is associated with dystopia, a Mordor that obliterates, a bulldozer that runs over what is in the way (KJ20). The sheer quantity of extractive advances accumulates “like this huge damn ball that rolls over you” (KJ26). There is also the sense that given the growth-orientation of the aligned, this ball will grow bigger (KJ14, 20), become unstoppable. Extraction is described as creating undesirable societies in which people do not interact nor care for each other (KJ19) and toxic masculinity thrives (KJ13, 15, 23, 28), young people take jobs in mines instead of educating themselves (KJ10), and regions like Norrbotten are sacrificed as resource colonies for financial centres, a region literally being shit on by centres without an acknowledgement of their contributions (KJ28). Extractive interests are likened with a wolf and alternative ways of life a reindeer (KJ18), elsewhere a hare and a fieldmouse (KJ14) when illustrating the power dynamics and gluttony (KJ28) sensed in extractive desires. They signal a sense of helplessness in being caught in a paddock with a predator. Interviewees express that their survival, livelihoods, ways of life, and values are being sacrificed for the benefit of extractive desire. Monetary valuation is prioritized and leaves no room for non-extractive alternatives (KJ14, 31). The mine goes first (KJ9) and swallows all, “Everybody goes in the mine” (KJ19) – people, environments, and dreams die in the pit (KJ19). Killjoys sense that figures and ideas that deviate from the idea that extraction leads to happiness are disarmed in various ways, forced out of the way

to re-establish the comfort of extractive alignment. Interviewees note that state and industry actors do not listen, are not attentive, or are not interested in their concerns. They sense a lack of respect for their orientations. Extractive endeavours are envisioned as shoving aside obstacles, emptying the North of its nature and people that stand in the way. Extraction and those who want to advance the fantasmatic project of extraction benefit if obstacles were to “die out here” (KJ18; also Whatlocalpeople n.d.) or else move aside, reinforcing the idea of the nomadic Sami that ought to be flexible (KJ18, 20, 21, 31) on land that is presented by the aligned as vacant and vast. Extractive alignment is here envisioned as an external, destructive force that enters an existing, hopeful status quo. It is perceived as strategically cancelling out existing life to make room and clear land from the unwanted presence of the unwilling.

2. Community in resistance and the destructive Other

Interviewees associate extraction with death and destruction and stress the importance to withstand its regulatory power so as not to forfeit even more land and values (KJ20, 26). While grievances are often expressed on individual terms flagging for a variety of experiences there is also a sense of community envisioned in a stimulus to integrate into a common order (Freud 2003, 99), into alternative desire lines. This community envisions itself as othered by the aligned and as narrated as an obstacle for their happiness (KJ7, 8, 14) but it also others in their own right – the state and companies as predators (KJ18), the “useful idiots” (KJ19) that believe in the story of extraction, the Stockholmer unaware of the harms of extraction sipping their Lattes in blissful ignorance (KJ28). As is the case with the aligned the Other presents an obstacle, “as if happiness is what we would have, if that thing did not get in the way” (Ahmed 2010b, 32; see also Stavrakakis 2007). Interestingly, alternative desire lines are envisioned as ensuring a life for “those who come after us” (KJ14, also KJ3) in the same way as does the extractive line, both seeing in the Other the thief of joy for their children. The community of the misaligned is referenced in the harms that it has endured by the hand of colonial policy, neglect of the Sami and the region more generally (KJ10, 12, 20), and as continuing to fight for next generations (KJ14). Ties to the Other are likened with a violent relationship that the misaligned cannot exit without risking a real beating (KJ20). The Other is in control, holds the pen, and decides over the region in their own choosing, perpetuating the idea that the North is Sweden’s West Indies (KJ18, 27, 28), and the people are not more than a nuisance (KJ10).

3. *Dismissal of the line: The irrationality of the extractive fantasy*

The main mechanism of staying out of line is a reference to flawed reasoning. For instance, considering the perceived oversight of livelihoods and lifestyles that misalign with the fantasy of extraction, killjoys debunk the idea of coexistence as equal and harmonious and instead point to the fatality of imposed industry expansion on alternative orientations, pertaining to mining as well as green steel or the green transition more generally. The emphasis on vastness of land and single-impact investments in comfortable stories of both green and traditional extraction imposes ideas of emptiness and invisibility that legitimise further expansion. Killjoy interceptions question supposed emptiness as a matter of ignorance or lack of knowledge, as well as an insistence on existence of that which is shoved aside by extractivism. The imaginary of the land as empty is exacerbated by the piecemeal rather than holistic representation of industry advances. Quantifying land vis-à-vis a confined mining pit or other singular industry impacts not only misrepresents the actual impact of extraction, but also reinforces the idea of the Sami as nomadic and flexible and therefore adept to avoid extraction (GS6). Climate urgency is also an integrative part of the extractive rationale for further industry expansion, where it is argued that the impacts of climate change on reindeer grazing lands can be remedied through green investments (GS 6, 20). Here instead, a wider notion of environmental impact is displayed, in which biodiversity loss is felt as the immediate threat and climate change as the indirect consequence of industry expansion (KJ2, 14, 17, 27). As such, further industry expansion for the sake of climate action is a counterproductive, and illogical measure.

In the killjoy data the pro-extraction argument of employment is frequently referenced as understandable but flawed. As we have seen, the question of employment is central to the story of comfortable alignment. Killjoys instead attempt to debunk the medium of employment through which the happiness of extraction is envisioned. They stress that industry employment cancels out more sustainable alternatives. Local employment and revenue of mining is exaggerated and will for various reasons not materialize, and if it does, it will be only short-lived (KJ9, 10, 18). Employment in extraction is perceived as delimiting creative thinking and self-realization, resulting in dreams dying in the pit (KJ19). Resisting the line suggests choosing creativity over destruction (KJ18). The idea of no alternative is dismissed as an inability of the aligned to look beyond the path of extraction, as the aligned being governed into docility to an extent that they liken trees in plantation forests, neatly standing in line and obeying orders (KJ28). They have been “imprinted” (KJ27) that extraction means welfare and happiness, that

“we have to chop, shovel, and blast” (KJ28). The aligned, the Other, is understood as blindly following the false sense of happiness promised through material accumulation and consumption, motor-driven relationalities to nature, the quest for constant profitability and growth, and the notion of needs (KJ8, 13, 18, 19, 28). In fact, it is an “illusion” (KJ3) that this will lead to happiness. The imaginative capacity of the aligned is compromised and creativity is needed to dare to step out of line, to realize that extraction is but one alternative that will not in fact lead to happiness given its many destructive side effects.

The aligned are critiqued as ahistorical in that they believe in the joy that extraction would bring despite evidence to the contrary, such as Jokkmokk’s Vattenfall epoch. The aligned are envisioned as prescribing to a false sense of causality (Ahmed 2010b, 28; see also Žižek 2016, 57) that retains their gaze toward the object. This critique is most salient in the description of the quest for extraction as a drug, a search for the next fix (KJ14, 15). Driven by desperation, extraction is envisioned as a saviour, a solution to ease the pain (KJ5, 16). Longing for extraction is seen as an addictive behaviour in which those who are hooked are incapable of considering its consequences (KJ10) all in search for the next kick, unwilling or unable to acknowledge it is merely temporary and “think about the hangover” (KJ15). It is understood as naïve to search for happiness in extraction, which makes claims to the irrationality of the aligned. But it also suggests that while happiness cannot in fact be found by arriving at extraction (Freud 2004, 5; Lacan 2008, 85) the aligned remain undisturbed in their pursuit.

4. Killjoy desire lines: Alternative objects of desire

As noted above, extraction is among the aligned associated as an unhappy object. Another mechanism for staying out of line is the imaginary of alternatives or the treading of alternative desire lines. While the aligned see in the killjoy a source of disorder or chaos the misaligned discard extractive alignment while reinforcing order elsewhere. Turning ones back against the object of extraction is here not a threat to survival and welfare, but a possibility for neighbourliness, togetherness, care, creativity, long-term planning, and social and environmental perseverance (KJ3, 8). In alternative desire lines one can re-establish the connection to nature that has been lost (KJ4, 18), regain respect to its limits (KJ14, 20) by residing within nature rather than extracting it according to a false sense of needs (KJ7, 27), recognize other-than-monetary values that help formulate a more accurate object of happiness (KJ3) rather than being blinded by consumption and material overuse (KJ20). While the mindset of extractive industries, including those that

advocate green transition efforts, continue to manoeuvre in a rationale that wishes to “tame (laughs) nature” (KJ12) interviewees advocate a mindset and as a result human-nature relations and socioeconomic activities that are formulated ‘for’ rather than ‘against’ nature (KJ2, 3, 8, 12, 15). Growth for the sake of growth is dismantled as deceptive and counterproductive (KJ19). Instead, urbanization and general growth trends ought to be resisted for the sake of variety and small-scale, local living (KJ15, 16, 17). In this way, the misaligned advocate for a shift in the valuation of work, away from pride in chopping and blasting (KJ28) and toward creative and care work (KJ13), trade of services (KJ12), production of quality products that last (KJ19), and small-scale, localized ownership and decision-making (KJ13, 19). A shift away from extraction is envisioned through a radical, structural change in the economic model, human-nature relations, and consumption patterns (KJ19, 25, 28), resisting the quest toward profitability and growth (KJ13). Instead of associating misalignment with social and financial despair, killjoys critique the sense of going backward and making sacrifices that is advocated by the aligned. Killjoys envision instead that a better life is possible by breaking with the fantasy of extraction, where “we become healthier and calmer and happier and have time to help each other” (KJ8). The either-or formulation of extraction or despair is dismantled by reference to alternative opportunities to help municipalities flourish that are not conditioned on the survival of certain groups of people, the pride of the region, and nature. An alternative line that decentres extraction and its destructiveness would instead be one in which people would truly be able to get along, “because what contradiction could there be in that?” (KJ15). This vision gives “real faith in the future, that feels great – that version was fun to think about” (KJ8).



7. CONCLUSION

This dissertation set out to study Swedish extractivism in the North or indigenous Sápmi. More specifically, planned iron ore mining in Gállok/Kallak and the hydrogen-based steel transition in Gällivare/Malmberget, Boden, and Luleå have functioned as entry points into the Swedish emphasis on extraction in its green transition trajectory in the North. In the Swedish steel transition and efforts of the greening of mining carbon emissions reduction is highlighted while other environmental impacts such as biodiversity loss are largely dismissed. The green steel transition in the North is accompanied by unprecedented upscaling ambitions of domestic steel production triggering an equally unparalleled need for virgin ore and energy. Despite its often harmful local and regional consequences, environmentalism is uttered through extractive impulses – an expansion of mining, energy and transport infrastructure, wind power factories, and deforestation – to fuel the Swedish reinvention of the steel industry. While the green steel transition seems to manifest optimism for increased local processing and ownership, and to break with North-South power dynamics that have rendered the region as a resource colony for the politico-economic centre, the scale of the green steel push risks reinforcing rather than curing core-periphery dynamics. What is more, indigenous injustice in Sápmi risks amplifying amid accelerating pressures on Sami land.

In this concluding chapter I summarize the main arguments that I have drawn from this study. I then proceed to discuss the main findings for the three research questions respectively. I have asked; (1) How is the alignment with the fantasy of extraction upheld and reiterated, (2) how is discomfort productive in disrupting extractive desires, and (3) how does the killjoy defy the fantasy of extraction? Thereafter follows a discussion of the contributions to the literature and ways forward.

Argument in brief

My main aim was to understand the trust that is placed in extraction as a means to arrive at a happy, prosperous, green future. Drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis (Lacan 1993; see also Ahmed 2010b; Freud 2004) and literature on critical race pedagogy (hooks 1994), this dissertation has dissected common incentives to align with the idea that extraction promises a better future. I have shown that extraction is an undertaking that is instigated by an affective or emotional investment (Ahmed 2010b, 24) into the fantasy of extraction. I have laid out how those embedded in the extractive order are held docile because of a promise, an affective anticipation in anticipated enjoyment enshrined in the fantasy of extraction – meaning, people align because they hope for a better future. The fantasy promises that by way of alignment employment will be secured, children will not need to move elsewhere to secure professions, geopolitical and economic security will be ensured, the climate crisis will be averted, and development will be granted. These are but few of the associations that advocates of extraction and the growth-based green steel transition envision in these investments. Extraction, read in this way, symbolizes an object of desire on which happiness is conditioned.

I have shown that the *attraction to extraction*, as I see it to play out in the North, is in fact not a comfortable undertaking but a path that is upheld and imposed despite discomfort. Coming in contact with the substitute object of desire as identified as extraction does not in fact result in the anticipated enjoyment (Stavrakakis 2007), but rather, it brings with it instances of environmental and social destruction that clearly disturb the aligned and directly harm many of the misaligned. Meanwhile, the fantasy (Žižek 2008) functions to keep us in line despite potential reminders that that which we desire may indeed be harmful. It functions to restrict our possibility to transgress (Zevnik 2017) the given order because we are led to believe that happiness is on the line. By analysing the associations of extraction as a happy object (Ahmed 2010b) I have shown how a promise of progress and fear of deterioration associated with transgression work to ensure the docility (Foucault 1979; see also Fanon 2008) of the body politic, how the aligned desire as prescribed despite the harm that compliance inflicts upon them, others, and the rest of the living world. The fantasy of extraction serves to present a destructive undertaking as the rational path, indeed the only alternative.

There has been critique formulated against green steel investments that questions the feasibility of the use of energy and capital for developments located in the North (SVT 2023a). The critique that results from this study is altogether different. I have found that the locally aligned find comforting relief in anticipations of an ownership over processes historically held in the South and of local benefit from often destructive activities, which can be interpreted as a positive alteration to some of the qualities of extractivism (Ye et al. 2020) found in the North. The critique that I pose, instead, is that other destructive qualities of extractivism are in fact sustained because of the material-heavy design of the transition, its emphasis on an unprecedented upscale in production and in effect mining, deforestation, infrastructure development, and energy production, reinscribing the North as a resource colony and strengthening colonial power dynamics while giving the impression of local ownership and environmentalism. This insight speaks to similar arguments in literature on the greening of frontiers or sacrifice zones, as well as green extractivism (Bruna 2022; Dunlap 2019; Dunlap and Brock 2022; Dunlap and Riquito 2023; Voskoboynik and Andreucci 2022; Riofrancos 2019b). The green steel push, then, integrated into the fantasy of extraction helps to ever more forcefully foreclose alternative trajectories that have the potential to shift gears and break with extraction.

I have shown how the fantasy of extraction – the idea that extraction will lead to a happy future in various forms – capitalizes on a lack that is felt, not least in the sacrificed frontier of the North (e.g., fears of unemployment or lacking social welfare provisions). It also capitalizes on lack sensed elsewhere – a geopolitical insecurity or fears about deteriorating state budgets and the like. The fantasy is successful in the North because the colonial and regional politics that have historically rendered the region extractable for the sake of national development have inscribed a certain path dependency with which the aligned find difficulty to break (see similar arguments in regional economic geography scholarship, e.g., Coenen, Benneworth, and Truffer 2012; Grillitsch and Sotarauta 2018; MacKinnon et al. 2019). In fact, state, company, and industry actors narrate these extractive legacies as assets of the region to reinforce it as a frontier of resource control for the green transition. With material legacies and sedimentations of such policies (e.g., infrastructure, deforestation, mines, cracks in buildings, city parts disappearing) residents are regularly reminded of the purpose that has been administered upon the region. Given this history, there is a general sense of no alternative to extraction when it comes to the socio-economic development of the North, capable of alleviating the sensed lack of secure employment, poor social service provision, and the like. The fantasy, then, presents extraction as the way

out of agony. Though, the lack that is promised to be filled by extraction may be argued to have come about by once (or twice) before sacrificing the region for Sweden's extractive endeavours.

I have also shown how locals that are generally aligned display discomfort with the impacts of extraction but align nonetheless amid a promise of a delivery of happiness in its various forms. Sentiments of the region being used as a periphery and resource colony for the South, environments that are replaced by extraction, and societies that are devoured by mining pits are uncomfortable sights for the aligned. Nonetheless, extraction is reinforced as the path toward happiness, even if this often is done reluctantly. As such, the happy associations of extraction largely fail to materialize. Read in this way, the fantasy of extraction constitutes a false promise of a grant future that is summoned to advance extractive investments in an already sacrificed resource frontier (Kröger and Nygren, 2020; Rasmussen and Lund 2018, 391; Shade 2015; Valdivia 2015). I have shown how a sense of no alternative – which emerges from happy associations with extraction and an internalized fear of transgressing the extractive order – keeps the body politic in line, docile even where there is an ideological disinclination to trust the promise of extraction. This dissertation has pointed to local discomfort among killjoy as well as the aligned that suggest that the green steel transition in its current growth-based and profit-oriented articulation risks exacerbating rather than alleviating the destructive tendencies of Swedish resource politics by capitalizing on this sense of no alternative in the region. Meanwhile, the fantasy of extraction leads the aligned to associate transgression with municipal demise, failing social services, geopolitical risks, and other such consequences, effectively keeping people in line and foreclosing the imaginative capacity of alternatives into a sphere of implausibility, irrationality. As such, the regulatory power of the extractive order incentivizes the aligned to dismiss and discard alternatives that are in fact outlined by the misaligned as threats to the promise of happiness (Ahmed 2010b) envisioned through extraction.

Extractive investments under the banner of the green transition are heralded by the centrally as well as the locally aligned. They reinforce the allure of extraction by promising an opportunity to break with the negative properties of extraction (that which causes discomfort) while retaining its assigned potential, its saviour status. Green steel fuels hope for increased processing in the region and diversifying opportunities alongside extraction that may come about through access heat from hydrogen-based production (e.g., greenhouses, tropical water parks, other industries). Meanwhile, the acceleration of activities such as energy

and ore extraction that are triggered by the green steel push arguably reinforce the resource frontier while merely adding layers of processing. Nonetheless, green steel production is to a large extent envisioned as separate from extraction, allowing for a more comfortable position in line.

The fantasy is powerful in concealing the harms of extraction as a necessary evil, a sacrifice that must be made for the sake of development, employment, or other such joyous associations. Rather than resulting in an outrage about the extractive destruction that has come to characterize the region, the allure of the fantasy and its greened articulation risks carving out foot soldiers for the centre that internalize a need to chop, shovel, and blast in the hope of arriving at happiness at the bottom of the pit. Guided by this fantasy incisions in familiar environments, cities that are taken by mines, and the emergence of unattractive societies is accepted as an obligatory trade-off for happiness. In this way, the notion of the greening of existing processes allows for the aligned to calm concerns about the impacts of extraction while reinforcing the sacrificial tendencies that have once inscribed the now seemingly logical path of extraction. The endeavours for perpetual growth that are inherent in green steel solutionism risk, as such, to reinforce the frontier of the North as the land of the future to be appropriated for the sake of the lush opportunities it holds, while at the same time delivering the false promise that these tendencies are in fact broken. Greening the frontier, in this way, allows for an ever more docile compulsion to abide by the extractive order and its now greened and thus hidden consequences. It also allows for a less troublesome dismissal of perceived obstacles to extraction such as Sami rights and biodiversity, presenting an opportunity to disregard concerns and alternatives associated with them as obstacles not only to municipal but also planetary survival. Here, I have shown that such perceived obstacles are presented and dismissed as selfish, unwilling, and ignorant to the urgency of the climate crisis. This misrepresentation of Sami and environmental concern risks seriously aggravating Sweden's already alarming misrecognition of Sami rights (Allard 2018; Lawrence and Moritz 2019; Mörkenstam 2015; 2019; Raitio, Allard, and Lawrence 2020).

While the allure of the fantasy disguises alternative trajectories I have shown that killjoys and other perceived obstacles to the project of extraction pose troublesome and potentially productive reminders of the negative impacts of extraction. Where these reminders of the harm of extraction do emerge, they seem to present productive instances of discomfort as they pose an ideological quarrel within some of the aligned, most visible among those who are situated in closest geographical proximity to these harms. Still, the notion of no alternative that is inscribed in the

extractive order is powerful in prompting fear of a practical dismissal of extraction and a serious investigation of alternatives. For the misaligned, the harm outweighs the allure and extraction is instead experienced as a fatal undertaking (Chagnon et al. 2022) that forcefully forecloses more productive alternatives. For the aligned, instead, the fear of transgressing the extractive order and thereby breaking with the promises associated with extraction seem to continue to outweigh the experienced harms. The green rearticulation of extractivism functions here to strengthen the allure of extraction. It adds additional layers to the fantasy, which now also has come to promise increased local processing, a glimpse at local decision-making that breaks with core-periphery traditions, and recognition for the region's contributions to Sweden's climate action. As such, the green steel transition risks reinforcing the docility of the peripheral role of the North, thereby reinscribing a limit to its capacity to imagine alternative, more productive futures, reproduce colonial relations and the North as an extractive frontier.

While alignment is motivated by a promise to arrive at happiness through extraction, the aligned are far from content with the necessity of extraction nor with its consequences. In fact, extraction seems to function for the aligned as a means to arrive at a purer form of happiness, a necessary evil that one has to endure to accumulate the financial and temporal means to then detach from the sphere of extraction and its socio-economic consequences. I have shown that in this purer form, the idea of happiness is in fact remarkably similar among the aligned and misaligned – spending time with family and friends, leisure time, and residing in nature. Alignment is for many locals triggered by a state of precarity and fear of what awaits if one were to resist. There is a political responsibility here to discontinue the project of capitalizing on the precarity and sense of no alternative that today works to facilitate state and industry projects of industrial expansionism, green or otherwise. Regional and local politics, then, ought to facilitate imaginative inquiries into possibilities of locally owned and defined processes of future-making that break with an imposed but internalized destructive system and instead provide ruptures for radical alternatives. In fact, as I have shown, there is ample evidence of such imaginative capacity among the misaligned that is today disregarded for the sake of the stability of the extractive fantasy but that may serve as a stepping stone for a conjoint, non-extractive reconfiguration of the North. Such a reconfiguration, however, requires an unmaking and unlearning of colonial complicity (Spivak 1990; Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012; Vuorela 2009). It requires lingering in discomfort (Boudreau Morris 2017; hooks 1994) about the colonial implications of industrial advances in the North and their implications on Sami peoples so as to allow for a

discontinuation of naturalized imposition. The realization that extraction in fact is a discomforting element even among the aligned may help initiate imaginative processes that dismantle the position of the Sami or environmentalist as a hindrance to progress and happiness. Rather, radical ruptures may allow for a re-evaluation of extraction as an object of desire altogether. Meanwhile, the alternatives outlined by the killjoy echo academic calls for dematerialization, a dismantling of the growth paradigm, and toward reciprocity, care, and regeneration in human-nature relation (Broad and Fischer-Mackey 2017; D'Alisa 2014; Demaria, Kallis, and Bakker 2019; Hickel and Kallis 2020; Kallis 2017; Soper 2020) in their renegotiations of a more productive path toward happiness. If taken seriously, these ruptures of the extractive allure may serve as entry points into anti-extractive futures that hold real potential to dismantle the North as a land of the future, a treasure trove for extractive desires.

1. Upholding alignment

I have shown how the alignment with the fantasy of extraction is upheld and reiterated in discussions surrounding extractivism in the Swedish North. I have dissected the regulatory power of the extractive order and have shown how the fantasy functions to impose *docility* upon those embedded in the extractive order. With this I have suggested that the fantasy has a hold over (Foucault 1979) the body politic, prescribes how to desire and thus regulates or channels conduct into avenues of supposed rationality. The body politic is made willing to comply even in instances in which compliance proves itself uncomfortable. Indeed, I have shown how many aligned comply reluctantly, tread the path of extraction despite apparent discontent. The fantasy and its reiterations inscribe linearity between a sensed lack and happiness bound together through the path of extraction. A dystopian reality is envisioned where this linearity cannot be followed, placing the reason of unhappiness among an Other through the making of obstacles, and a flight from discomfort and dismissal of obstacles that reinforces the rationality of alignment. As is discussed further below, I have explored the productive potential of discomfort in triggering change by opening up previously unavailable interpretive potential (hooks 1994; see also Applebaum 2017; Zembylas 2018). I have discussed how a lingering in discomfort opens opportunities for radical openness (hooks 1994) in which alternative pathways may be envisioned. Fleeing discomfort by way of dismissing the obstacle, instead, is a form of control (DiAngelo 2018) exerted by the aligned for the sake of staying in line, retracting

(Chadwick 2021) into a sphere of comfort in alignment. In cases in which discomfort had a productive, disorienting quality (see discussions below) this may be interpreted as a stepping back in line after a brief transgression.

The first two empirical chapters (4 and 5) have focused on the regulatory power of the extractive order and the function of the fantasy of extraction to keep the body politic in line. I have shown that the object of extraction is attached with a broad variety of positive affective associations (Ahmed 2010b). Extraction is envisioned as a means to arrive at prosperity, social welfare, employment, rural development, demographic growth, sustainability, a future without child labour, geopolitical security and self-sufficiency. These happy associations infer that the provision of these things is currently missing, it is lacking in the Lacanian sense (Lacan 1993) that can be filled through extraction. It also infers that without extraction a contrary reality awaits, one in which the lack is exacerbated, which in the data is associated with notions of crisis, death, Stone Age-like living, unemployment, municipal decay, climate and other forms of deterioration. This dystopian reality in which extraction is not realized disincentivizes transgression (Zevnik 2017) as something hazardous, as forfeiting a shot at happiness. Meanwhile, the happy associations with extraction, or that which is envisioned to await us in the future if only we desire right (Ruti 2017) ensures a sense of security, stability, comfort through its anticipatory qualities. Given this affective motivation to stay in line (in a hedonic quest for comfort and absence of pain/discomfort) the fantasy of extraction is repressive and prevents failures to desire according to its principles. In fact, the regulatory capacity of the extractive order and its fantasmatic allure inscribes little flexibility. This is noticeable in the common notion of no alternative. The flexibility that is in fact granted is presented in an either-or fashion allowing a choice between extraction as survival or death. Being integrated in the extractive order and yielding one's belief to the dichotomy of extraction or death many of the aligned that reside close to extractive activities seem to accept guidance of their conduct along the lines of the fantasy. Many do so, however, in a *reluctant* rather than enthusiastic manner and display clear discomfort with incisions in familiar environments and social fabrics. Death is invoked in various ways to indicate a necessity to endure this discomfort as the only option to ensure development. The performative reiterations through which alignment is upheld foreclose the imaginative capacity of the aligned to envision alternatives to extraction and alternative pathways to happiness.

I have outlined how the environmentalism proposed in the green transition is in fact incapable of comfortably encompassing biodiversity nor Sami rights. Instead,

the aligned display struggles when faced with these issues and the land needs of the green steel design. They pose them as obstacles to transition efforts, framed as the selfish, individualistic Other that stands in the way of climate action. The impact of extraction on nature as well as Sami rights and land is presented as negligible and absurd, referencing Swedish leadership in sustainable mining or what is presented as a minimal amount of land needed for single-impact entities such as mines (see also MacPhail, Beland Lindahl, and Bowles 2023; Wilson and Allard 2023). Where biodiversity concern is lifted, it is articulated as a matter of compensation elsewhere and restoration post-extraction. As such, it is held at spatial and temporal distance to allow for extraction here and now, which keeps the line free from obstacles while at the same time calming the aligned that environmental concern indeed is integral to the fantasy. It is the Other that is to blame for resisting the expansion of mining and steel production for the green transition in the best place and by the best imaginable actor.

For the killjoy, the notion of no alternative that is instigated by the aligned is instead a frustrating sentiment. It is here stressed that the mine – as a symbolic construct that encompasses extractivism more broadly – swallows all, disallowing for the creativity needed to look beyond the extractive promise. Still, even among local killjoy there is a sense of understanding expressed for the taken-for-granted position of extractive activities in the mindset of the people of the North. Given the historic inscription of the region as an extractive frontier (Kröger and Nygren 2020; Rasmussen and Lund 2018, 391) that is sacrificed for the greater good (Käkönen and Thuon 2019; Scott and Smith 2018; Shade 2015; Valdivia 2015) extraction is the naturalized path, the easy way out for municipalities and residents that are at times struggling to make ends meet. The imaginary of the region as adept for extraction is ambiguous among the aligned. Historic legacies of extraction (both physical and ideational) function as signposts for the region, as (often the only) avenue of hope for regional development. They are being referenced as opportunities that place the region as the logical place for new extractive investments, especially for the green transition (see MacKinnon et al. 2019). Elsewhere, these legacies are referenced as uncomfortable reminders of the harms of extraction both for the aligned and misaligned, a discomfiting result of an extractive path-dependency, resource colony, and colonial power dynamics.

Alongside the happy associations that are forged with extraction and the sense of no alternative I have outlined six ways through which docile alignment with the fantasy of extraction is upheld and reiterated. First, happiness is envisioned as conditioned upon extraction, placing it temporally in the future or in a

romanticized past. This reinforces incentives to align by way of ensuring that if only extraction were to materialize, we would be happy (read: employed, secure, cared for through social services, etc.). Failures to attain extraction in the present discursively reinforces extraction as an object of desire (Stavrakakis 2007, 241). Second, failures to desire according to the direction of the fantasy are associated with backwardness, loss, despair, instilling a fear of transgression. Third, legacies of extraction or what I refer to as sediments of alignment are invoked to ensure extractive continuity and pose reminders of the imposed identity of the region as a resource frontier. They work to limit the scope of possibility and indicate logical directions of movement.

Fourth, a sense of urgency and crisis is invoked to ensure docility, in which increased extraction is presented as the only way to divert various forms of disaster. For instance, increased extraction in Sweden is imagined as solving environmental and social crises elsewhere, envisioned as cancelling out market shares associated with dirty mining operations. A sense of exceptionalism and responsibility is inscribed in the Swedish persona that calls for extractive leadership. A sense of climate emergency is invoked to further strengthen the fantasy of extraction, ensuring that the green steel transition and the extraction that is done for this purpose is a means to save the planet. Meanwhile, the perfect market assumption of 'clean' supply cancelling out dirty shares elsewhere is of course a myth. Rather, supply increases as an add-on to existing extraction and production, further triggering the material-heavy living that is elsewhere noted as a root cause of concern (Hickel and Kallis 2020; Kallis 2017; Soper 2020) and a consumer-oriented fix to environmental degradation. Extraction is presented as 1 or 0 – either there is extraction and therefore a happy future, or there is no extraction whatsoever and therefore despair. There is throughout the data no reflection on moderation of resource use that would grant a debate about the 'needs' themselves and whether resource-heavy living is compatible with planetary limits to growth (Gómez-Baggethun 2020). Alternative transition pathways that rather accentuate the need to scrutinize modern needs, consumption levels, resource-heavy living, biodiversity loss, and the market-based definition of the good life (which are critiques that we find among the killjoy) are presented as naïve and irrational, thus made inaccessible and forging docility in alignment for those that do not want to risk planetary decay. While consumption levels are problematized in the data, most vocally among the killjoy, the aligned are sure that curbing consumption is not the solution. The green steel articulation ensures that one does not need to change comfortable living despite the climate crisis. Alternative pathways are instead envisioned as (1) incapable of dealing with the crisis, and (2) an

unnecessarily uncomfortable alteration of current ways of life. The extractive tendencies in climate saviourism are also questionable in their emphasis on growth and consumption and a cancelling out of environmental concern such as biodiversity loss for the monopoly of decarbonization in the heavy industry. The climate is here framed as the overarching concern that overshadows other issues due to time restraints and an urgency to act quickly. In this way, the strain on biodiversity that the expansion of extraction in decarbonization efforts causes is framed as an inevitability of climate action.

Fifth, I have outlined ways in which rationality is invoked in attempts to create linearity in alignment and dismiss potential obstacles as irrational. Invoking the rational Self, the one who knows that we of course need mines, casts the transgressor, the Other as irrational and indeed recklessly endangering the mission of the body politic in its quest for planetary and other forms of survival. In the second empirical chapter (5) I outlined in more detail the ways in which the Other causes discomfort by challenging the dominant fantasy, but also how obstacles are made and capitalized on to strengthen community and stability against an irrational Other that is envisioned as the cause of unhappiness, the reason why the happy object has not yet been obtained (Ahmed 2010b, 32; Stavrakakis 2007). Those who fail to abide by the fantasy of extraction, then, are presented as “the other of reason” (Castro-Gómez 2019, 276; see also Blaser 2013; Gómez-Barris 2017; Mignolo 2011b; Plumwood 1993; Quijano 2007; Said 2003). Alignment with the fantasy of extraction is in this way reinforced as the path of rationality. Obstacle-making strengthens the fantasy of extraction as a valuable affective direction or investment despite the negative impacts that materialize as a result of extraction. Protesters and Sami activist are for instance presented as aggressive, emotional, bizarre, radical, ignorant, selfish, stubborn, difficult, unwilling to compromise and sacrifice for the greater good. Obstacles are dismissed by (1) presenting the impact that the Other associates with extraction as negligible, and (2) placing the Other and their irrational concerns alongside the dystopian future that is imagined without extraction, pacing an allegation of the theft of joy onto the Other. For instance, reference to the impacts on Sami land rights is dismissed by presenting extractive advances as insignificant single impact-entities quantified against the entirety of Sápmi. Sami claims are also dismissed by reinforcing that flexibility ought to be ensured in nomadism, presenting reindeer herding as an industry that ought to be evaluated on their socio-economic benefit relative to other industries, and that should be treated as a hobby activity (see also Persson, Harnesk, and Islar 2017) that ought not infringe on real jobs. Elsewhere, the blood lines of Sami activists are questioned to dismiss the validity of their

concerns. Similarly, biodiversity is dismissed as an avenue of concern by merging it with notions of local nature, single plants, and front yards that ought to be sacrificed for the sake of the climate, if it weren't for the selfish Other. What is more, the Sami and other imagined obstacles are presented as threatening climate action altogether amid an excessive claim to land. In this way, dismissing the obstacle functions indeed as a compulsory and righteous undertaking to ensure the survival of the planet and people.

Sixth, the Self is framed as a community, securing a sense of togetherness and homogeneity (Douglas 2003; Puwar 2004; Lacan 2008) among those who integrate in the symbolic order (Freud 2004; Lacan 1993) in an appropriate manner. Notions of 'we', 'us', and 'our' that are commonly invoked in stories of alignment establish comfort in the treading of the line, and again, suggest that transgression has consequences not only for oneself but for the whole community. A failure to extract is here for instance noted as threatening the community of Sweden vis-à-vis undemocratic or aggressive Others.

2. The productive potential of discomfort

I have shown how obstacles are in different ways mobilized by the aligned. The gravity of discomfort that is caused seems to vary depending on the troubles that the obstacle causes for the Self. Here, clear-cut obstacles such as Russia, China, vague notions of undemocratic Others, or permit processes are integrated painlessly, naturally, and officially in narratives of alignment and trigger a harmonious response of dismissal. Distancing oneself from these obstacles is a valuable exercise for bolstering a position of the exceptionality of the Self (see De Leeuw 2023; Fur 2013; Habel 2012; Lindmark 2013; Naum and Nordin 2013; Ojala and Nordin 2019). Imagined or physical obstacles such as the Sami, biodiversity, and even protestors cause greater deviation from linearity and their dismissal seems to be more troublesome for the position of the Self. Dismissal is here often preceded by an acknowledgement of Sami rights, freedom of speech, and environmental values. After such an admittance of value, protestors are the easiest to dismiss as standing in the way, as strange types or hippies that resist out of spite. Indicating its disorienting quality as an obstacle, Sami rights are all but absent from the industry and much of company expressions. Interviewees delayed the introduction of the Sami question especially, and once it was introduced displayed visible discomfort about difficulties to integrate or dismiss the Sami in

the exceptional story of extraction. Some chose not to actively dismiss the validity of the Sami as an obstacle, but rather, disengaged and fled discomfort by taking distance from the issue, noting it is a difficult or complex question. Elsewhere, it is stressed that cumulative pressures are real and must be acknowledged, while spatially situating the problem elsewhere than here (e.g., in other municipalities or in mining rather than steel production) or ensuring that measures are already taken (e.g., LKAB highlights its mapping of impacts on reindeer migratory routes; see also Lawrence and Moritz 2019). These obstacles also trigger a less synchronized response among the aligned. They cause greater discomfort because their dismissal risks scrutiny of the just, environmental, and inclusive idea of the Self.

I have argued that this performative negotiation of the Self relative to the Other exemplifies the productive value of discomfort. The rejection of these imagined obstacles as valuable avenues of concern vis-à-vis the collective orientation requires skilful navigation so as not to risk bringing to the fore reminders of the harmful consequences of extraction that would jeopardize the stability of the fantasy. While these obstacles are indeed Othered, they are often dismissed by assuring their compatibility with the fantasy of extraction, reinsuring that extraction does not in fact have a noteworthy negative impact on nature or the Sami (for the “hypocrisy” of the indigenous rights regime see e.g., Mörkenstam 2019). It is in instances in which this myth of compatibility of the fantasy with rights recognition or environmental protection is faltering that the gaze toward extraction is disturbed in productive ways, even if only momentarily. In these instances, the aligned is unable to disregard or disguise the impact of the fantasy on the Other, causing problems in the imaginary and portrayal of the Self. Still, once the aligned manage to navigate between the Self and the Other the obstacle is dismissed and a return to extraction as the desirable object is instigated, nonetheless. For instance, the sense of friction between the idea of the Self and the aspects of the Other with which the aligned wishes to uphold its association is navigated by way of focusing on undesirable traits of the obstacle. For instance, Sami are presented as standing in the way of climate action given their claim to land also needed for green investments. Against the backdrop of a general acknowledgement of the rights of the Other, the obstacle can be dismissed given the threat it poses for other admirable qualities of the (here: the environmentally conscious) Self. Similarly, impacts on Sami livelihoods are dismissed by referring to a vastness of land and a need for communication. Claims to coexistence function to present those unwilling to compromise as troublemakers and those who seek dialogue as willing, unreflective of the power dynamics that are

highlighted by killjoys as troubling the idea of harmonious coexistence. The aligned work here to rid the Self off its negative implications by performing a willingness to engage in dialogue and indeed embodying a persona of a facilitator of Sami rights. Meanwhile, the Sami are presented as stubborn and unwilling to accept this invitation, thereby effectively forfeiting one's claim to their rights. Another example of this is the reference to child labour elsewhere, that risks exacerbating if obstacles were to come in the way of an expansion of sustainable mining activities in Sweden. Reinforcing the virtue of the Self (De Leeuw 2023) in this dismissal process seems to be a powerful source of stability for the community of the aligned. Even if there is no evidence in the data that friction of the Self vis-à-vis the Other may result in a stepping out of line and serious re-evaluation of the fantasy I suggest that obstacles cause significant discomfort among the aligned that requires great efforts to ensure the credibility of the line. As such, it carries productive potential of possible ruptures of the fantasmatic promise. However, as we have seen, this indication of the productiveness of discomfort is not evident among all interviewees and the dismissal of these obstacles is also practiced less methodically for instance by mobilizing racialized grounds for Othering.

The impacts of extraction envisioned in destructive environmental and societal change seem to be the most productive avenues of discomfort from which the aligned indeed fail to disengage, retaining a sense of discomfort in alignment. These changes range from the moving of cities, familiar environments that disappear, to risks of a forming of unattractive societies envisioned as hypermasculine barrack towns likening Russian labour camps. Often, these unwanted consequences of extraction are associated with core-periphery power dynamics often referred to as the issue of the resource colony. While there is clear discontent among local interviewees extraction is refocused as the object that promises happiness by inferring a sense of no alternative. Alignment is in this way reinforced but in a rather reluctant manner. The fantasy of extraction is thereby not re-evaluated to the point of disintegration, but rather, the *how* of extraction is scrutinized. The increased processing and local ownership that is envisioned in green steel investments allows for reluctance to be eased by assuring that alignment does not need to imply a reproduction of past mistakes and may indeed present a way out of frailty. Still, this set of obstacles to comfortable alignment is productive in that they cause frustration about a need to make sacrifices for the sake of extraction. A brief re-evaluation of alignment is here uttered by denoting the failures of extraction to deliver on the happy associations of extraction (e.g., with reference to malfunctioning social services in mining towns). Discomfort

functions here to destabilize the fantasy that extraction will indeed result in happiness, but still, the fear of the consequences of committing entirely to transgression seems to surpass such discontent. In this way, rather than daring to step out of line to search for alternatives, advocates of extraction (at least those included in this research) assume a position of reluctant alignment as the highest degree of their defiance. Some suggest that certain areas of land should be exempted from extraction (see also Beland Lindahl et al. 2023) or that investments should focus on already exploited areas rather than virgin land. Here, one can sense a hint of misalignment, though, the productivity of discomfort is here spatially confined to certain areas of land – or to *delineated zones of misalignment* – while retaining general, but reluctant alignment. Others seem to display a willingness to step out of line but find difficulties to practically disengage from the direction indicated by the fantasy. Despite this practical failure to discard the allure of extraction and allow for an inquiry into possible alternatives discomfort is here productive in instilling doubt among some of the aligned. As such, I suggest that we need to pay attention to the productivity of discomfort not only as evident in the dismissal of extraction altogether, but indeed as creating messiness in the path of extraction. The allure of the fantasy is strong enough to prevent transgression (amid fears of consequences and the happy associations with extraction discussed above). However, an ideological willingness to detach from the fantasy is a productive consequence of discomfort that could be capitalized in a political project to formulate alternative, less disruptive, and destructive fantasmatic desires. In fact, as I have outlined in the third empirical chapter, many alternative objects of desire are already identified but are commonly dismissed by the authority of the extractive order. In this way, I interpret such ruptures of linearity among the aligned as moments of openness (hooks 1994) that bear the radical potential of a rejection of the fantasy of extraction, even where creative explorations and the practical implementation of alternatives are constrained.

The productive potential of discomfort is also visible in moments of instability of the position of some of the generally misaligned, the killjoy. They express general acceptance of some of the guiding principles integral to the fantasy of extraction often advocated by the aligned. Often, these instances are accompanied by sentiments of discomfort, for instance as being unable to detach from a consumer role that inscribes a need for iron and steel. Elsewhere, the allure of the fantasy of extraction seems persuasive amid economic precarity, presented as a sense of necessary evil (e.g., a sensed necessity to work in the extractive industry to provide for one's family). Stepping in line with the fantasy of extraction takes the shape of the popular argument of needs, which indicates that the fear of consequences of

transgression also reach the misaligned. Here, wind power expansion is sometimes uncritically reproduced as a necessity in light of energy needs, and extraction of minerals to address consumer needs and sustainability needs. Responding to the discomfort of climate change, some also place themselves as conscious consumers through purchases such as solar cells and electric cars, arguably integrating into a consumer-based transition trajectory that breaks with the general capitalist growth critique of the misaligned. In this way, some of the killjoy, most often environmental activists, indeed fall in line as a result of discomfort, sensed as an inability to properly attain happiness in misalignment. Meanwhile, the precarity that is sensed in a position of misalignment is a result of the power of the extractive order to foreclose alternatives even for some of the killjoys.

3. Killjoy defiance

In the last empirical chapter (6) I have shown how the killjoy or the misaligned defy the allure of the fantasy and reject extraction as a desirable undertaking. I have demonstrated the discomfort that is experienced when encountering extractive activities, pressures, and mindsets, and the alternative objects that are envisioned as carrying happy potential. Transgression, thus, does not mean chaos but rather an endeavour for different linearity, direction, order. The misaligned are integrated into an altogether different, anti-extractive order that guides them. However, the ubiquity of the extractive order reaches the misaligned, either through its reiterations (e.g., sentiments about extraction as the only alternative as prompted by the aligned) or sedimentations (e.g., deforestations, mines, transport lines that are cutting off land areas).

I have identified four mechanisms through which the killjoy seems to be able to defy the fantasy of extraction and carve out alternative desire lines. First, defiance is facilitated by way of envisioning dystopian futures by reference to historic harm and other unhappy associations with extraction. Extraction presents an unhappy rather than happy object for the misaligned, associated with demise, destruction, obliteration. It takes the shape of an obstacle that obstructs the path toward alternative futures. The discomfort that is experienced as a result of extraction helps identify the fantasy as an irrational endeavour at least for most of the aligned, and most of the time (see above discussion of killjoy alignment). The obstacle of extraction is not passive, however, but is experienced as a predatory force (see Nachtet, Beckett, and MacNeil 2022; Sehlín MacNeil 2018) that devours existing

ways of life for the sake of short-sighted joy (see also MacPhail, Beland Lindahl, and Bowles 2023).

Second, a sense of community is envisioned in defiance against a destructive Other. There are similar tendencies here as with the aligned to positioning the Self opposite an Other to strengthen a sentiment of togetherness in the harms that are endured and ensure an integration into a community of the killjoy. The Other is the state, company, and industry unwilling or unable to acknowledge local harm, reproducing colonial relations, deciding over the faith of the region, and disallowing proper consent regulations for the Sami peoples (see also Beland Lindahl et al. 2023; Lawrence 2014; Lawrence and Moritz 2019; Mörkenstam 2015; Raitio, Allard, and Lawrence 2020). The Other is also envisioned in locals that align and choose to endure the beating dealt out by extraction, envisioned as the useful idiots of the extractive order. Elsewhere, the Other is envisioned as a city-dweller that supports the project of extraction in safe distance from its destructive consequences, ignorant about the harm it brings.

Third, killjoys dismiss the extractive line as flawed. Again, this mechanism of misalignment displays similarities to the strategies of the aligned, in which a dismissal of obstacles is motivated through reference to irrationality. I have shown how the killjoy dismantles arguments that are used by the aligned to infer rationality for the project of extraction. For instance, the notion of the vastness of land through which the aligned imagine their empty playing field for extractive endeavours is dismantled as a flawed representation of mines and other activities as single-impact entities. Instead, cumulative effects (see Kløcker Larsen et al. 2016; 2017) are highlighted to visualize the interconnection of extractive processes that the state and industry prefers to present as separate, singular, and insignificant. What is in existing literature examined as an imposed colonial gaze of emptiness (Bhandar 2018; Kröger and Nygren 2020; Li 2014) is by the killjoy interpreted as a neglect and ignorance of existing lifestyles and livelihoods and a form of control that renders the land exploitable. Here, the land is important, but the people are merely a nuisance (see Li 2011). The notion of coexistence as happening on equal and harmonious terms and faltering because of an absence of will among the killjoy is dismissed. Instead, given unequal power dynamics and the destructive tendencies of green and other forms of extraction, coexistence is here presented as a myth. Another myth that is dismantled by the misaligned is the notion that green industry investments are beneficial for Sami reindeer herders and ought to be supported amid the risks that climate change poses on migratory routes. The misaligned challenge the limited definition of environmentalism and

green-ness promoted by the aligned and instead position biodiversity concern as the immediate, viscerally felt threat, triggered by climate change as well as extractive investments. Green rearticulations of extraction are therefore illogical given the additional pressures they cause on the living world. The saviourism that the aligned claim vis-à-vis the Sami is rejected as another imposition of destructive control. Many of the misaligned note that they understand the allure of the promise of employment that is attached to extraction and that incentivizes much of the local alignment. However, employment in extraction is understood as foreclosing opportunities of self-realization (which is also noted by some of the aligned referencing to low education levels due to early and high-paying mining jobs), as delivering only short-term solutions for a more general state of precarity and cancelling out more creative alternatives. Indeed, the argument of no alternative is dismissed as flawed and as stemming from an identification with a centrally administered regional identity of a people that blasts, shovels, and chops. Killjoys questions the search for happiness in consumption and material accumulation as well as for constant profitability and growth. They also remark that extraction has in fact not led to demographic growth and sustained employment in previous instances of extraction such as Jokkmokk's waterpower high. Nonetheless, the aligned seem to search for a next fix, their next high in the addictive allure of extraction.

Fourth, another mechanism for staying out of line and defying extraction is the imaginary of alternative ways of life other than those facilitated by extraction as potential avenues of happy futures. Seeking proximity to alternative objects of desire allows the misaligned to question the promise of the fantasy of extraction. It is this imaginative capacity that seems to be missing among the aligned, resulting in a sentiment of no alternative and reluctant alignment even among those who critically examine the extractive fantasy. This would suggest that breaking with the fantasy and the rationale of extractivism would require imaginative explorations beyond the repressive line of extraction. Killjoys dismantle the either-or formulation of extraction or misery through which transgression is otherwise disincentivized and highlight instead alternatives that do not entail the destructive consequences inherent in extractivism, that do not ask for a trade-off between societal and ecological survival. These alternatives include an emphasis on small-scale and long-term local processes of ownership and decision-making, a shift in the valuation of work from extractive activities to care and creative professions, communal trade of services, small-scale tourism, and cultural activities such as those that emphasize Sami art and culture. The misaligned dare to envision happiness beyond the promise of extraction and ask

for a radical dismantling of the growth paradigm toward a more reciprocal and regenerative order (see D’Alisa 2014; Demaria, Kallis, and Bakker 2019; Hickel and Kallis 2020; Soper 2020).

The green transition is understood as an important undertaking, however, one that ought to be realized in a fundamentally different way that breaks with risks to reproduce socio-ecological harm and regional and colonial power dynamics. Killjoys suggest that an environmental transformation must be coupled with meaningful structural change, breaking with the capitalist growth model and extractive human-nature relations. A truly green future is understood to imply a necessity to redefine needs and an ability to cover real, more realistic needs largely with recycled materials, which is an industry that is highlighted as deserving more attention. Defiance from the extractive allure is here not anymore associated with the consequences of transgression, but rather, a possibility for neighbourliness, togetherness, care, creativity, long-term planning, and social and environmental perseverance, closeness to or embeddedness in nature (see also Beland Lindahl et al. 2018; MacPhail, Beland Lindahl, and Bowles 2023) rather than hierarchical, extractive relations to it, respect for its limits, and a detachment from the illusion of luxury or consumer needs. By defying the fantasy of extraction, the misaligned find themselves capable of recognizing other-than-monetary values (see also Persson, Harnesk, and Islar 2017) that help formulate more accurate, or less destructive objects of happiness other than extraction and its symptoms of material overuse, excessive consumption, and the harmful effects of perpetual growth.

Overall contributions and ways forward

My findings speak to the literature on (green) extractivism, feminist and mainstream political ecology, land literature more generally and relating to notions of the frontier and (green) sacrifice zones, research on Swedish resource use and colonial imposition, and their implications for Sami land rights.

I have drawn on insights in the conceptual literature on extractivism (Acosta 2013; Chagnon et al. 2022; Dunlap and Jakobsen 2020; Gudynas 2013; Ye et al. 2020) to understand Sweden’s *attraction to extraction*. I have expanded this literature by developing discussions on the notion of extractivism as a rationale or way of thinking (see Chagnon et al. 2022; Dunlap and Jakobsen 2020). Commonly, scholars lend their attention to strategies of resistance against extractivism

(Dunlap 2022; Dunlap and Arce 2022; Kröger 2020; Riofrancos 2019a; Willow 2019) and anti- or post-extractive alternatives (Brand, Boos, and Brad 2017; Broad and Fischer-Mackey 2017; Riofrancos 2020; Veltmeyer and Záyago Lau 2020). With my psychoanalytical framing, I have contributed with insight into the regulatory power of the extractive order and its fantasmatic allure, expanding our knowledge about the *how* of extractivism, how it continues to forge docility with the idea that extraction brings happiness. I have also contributed to this literature with a focus on the thus far underexplored Swedish case. Swedish resource politics in the North display many features of extractivism, there among core/periphery dynamics of uneven distribution of harm and benefits of extraction, infrastructure that serves to draw resources from these peripheries, decision-making and processing conducted in centres, and social and environmental “barrenness” in frontiers of extraction (Ye et al. 2020). I have suggested that the green steel transition presents a promise of an alleviation of some of these aspects, notably through increased processing in the region. At the same time, however, the North is reproduced as a resource frontier (Rasmussen and Lund 2018) amid unprecedented pressures on the living world and the Sami peoples, and reinstated as the “land of the future” (LKAB 2022) for Sweden’s development trajectory. As such, the Swedish green steel case fits neatly into discussions of green extractivism (Bruna 2022; Dunlap 2019; Dunlap and Brock 2022; Dunlap and Riquito 2023; Voskoboynik and Andreucci 2022; Riofrancos 2019b), displaying processes driven by continued growth endeavours in which the above destructive features of Swedish extractivism are maintained while expanding the scope of enthusiasm and hope associated with it through its green label.

I have outlined the harm that killjoys experience when encountering extraction and the alternative desire lines that they carve out when escaping its pressures. While the harms of green steel and green industry investments are often overlooked I have outlined the ways in which these processes in the North reproduce destructive power dynamics that risk casting the region again as a green resource frontier (Acosta García and Fold 2022; Kröger and Nygren 2020; Rasmussen and Lund 2018; Yenneti, Day, and Golubchikov 2016), a green sacrifice zone (Össbo 2023a; Scott and Smith 2018). Instead of delivering on its promise to break with past harms of frontier-making, green steel and other land intense investments that fail to break with the extractive, growth-driven, and techno-capitalist rationale of expansion inevitably reproduce sacrificial impositions on the land of the North. In this way, the land is re-moulded or reconfigured (Rasmussen and Lund 2018; Tsing 2003) into a green frontier space, however, building on, retaining, and accelerating already articulated frontier-

dynamics. Following insights in existing literature (Dunlap 2020; Chagnon et al. 2022; Inwood and Bonds 2017; Össbo 2023a; Shapiro and McNeish 2021; Simpson 2019), the green expansion in the North can as such not be regarded as an altogether new undertaking but is facilitated by earlier waves of colonial imposition that have rendered the region extractable and its people disposable. I have shown how green steel investments work as disguised frontier-making in the North by re-focusing the fantasmatic promise of extraction and disassociating from its destructive tendencies. It enforces the idea that green forms of extraction present a promise that can alleviate the discomfort sensed in its earlier articulations.

Meanwhile, I have shown that the ripple pressures of green steel investments not only reinforce core-periphery dynamics and reinscribe the North as a resource frontier but also place unprecedented risks on indigenous land, peoples, and rights recognition. Existing research has pointed to the cumulative pressures of past, current, and future land investments and their impacts on indigenous rights recognition (Kløcker Larsen et al. 2017; Lawrence and Kløcker Larsen 2017; Österlin and Raitio 2020). This dissertation has not engaged in a systematic mapping of the pressures that are exacerbated through green extractivism, which could be an important undertaking for future research in collaboration with local land users. As I have shown, industry and state actors continue to compartmentalize impacts on land as single-impact unities, presenting green steel production as largely unrelated from extractive impacts such as mining, wind power expansion, deforestation, or pressures on energy and transport infrastructure. There is value in debunking the *disguised frontier* by revealing these material interconnections. In fact, existing literature has outlined hypocritical and flawed dynamics in the Swedish indigenous rights regime (Allard 2018; Kløcker Larsen, Österlin, and Guia 2018; Lawrence and Moritz 2019; Mörkenstam 2015; 2019; Raitio, Allard, and Lawrence 2020). This is a tendency that I see to exacerbate given the reinforced claim on exceptionalism that Sweden makes amid green steel leadership. In fact, there is a tendency in policy and industry debates to highlight a need to fast-track green investments as not to jeopardize a swift response to the climate crisis (Government Offices of Sweden 2018). Swedish innocence (Fur 2013; Lindmark 2013; Naum and Nordin 2013; Ojala and Nordin 2019). Environmental virtue (De Leeuw 2023) is reinforced and functions as another disguise mechanism for indigenous rights neglect. The policy and rights implications of this shift toward fast-tracking green investments deserves more attention going forward.

Alignment with the project of extraction is in the data presented as the rational path, as choosing survival over death. Obstacles to this endeavour of extraction are dismissed as irrational, emotionally motivated, unfounded, and dangerous. Mainstream political ecog and environmental politics literature has largely neglected the role of emotions in resource management (Sultana 2015). Feminist interventions have highlighted the importance to acknowledge emotions and the body in access negotiations and exclusion from environments (Hennings 2019; Moore 2005; Sultana 2011; Truelove 2019; Wutich and Ragsdale 2008). However, emotions are most commonly discussed as a feature of those who resist land investments, thereby risking to retain a binary between the emotional victims of extraction on the one hand and the state or industry as the rational user and abuser of emotions (see Lempinen and Lindroth 2021). Others have gone further to grasp affective associations with extraction that trigger the legitimacy of such activities (Li 2007; Sejersen and Thisted 2021; Van Teijlingen 2016; Weszkalnys 2016). Still, state, industry, and company actors have largely been exempted from an inquiry as emotionally informed actors. My psychoanalytical framing expands this literature by pointing to the fantasmatic allure of extraction as pervasive beyond locals to state, industry, and company spheres.

This framing has helped to dissect the claims to rationality and logic that are made by local, company, industry, and state advocates of extraction and the associated imposition of irrationality on critics. By dissecting the ways in which extractive land use is elevated over irrational alternatives I have contributed to broader discussions on a questioning of assumptions of the extractability of nature, the dualistic understanding of its resource-ness (Bridge 2011; Escobar 1999; Harvey 1996; Plumwood 1993). Instead of claiming rationality for one orientation over another, this dissertation points to the seductive power of affective investments in objects of desire, may they be extraction or other promises of happiness. The orientation toward extraction is affective in the same way as other identified fantasmatic motivations. In this way, I have demonstrated that through the power and dogmatic position of the fantasy of extraction its followers can lay false claim to rationality. This reading into the promises attached to extraction as a fantasy is also an important expansion of the extractivism literature discussed above. Opening up this claim of rationality has the potential, if taken seriously, to visualize alternative trajectories that the extractive fantasy has thus far managed to disguise. Going forward, there would be value in expanding the literature on the imaginary of bottom-up formulations of alternatives that may work to incite hope in the region while disengaging from the necessarily destructive tendencies of extractivism.

Appendix

Empirical material

Table 1. List of interviews

Code	Description	Length	When & where
KJ (Killjoy, Mine/industry-critical) 1	Gruvfritt Jokkmokk (Mine-free Jokkmokk) Facebook group member, external activist	32 min	Online, May 2022
KJ 2	Stockholm-based Sami environmental activist, external	1 h 05	Online, May 2022
KJ 3	Forest biologist, Gruvfritt Jokkmokk Facebook group member	1 h 10	Online, May 2022
KJ 4	Gruvfritt Jokkmokk Facebook group member, external activist	1 h 20	Online, May 2022
KJ 5	Former Green Party Member, Urbergsgruppen member	48	Online, May 2022
KJ 6	Luleå-based activist, Gruvfritt Jokkmokk Facebook group member	1 h 27	Luleå, May 2022
KJ 7	Former Green Party member in Jokkmokk	1 h 03	Online, May 2022
KJ 8	Luleå-based activist, Gruvfritt Jokkmokk Facebook group member	2 h 18	Luleå, May 2022
KJ 9	Gällivare forest reindeer herding community	38	Online, May 2022
KJ 10	Archeologist, Region Norrbotten employee	1 h 20	Online, May 2022
KJ 11	LTU employee, Gruvfritt Jokkmokk Facebook group member	54	Luleå, May 2022
KJ 12	Amnesty Sápmi member	56	Luleå, May 2022
KJ 13	Musician Vittangi, Gruvfritt Jokkmokk Facebook group member	51	Online, May 2022
KJ 14	Jåhkågasska tjiellde reindeer herding community	3 h	Jokkmokk, May 2022
KJ 15, 16	Jokkmokk-based, former environmental NGO members, nature-tourism	1 h 45	Jokkmokk, May 2022
KJ 17	Activist, socialist party Boden	44	Online, May 2022
KJ 18	Jokkmokk-based sami artist	57	Jokkmokk, May 2022
KJ 19	Jokkmokk-based small-scale tourism guide	2 h 55	Jokkmokk, June 2022
KJ 20	Jåhkågasska tjiellde reindeer herding community member	2 h 23	Jokkmokk, June 2022
KJ 21	Environmental NGO member, Kiruna	1 h 10	Online, June 2022
KJ 22	Environmental NGO member, Boden	1 h 04	Online, June 2022
KJ 23	Environmental NGO member, Gällivare, former miner in Malmerget	41	Online, June 2022
KJ 24	Boden-based, Gruvfritt Jokkmokk Facebook group member	1.5 h, not recorded (NR)	Boden, May 2022
KJ 25	Follow-up interview KJ 23	30 NR	Online, Nov 2022

KJ 26	Girjas reindeer herding community member (Gällivare municipality green steel consultations)	45	Kiruna, Nov 2022
KJ 27	Sami parliament member	1 h 30	Kiruna, Nov 2022
KJ 28	Jokkmokk local, Whatlocalpeople community	1 h 53	Jokkmokk, Dec 2022
KJ 29	Sirges reindeer herding community	1 h 49	Jokkmokk, Dec 2022
KJ 30	Follow-up on KJ 14	1 h NR	Jokkmokk, Dec 2022
KJ 31	Tuorpon reindeer herding community	35	Jokkmokk, Dec 2022
MJ (Mining Jokkmokk +) 1	Former Jokkmokk municipal politician (Social Democrat)	1 h 21	Jokkmokk, May 2022
MJ 2	Local citizen, Vattenfall employee	47	Jokkmokk, May 2022
MJ 3	Local citizen, Jokkmokk Iron Mines AB employee	32	Jokkmokk, June 2022
MJ 4-6	Chat with three locals at the local café	1 h NR	Jokkmokk, Dec 2022
MJ 7	Chat with local at JIMAB information meeting	15 NR	Jokkmokk, Dec 2022
MJ 8	Sweco employee Jokkmokk, engagement with Beowulf and JIMAB since 2011	47	Jokkmokk, Dec 2022
MJ 9	Chat with Boden-based truck driver at local café	25 NR	Jokkmokk, Dec 2022
MJ 10	Employee at Strukturum (Jokkmokks business agency)	1 h 08	Jokkmokk, Dec 2022
MJ 11-13	Chat with three locals at local café (2 of which same as MJ 4-6)	1.5 h NR	Jokkmokk, Dec 2022
MJ 14	Local citizen, vocal supporter of the mining project but has become more opposed; he offered to drive me from Jokkmokk to Murjek on my way back to Lund (same as MJ 13)	1.5 h	Jokkmokk-Murjek, Dec 2022
GS (Green Steel +) 1	Luleå municipal employee, city planning	45	Luleå, May 2022
GS 2	Luleå harbour employee	1 h 09	Luleå, May 2022
GS 3	SSAB employee	54	Luleå, May 2022
GS 4	Luleå Business Region employee, exploitations	1 h 05	Luleå, May 2022
GS 5	Swerim employee, including site visit	1.5 h	Luleå, May 2022
GS 6	H2 Green Steel employee	1 h 13	Boden, May 2022
GS 7	SSAB employee	33	Online, May 2022
GS 8	Boden municipal politician	28	Boden, May 2022
GS 9	LTU employee	53	Online, May 2022
GS 10	Boden Business Park employee	51	Boden, May 2022
GS 11, 12	Luleå Business Region + Boden Business Agency employees	1 h 10	Boden, May 2022
GS 13	Gällivare municipal employee, municipal transformation	1 h 09	Gällivare, May 2022
GS 14, 15	Gällivare municipal politicians	1 h 21	Gällivare, May 2022
GS 16	Luleå municipal politician	44	Online, June 2022
GS 17, 18	Tillväxtverket (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth) employees, Just transitions	51	Online, June 2022
GS 19	Svenska kraftnät employee	58	Online, June 2022
GS 20	LKAB employee	1 h 11	Online, Aug 2022
GS 21	Peter Larsson, government assigned coordinator for investments in Norr- and Västerbotten	47	Online, Oct 2022
GS 22	Follow-up interview GS10, including H2GS site visit	3 h	Boden, Nov 2022

GS 23	Länsstyrelsen Norrbotten employee	55	Luleå, Nov 2022
GS 24	SSAB Luleå employee	1 h	Luleå, Nov 2022
GS 25	Follow-up interview GS4	1 h NR	Luleå, Nov 2022
GS 26, 27	Follow-up interview GS13 and GS14	1 h NR	Gällivare, Nov 2022
GS 28	Follow-up interview GS10. Initiated by research participant to talk about my entry point	1 h NR	Online, Nov 2022

Table 2. List of observations

Observation	When	Description
O1. Forest walk Gällök	Aug 2020	Walk in Gällök/Kallak's forest areas, gravel road
O2. Walk in Luleå	May 2022	Walk at Luleå harbour, industry landmarks
O3. Visit to Swerim factory	May 2022	Guided tour through the Swerim (Swedish metals research institute) research factory in Luleå
O4. Workshop and lectures	May 2022	LTU-organized workshops (3) with SSAB and H2GS for university students, tailored to possibilities for future employment in Luleå
O5. Bodentravet	May 2022	Visit to a H2GS-initiated networking even at the Boden horserace
O6. Walk in Boden	May 2022	Walk in Boden town, train station murals
O7. Walk in Malmberget	May 2022	Walk through Malmberget around the mining site - the city had reached a "point of no return" and is being absorbed by Gällivare
O8. Visit to H2GS site	Nov 2022	Guided drive/walk visiting the green steel site in Boden in the early phase of construction after the areas was deforested
O9. LTU Workshop	Nov 2022	LTU-organized workshop with LKAB, Vattenfall, and Swedish Lapland in Luleå
O10. Walk in Kiruna	Nov 2022	Walk in Kiruna old town and view over LKABs mine
O11. Visit to Kiruna mine	Dec 2022	Tourist trip, guided tour to LKAB mine in Kiruna
O12. Reindeer pasture visit	Dec 2022	Walk through enclosed reindeer pasture in Jokkmokk with a Sirges reindeer herder
O13. Information meeting Jokkmokk Iron	Dec 2022	Public presentation/meeting about Kallak/Gällök in Jokkmokk, organized by JIMAB (seen in NSD)
O14. Reindeer pasture visit	Dec 2022	Full-day participant observation in Jåhkågasska reindeer pasture, including the shooting, skinning and cleaning of one reindeer
O15. Walk in Jokkmokk	Dec 2022	Several walks through Jokkmokk

Table 3. List of secondary material

Actor	Description
Beowulf Mining AB & JIMAB	Beowulf Mining website ; Jokkmokk Iron AB website ; Beowulf Mining selected video material, youtube; Selected documents 2011-2022 (e.g., Annual reports, Environmental impact statement, Kallak and laponia, Kallak: a real asset report)
Bergsstaten	Bergsstaten website content; Statements on Beowulfs concession request 2015-2018
Boden	Boden municipal and Bodenxt website content; Boden municipality youtube channel , selected videos
DenSvenskaGruvan	DenSvenskaGruvan website content
Fossilfritt Sverige	Fossilfritt Sverige (Fossil free Sweden) website; Fossil free Sweden youtube channel , selected videos; Selected documents 2019-2021 (e.g., Sweden's transition in heavy industry report)
Gällivare	Gällivare municipality and Gällivare Näringsliv AB (Business agency) website content; Gällivare municipality and Gällivare Näringsliv AB youtube channels, selected content; Selected documents (e.g., Gällivare magazine, Re-do magazine)

H2 Green Steel	H2GS selected website content ; H2GS youtube channel , selected videos; H2GS strategy video ; H2GS information meeting ; H2GS press conference including ppt presentation
Hybrit	Hybrit development selected website content
Invest	Invest in Norrbotten selected website content
Jernkontoret	Website content ; Jernkontorets youtube channel content, selected content; Selected documents 2013-2022 (e.g., Steel forms a better future, Climate action plan for a fossil free and competitive steel industry in Sweden)
Jokkmokk	Jokkmokk municipal website content ; Selected documents 2013-2018 (Statements on Beowulfs concession request, Report on societal changes, Citizen dialogue)
LKAB	Website content on LKAB's green transition; Selected video material LKAB youtube channel ; Strategy video ; Selected documents (e.g., LKAB Future magazine, Kultje magazine 2022)
Luleå	Luleå municipality and Luleå Business Region website content ; Selected documents (Clean, clever, close report)
Länsstyrelsen	Selected website content ; Selected documents 2016-2020 (e.g., Regional strategy for a sustainable mineral sector, The future of Norrbotten)
Mining For Generations	Selected website content
MJ	Name collection for mining in Jokkmokk 2013
Regering	Selected website content (press releases, articles etc.); Selected video material, ministry statements mm.; Documents related to Kallak 2017-2022 (Begäran om komplettering; Bearbetningskoncession för Kallak K nr 1; Minister of Business Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson presentation; N2017/04553 Letter to JIMAB AB); Selected documents, directives, decisions, legislation 2009-2022 (e.g., Sweden's mineral strategy, Samordningsuppdraget angående gruvnäringens expansion, 2013:9 Utvinning för allmän vinning)
Region Norrbotten	Selected webiste content
Resistance voices	Selected websites, youtube channels, documents 2012-2022 (e.g., Anders Sunna's art, Gällök magazine, Various letters to the Ministry of Business; Maxida Mäarak "sommarprat" radio P1, Kolonierna, What local people, SSR, Documentary: "Gällök")
Riksdag	Queries and responses on the Kallak decision; Kallak-related documents (Committee on the Constitution (KU) audit on the government delay regarding a Kallak permit, various steps: 2019/20:11 ; 2020/21:KU10 ; KU audit Minister of Business Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson vis-à-vis Kallak 2021/22:34); Innovation critical metals and minerals – a research overview 2022
Sami Parliament	Selected webite content ; Selected documents 2013-2022 (Statement on exploitation in Sápmi ; Minerals and Mines in Sápmi ; (4) Statements on Beowulfs concession request; Statement on SOU2021:21)
SGU	Selected website content
SSAB	Selected website content ; Selected videos , SSAB youtube channel; Consultation report for permit request SSAB Luleå 2022
Svemin	Selected website content ; Selected videos , Svemin youtube channel; Selected documents 2012-2022 (e.g., Mining sector – a growth engine for Sweden, Metals and Minerals information material for children, My Mine information material, Mining with nature – Swedish mining and mineral industries' action plan for biodiversity)
Vattenfall	Selected website content ; Selected video content, Vattenfall youtube channel

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