Progress Stories and the Contested Making of Minerals in Greenland and Northern Québec

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Original article

Progress stories and the contested making of minerals in Greenland and northern Québec

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to go beyond progress stories presented *in* and *about* the North by industry and governmental bodies. By pursuing event ethnography and public policy analysis, progress stories are analyzed and contextualized, drawing on recent insights from participant-observations at mining conferences and conventions (e.g. PDAC), field visits (organized by REXSAC and the MinErAL Network) to Greenland and Quebec. Quebec has a long history of mining, and in Greenland substantial profit from mining has also been possible (before the Greenland Self-Government authorities took over the responsibility for the mineral resource area). Northern communities are in many ways co-investors of mining projects and promised to benefit from the extractive activities. However, with a (2014) mining strategy preparing Greenland for something that never really happened. Mining in Greenland is still carried out, but the making of minerals there is contested. Around the same time, Québec launched Plan Nord and initiatives mostly aimed at fostering mining investment and development in Northern Québec. The analysis illustrates that development of the mining industry in praxis is much more modest than envisioned, but still the progress stories do have an impact on local politics, the understanding of history, and relationships between North and South.

1. Introduction

After years of Arctic research and attendance at mining events, what continues to puzzle the authors is the fact that the North is time and time again entangled in narratives about progress and "value creation" without seeing much of this wealth and value. Economic scholars like Mariana (Mazzucato, 2018) questions the stories that are told about who the creators of wealth are in modern-day capitalism as well as where value creation comes from (xiii). Therefore, this paper focuses on the role of governments, industries and communities in these narratives of wealth creation. Extractive industries matter in the North, and they bring histories and stories with them while functioning also as a contact zone between the North and the South. Northern lands have always been spaces of encounters according to (Powell, 2017): 126), which is illustrated with his references to explorers, missionaries, Indigenous peoples, researchers, businesses, tourists, and, in the last 30 years, the extractive industry.

The objective of this paper is to go beyond progress stories presented *in* and *about* the North by industry and governmental bodies by analyzing examples of frontier speak in an attempt to understand current progress narratives in the politics of investment for mining in Greenland and Northern Québec.

The point of departure is that minerals can appear as collaboratively made analytical units (Brichet, 2018) whose processes of *making* and *unmaking* may be studied through stories and events. Resource-making as an analytical approach is informed by recent anthropological work (e.g. (Tsing, 2005), 2015 and (Hastrup and Lien, 2020)), and Arctic Studies scholars have - with empirical findings from the North - added how the ongoing making of resources comes with different visions of the future (Avango et al., 2013).

In these years, large scale societal reorganizations are prompted by globalization. In the Arctic, this process has accelerated a renewed pressure on local communities which in the academic literature is described as "multiple pressures" (Avango and Rosqvist, 2020). New studies like this into the spirit and stories of capitalism reveal a major reorganization of dominant value systems (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). As a method, (Tsing, 2015) asks the ethnographer to go beyond progress stories and argues how it is in the "listening to that cacophony of troubled stories that we might encounter our best hopes for precarious survival" (34). This work might not go as far as Tsing and reflect on new

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ways of surviving, but it attempts to understand the sociability of investment in mining. The authors will use this approach to analyze stories and frontier speak *in* and *about* Greenland and Northern Québec in regards to the politics of investment. (Cameron, 2015) characterizes stories as "not isolated text or wholly imaginative devices. Stories are not simply *about* people or places. They are themselves composed of networks of relations between people, places, and things, and specific practices of stories matter" (21). Like Cameron (ibid), the intention of this paper is not to tell "better stories", but instead to analyze the stories being told at venues such as PDAC and mining events in Greenland and Northern Québec. To learn more about the importance and impact of extractive stories - and thus related connections - a venue like The Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) seemed to be one of the places to be. Scholarly exchange of experiences and participant observations from the event (2016-2019) sparked the authors' motivation to write this article together. Additionally, we draw on insights from field visits (organized by REXSAC and the MinErAL Network) to Greenland and Canada.

2. Method: Events as Fieldwork Sites

In this study, the method of event ethnography and policy analysis is used, focusing on mining conferences and conventions where mining is showcased for investors, stakeholders, partners, and, as this paper will argue, the public. This approach will help to better explore and understand the connections that snake their way in and out of progress stories linking nations, regions, and local landscapes and communities. That being said, it has to be acknowledged that Greenland's image as a place of mining is implemented but still contested. In comparison, the Québec administration has been more informed by Euro-Asian market demands and hence has a more developed mining sector in the North (Rodon et al., 2018). To understand the entanglement, contrats and politics of presented progress stories, a comparison between Greenland and Northern Québec is pivotal to this analysis.

In event ethnography, meetings are not only meetings or seminars, conferences, conventions, and meetings should not be perceived as isolated events. To understand the progress stories about mining, the researchers have visited multiple events *in* and *outside* the mining regions and discussions related to these events (see list of events and sites). In effect, studying mining takes the researchers to fora and unexpected networks, landscapes as well as documents, which argue for former, present, and future mining plans. (Campbell et al., 2014), who have studied global environmental meetings to understand conservation and environmental governance, describe meetings as "active political space" (Ibid: X), where researchers, by applying event ethnography, can observe and participate in the processes that produce outcomes—or fail to do exactly that. The fieldwork data and field note vignettes are included with the intention of helping the reader (and the researcher) to understand both the atmosphere and format of these meetings as well as how the structures and processes of the meetings influence what happens ((Brosius and Campbell, 2010): 249). Generally, the two authors want to know how mining becomes meaningful. Tracing the engagement ethnographically allows for the study of associations, assumptions, meaning-making, and storytelling about mining in the North. An event ethnography approach recognizes that what will be performed in front of the audience(s) is not random. In other words, the researcher wants to study meetings not just for the content or facts but also to analyze how the content is performed (see (Brosius and Campbell, 2010): 250). This paper attempts to follow some of those "market and business journeys" (MacDonald, 2010) and, in doing so, the production of potential progress stories which often function as a kind of catalyst for keeping the projects alive (e.g. in media, reports, strategies, and policies).

2.1. About the Authors

In line with the event ethnography approach, the article follows an essay style with a spoken narrative form to examine the role of frontier narratives and progress stories in promoting mining at conferences. In effect, a perspective where methodology, results, and analysis are woven into vignettes about the two authors' presence at mining conferences. Rather than writing a conventional methodology, the authors here present themselves as persons with methodological and epistemic perspectives on their field sites:

Lill Rastad Bjørst (first author) is currently carrying out ethnographic fieldwork at PDAC and at other mining events. However, as with most ethnographic fieldworkers, she does not fit in: She is not an economist but thinks in line with (Tsing, 2015) who argues how "we need the ethnographic eye to see the economic diversity through which accumulation is possible" (66). Bjørst has former fieldwork experience with local mining debates in Greenland ((Bjørst, 2016a, Bjørst, 2016b)b, (Bjørst, 2017, Bjørst, 2020)), but what she came to realize is that discussions about mining in Greenland and the making of Greenland's minerals are taking place at multiple sites. They involve a variety of actors such as extractive industries, subcontractors, investors, prospectors, NGOs and environmentalists, nation states, the EU, transnational companies, local governments, municipalities, local citizens, and so on, which relate, navigate, and make minerals while imagining Arctic futures. So even though an Arctic Studies scholar like her, trained in Inuit Studies at the Department for Greenlandic and Arctic Studies in Copenhagen, would be expected to do research in the Arctic, she tends other sites as well to follow the stories, the debates, and the people. It is a fieldwork practice that comes with a lot of white men in suits, food on sticks, drinks, windowless conference rooms, gemstones, big trucks, dust, company towns, networks, and business cards. During the last seven years, she has visited various sites where mining in Greenland has been discussed. In this paper, however, she mostly contributes with an analysis of the events at PDAC. Apart from reading the stories about mining at the conference, she analyses these as relational and material ordering practices. The stories from the PDAC travels are repeated and compared to life in Greenland and fit into the production and repetition of frontier speak. (Dodds and Nuttall, 2016) demonstrate that the Arctic (and Antarctic) as "resource frontiers" have proven a useful, even necessary, accompaniment to statecraft, business and industry, Indigenous communities, environmental campaigners, and scientists, and they write: "While the object, area and importance of the resource frontiers vary, 'frontier speak' creates the very thing that it names and along with that a bounty of opportunity, challenge and risk for all those around it" (188). When it comes to Greenland, "frontier speak" is pivotal as mining still is not "really a thing". Minerals are still in the ground and need to be imagined, performed, and made up as valuable and desired at places like PDAC. Even today, images of Greenland as a place of mining are still contested. To stage Greenland as a place of mining and mining as a realistic opportunity has taken a lot of work—at PDAC Bjørst experienced all hands were at the pumps (Bjørst, 2020).

Thierry Rodon (second author) has attended the "Québec Mines" conference every year since 2012, the year when Québec Plan Nord was announced. He attended the conference sometimes as a panelist, sometimes as a workshop organizer, and more often as a participant. Québec Mine is an interesting event where mining companies mix with government officials but also members of the Indigenous communities that are omnipresent there, a chance for him to reconnect with many Indigenous friends and partners. As an academic, he is out of place, but this form of participant observation gave him many insights into the complex relationship between the mining industries and the Indigenous communities. He has also had the chance to observe PDAC in 2019 - a very different event where the corporate mining elite run the show and where fewer Indigenous peoples are present. This experience has led him to analyze mining development as a powerful narrative in the Canadian North (Rodon and Lévesque, 2018) and he has argued that the extraction of resources is at the heart of the relationship between the North and the South: Extraction of fur at first, then whales, then cultural artifacts, and finally minerals. Rodon has also regularly participated in

the Nunavik Mining Workshop, held each year in Kuujjuaq. Kuujjuaq is the biggest village of Nunavik, Québec, with a population of over 2,700 people. This symposium is a local initiative to foster interest in mining amongst the Inuit, although, in fact, the room is packed with Inuit from the entire Nunavik community, representing the Northern village and the Land Holding Corporation.

Data collection and fieldwork sites

Sites	Where	When	Actors	Material/data
PDAC 2016 (Bjørst)	Toronto, Canada	March 4–8, 2016	Mining sector, geologists Investors, MPs, Indigenous peoples' organizations	Magazines, posters and slides, reports, field notes (and participant observation), speeches by politicians, MPs, CEOs, national geological surveys, economic think thanks, Indigenous peoples' organizations, environmental NGOs, researchers, etc.
PDAC 2018 (Bjørst)	Toronto, Canada	March 4–7, 2018	(same actors as in 2016)	Field notes (and participant observation)
Royal Danish consulate (Bjørst)	Toronto, Canada	March 3, 2018	Representatives from the Danish and Greenlandic mining business community, Canadian invited speakers from the extractive industries	Slides (PowerPoint) Field notes (and participant observation)
PDAC 2019 (Bjørst and Rodon)	Toronto, Canada	March 3–6, 2019	Mining sector, geologists, Danish Crown Prince Greenlandic MPs Ministère des ressources naturelles du Québec (MRNQ)	(Streaming of Greenland Day from UK via YouTube) Greenlands Mineral Strategy (2020–2024) Québec Evening Encounters Workshops Participant observation Presentations
Québec Mines 2012–2019 (Rodon)	Quebec City, Canada	November	Mining sector Québec government Northern Indigenous communities (Innu, Inuit, Naskapi, Anicinape, and Cree)	
Nunavik Mining Workshop (Rodon) 2014–2019	Kuujjuaq, Nunavik, Québec, Canada	April	Mining sector Inuit and Nunavik organizations Inuit leadership (LHC and NV) Québec government	Participant observation Encounters Presentations

3. Analysis I: Making Minerals in Greenland

Bjørst's first vignette from event ethnographic fieldwork at PDAC 2016

I am hungry. The Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) 2016 convention is not like any of my usual academic conferences, where fruit,cake breaks and planned dinners are part of the programme. While looking for something to eat, I see two of my fellow Danes at the conference. They are from the business community in Northern Denmark (Region Nordjylland). They tell me that they have a meeting coming up with a business partner, but unfortunately they also have dinner tickets to a seminar at the same time with a three-course dinner. I can feel my stomach rumble. "Uh … sounds like an interesting seminar," I say casually. Before I know it, I am dining with 400 businessmen and the waiters are serving large pieces of meat and gravy and lots of wine. It is meant to be a networking dinner. The gentleman beside me attempts to start a conversation and asks what company I represent. I tell him that I am a researcher and work at a university. He looks disappointedly down at his plate. The awkwardness is disrupted when an elderly man suddenly enters the stage. His name is Don Coxe and he is an investor, strategist, and advisor at Coxe Advisors LLC. "We live in a global economy and that has not happened before," he tells the audience. He announces that economists have outplayed their role after the financial crises and, in an ironic tone, delivers the punch line: "Forecasts in economy have made astrology look great." The audience responds with laughter and applause. He then goes back to looking serious and says "Something needs to be done!". He continues to tell several stories about his own success as a strategist and advisor during this time of turbulence and advocates against history repeating itself. However, he thinks it was a "great moment in history" when we "broke out of the bond-boom era". But, there is a vast negative attitude toward the structures and forecasts. According to him, the name of the game was changed. On his company's webpage he is quoted for saying, "Never invest on the basis of a story on Page One—that is the efficient market. Invest on the basis of a story on Page Sixteen—that's on its way to Page One." According to Mr. Coxe, we are apparently not all experts in reading the market and the presented stories. So to him, reading and understanding the stories is important as they are also the basis of investment. In other words, it is not necessarily solely the market that provides the structures as something else is at stake - stories.The stories conveyed by Mr. Coxe at PDAC were in line with investor narratives in general, where "learning from the past" is used to argue for one's own position and pursued strategies in investment. This means that by deploying these stories of breaking with the past, he presented a narrative about a new beginning. Staging new beginnings and one's own position (on the right side of things) may be an effective way of building legitimacy and trust, which is highly praised in the financial sector. Mr. Coxe wanted to tell us that something was broken and that strategists and investors (like him) are needed. As soon as Don Coxe stopped talking, the waiters cleared the tables and the lovely food disappeared. They started preparing for the beginning of yet another PDAC session. Yet another "new beginning".

In 2014, the Government of Greenland launched a new Mineral Strategy (2014-2018) (Government of Greenland 2014) with the optimistic title "Our raw materials have to create prosperity" (Vores råstoffer skal skabe velstand). At the time of writing, the strategy has reached its expiration date and a new strategy has just been introduced (Greenland's Mineral Strategy 2020–2024 2020). In retrospect, the old strategy was preparing Greenland for something that never really happened: Greenland already lost its grip in 2012 when the market was booming—and hereafter the venture capital left Greenland. However, the Mineral Strategy for 2014–2018 overlooked this tendency in the market and presented a much more upbeat vision for the future. While the strategy was in place, several companies went bankrupt (London Mining, NunaMinerals, Angel Mining, and True North Gems). Investors lost their money, and the interpretation in the local newspaper *Sermitsiaq* was that Greenland had at the same time lost its unique chance to become a place of mining (Redaktionen 2019). However, mining continues to be part of the Government of Greenland's ambitions for the foreseeable future (Brichet, 2018).

To explain mining activities in Greenland in figures: In 2020, one out of two active mines in Greenland was about to go bankrupt and needed financial aid (because of Covid-19) (Redaktionen 2020). According to a new report from Statistics (Greenland, 2020), 95 persons work in extractive industries in Greenland - 65 of them Greenlandic (ibid.: 21). The turnover was only 99,172 kroner and the value added has been

negative since 2015 (ibid.: 23). Or put in different terms: If someone makes money on Greenland's minerals, it is definitely not the Greenlandic population.

Bjørt's second vignette from event ethnographic fieldwork at PDAC 2018

The Greenlandic minerals presented at PDAC were primarily visualized on slides, posters, maps, and webpages. Most of them were still resources in the ground and not in any stage of becoming a reserve. At the opening of the Greenland Day at PDAC 2018, Niels Tanderup Kristensen, Danish consul general and head of the Danish Trade Commission in Toronto, mentioned how Greenland this year had the biggest delegation to date and how he thought this created value in itself. Brian Buus Pedersen (Greenlandic Employers Association) said: "We are here as Greenland and to showcase Greenland," and he continued, "Hopefully you will get some investors". Greenland was showcased as "interesting", but to play the devil's advocate: Interesting for whom? I looked back at the room while the first speakers were presenting. Seventy percent of the people present were what I would describe as "the usual suspects from Greenland and Denmark", as I have seen them before at other similar events. Likewise, when Greenland Day 2018 (at PDAC) was opened by Mute B. Egede, the Minister of Mineral Resources, he was somewhat hopeful of a new beginning: "Times are changing" he promised. He continued talking about access via the Northwest Passage and Greenland as an "exploration destination" with prospects of "greenfield explorations"—referring to Greenland as an uncharted territory where mineral deposits (versus the brownfield project, which can range from the advanced development stage with a known resource to a proven producer). At that time, Greenland only had two active mines: Rubin and Hudson Company. The MP looked up from his notes at the audience and told about the preparations for the new Mineral Strategy: "We cannot sit back and wait to see what will happen," and continued: "Enjoy your time here today. Visit our booth at PDAC." He finished his keynote speech by saying "thank you" in Kalaallisut: "Qujanaq, let it be the first word you learn for our common partnership," with expectations of mutual reciprocity. His presence at Greenland Day was meanwhile short since an election in Greenland had been announced. While he was giving his keynote speech, he was no longer officially representing the Government of Greenland. His welcoming stories were ad hoc and used to construct relations between the Government of Greenland and potential investors who, according to my observations, were not many. However, he advocated for a "we" that was proactive (not just passively sitting back and waiting) and a partnership where appreciation is articulated with an occasional "qujanaq" ("thank you"). During the coffee break, most of the delegates spoke in Danish, and the Minister for Mineral Resources was already on a plane to run his campaign for yet another term (his party, however, lost its place in government).

At the PDAC Greenland Day 2018, the presentations told different promising stories about mining. At times they appeared synchronized, but at other times some of the stories also seemed contrasting: When the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland (GEUS) asked for more data and research in Greenland and complained about the lack of infrastructure arguing how the amount of data for interested companies was limited - Greenland's mineral authority more or less told the opposite story. Whereas GEUS was in the business of mapping and the compilation and storage of data, research, monitoring, and consultancy, the Greenlandic Ministry of Mineral Resources and Labour was at PDAC making Greenland interesting for investors with stories that were welcoming and staging Greenland as a possible and interesting place for mining.

On the slides presented by Anna Vass, Ministry of Mineral Resources and Labour, the headline read: "Why Greenland as an exploration target?". She quickly ran through Greenland's mining history from 1780 to the present day and stated that "Greenland is a pro-mining country" and that transport is possible both via road and air and mentioned ice-free shipping. At the same time, she was showing slides of ice melting around Greenland, which in this context also was presented as a positive thing. Julie Hollis, who works at the Ministry of Mineral Resources and Labour, took the audience through the critical and strategic minerals in Greenland, and through yet another point on her list of arguing for mining in Greenland, she mentioned that "Greenland has a stable political system."

By following the changes of the last ten years in the political landscape and the protests by civil society (against the mining of Greenland's uranium), other conclusions could have been reached (Bjørst, 2020). Her frontier speak and story of investment only left space for pro-mining arguments, and the assessment of Greenland being politically stable (compared to other countries) was one of them.

3.1. Mining and "Hunting for the Future"

Bjørt's third vignette from event ethnographic fieldwork at PDAC 2018

Later in the afternoon as an introduction to Greenland, the Greenland Business Association (Sulisitsisut) showed their promotional video with the English title "It is a new day in our country." In Danish, the title was "På jagt efter fremtiden" ("Hunting for the Future") with reference to the well-known Inuit hunting culture. The film tries to make connections using pictures, music, and a narrator telling a story about Greenland. The consistent use of the pronoun "we" and determiner "our" was repeated in this national odyssey of Greenland Figure 1. *The word "Greenlander" is not mentioned, but instead the word "people" is used. The film had pictures of Greenlanders and Danes working side-by-side in both the past and the present. One of the old black-and-white film clips showed a man helping another man into a diving costume. His nationality cannot be identified, but in the next clip, which was in color, the diver comes out of the water and looks like he is of Greenlandic origin. The speaker tells us: "But today it is different." In general, the film was telling a story (in Kalaallisut) of "a people" cooperating and developing Greenland in mutual respect and harmony. The colonial ties and power relations were erased. The presence of Denmark was nearly completely copy-pasted out of the pictures (Gad, 2016) and painted over by a national Greenlandic story about a new beginning, if not for a small hint in the introduction of the film where it was indicated that the past could also be related to some hard times. The speaker mentions: "We know the dark side of life, but we are determined to move on. And that is why we are still here". Later in the film it is underlined: "We use their past experience to hunt tomorrow." To emphasize the message of the film, the female commentator said: "We hunt the future, separately and together. We do what we have always done. Hunt the future" (Danish: på jagt efter fremtiden). As an illustration to underline the phase, four small clips were shown: 1) A Greenlandic choir singing at the National Day in Nuuk (sun and clear sky), 2) Danish and Greenlandic flags in procession, 3) a craftsman showing his letter of graduation, and 4) high school students at graduation throwing their graduate caps in the air to celebrate. Even though all the clips speak of proud and important moments for people in Greenland, one needs to be from Greenland (or know Greenland well) to understand the relevance of the long list of joyful moments. However, the metaphor has a problem. When the future is something you hunt, it can also slip away e.g. if your luck runs out while hunting: other people could be out hunting as well and have better skills and support. The film was as much about nation branding for Greenland towards potential investors as it was about targeting people in Greenland - as the co-investors they really are - to think about mining as part of the national project and potential new beginnings.*

In this film the impact of mining was only positive and potentially wanted by a collective "we." The conflicts of interest were painted over and the colonial legacy alluded to as "hard times." The progress stories were staged as frontier speak arguing for opportunities and using metaphors about hunting (which is often something Greenlanders have been admired for), ergo these skills can be used to "hunt the future." The narrative of the film is concurrent with the narrative presented in the new (2019) Mineral Strategy, in which mining is portrayed as necessary and important for Greenland's future. In the new Mineral Strategy, nature and environment present themselves in a separate strategic memorandum (ibid.: 2) and not part of the strategy itself. The separate strategic memorandum was not launched at the same time as the strategy, and at the time of writing it has still not been issued. In other words, environment and contamination, political instability, colonial

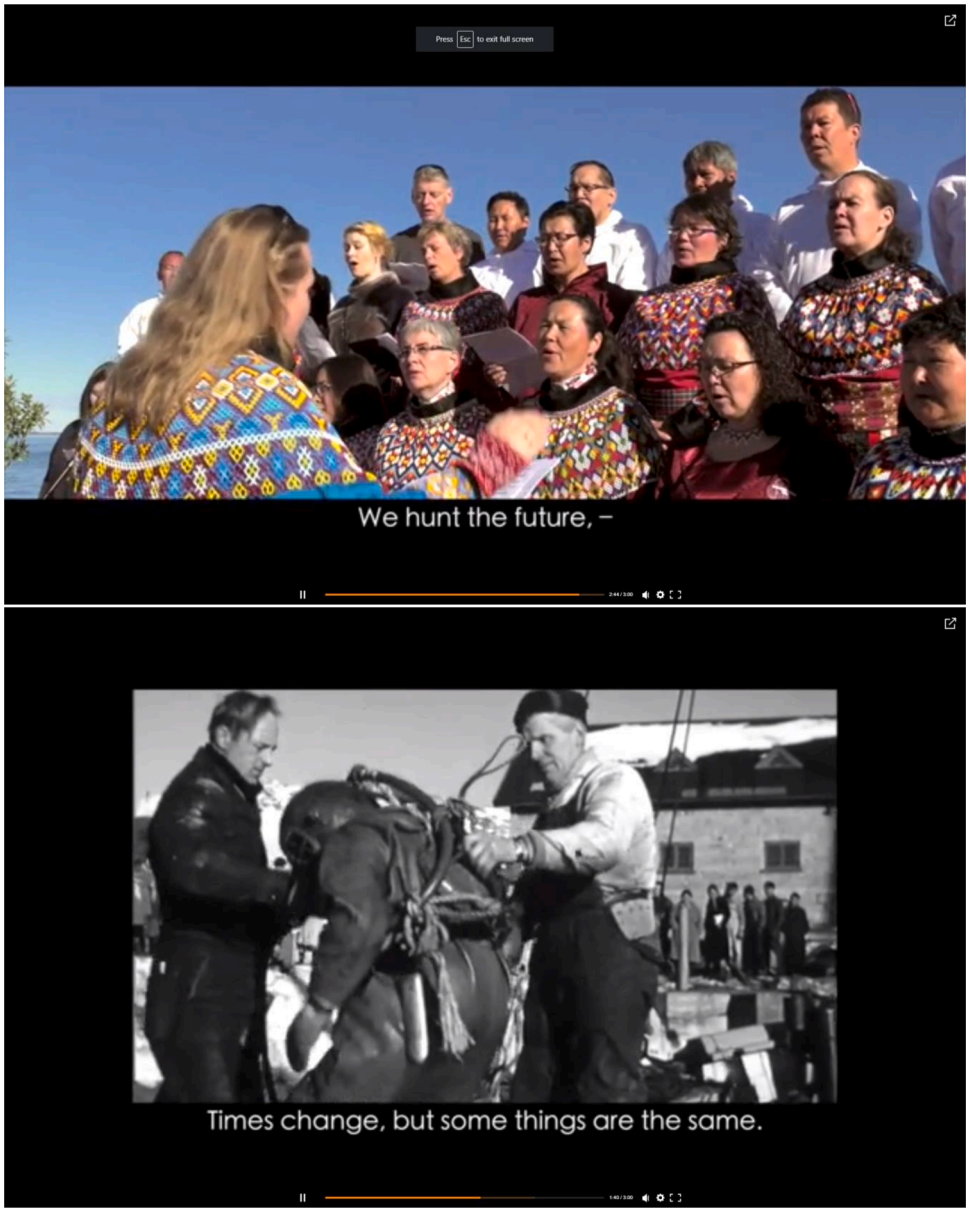

Fig. 1. Screenshot from the film "Hunting for the Future," (accessed 13 October 2020)

legacies, etc. are something to be thought about later on. You could say that "hunting the future" comes first.

At PDAC, the ambition of "showcasing" Greenland was combined with Greenland's official brand as a "Pioneering Nation." The catchphrases on the roll-up banners at the Government of Greenland's official exhibition at PDAC Figure 2 said: "Greenland. Be an explorer. Be a pioneer." The message embedded in "being a pioneer" speaks to the image of Greenland as a frontier, but also as moving into the future where anybody (local people, investors, or prospectors) can be the first to pioneer and explore (Ren et al., 2019). Furthermore, it speaks to the dominant mining narrative at conventions like PDAC, where development in mining is understood as positive and desirable. Something which Mr. Egede welcomes with a "qujanaq". Mark (Nuttall, 2017) has questioned the effect of the "Pioneering Nation" brand when it comes to mining. The brand might contain characteristics considered central to the nation's self-image and to how it wants to be seen by others but, "It nonetheless still positions Greenland as a place on the edge of the world, a place apart and somewhere different" (29). Following the metaphor, the history of pioneering also comes with many false hopes, regrets, and empty pockets e.g. being the second person to reach the North Pole, not finding the Northwest Passage, or losing crew to local disease. From what we know of the status of Greenland as a mining country, "pioneering" in mining could imply that it is also risky business to invest in Greenland. This contrasts with Greenland's ambition of being ready for business and shows how they are comparable with other mining countries. In the new Mineral Strategy (2020–2024), it is mentioned as an objective that "Greenland is to be an attractive mining country which investors will prefer over other mining countries" (8). It is a paradox that the Greenlandic appearance at PDAC was showcasing capitalism and competitiveness but without progress in the mining sector—hardly a "greenfield". From following the debates at PDAC in 2016, 2018 and 2019, it was difficult to identify any major breakthrough even with Greenland's national economy having the average grown of 3.5 percent in the years 2014–2017 (Økonomisk Råds Rapport 2018) plus the fact that the global mining sector was already recovering from the financial crisis so this could not be used as an excuse anymore. Capitalism without progress (as in Greenland) looks "patchy" according to (Tsing, 2015), and she continues: "The concentration of wealth is possible because

Fig. 2. Photograph from PDAC 2018: Roll-up banners at the Government of Greenland's official exhibition at PDAC stating "Greenland. Be an explorer. Be a pioneer." Photographer by first author.

value produced in unplanned patches is appropriated for capital" (5). Because of this, progress stories are possible no matter how small - and something always seems to be "happening". An assessment of the development in the Greenlandic mining sector for the last ten years does not show much activity; it has, however, been enough to make the headlines in Greenland and Denmark (and sometimes beyond). In that period, journalists have called Bjørst several times wanting her to comment on progress stories presented by the industry or the government or created and circulated by the press. The disappointment is always great when they realize that there might not be "a story" about a mining boom and nor can anyone tell if there ever will be one. It begs the inconvenient questions: What is the resource for investment, then? Why mobilize progress stories? And who are the real investors and risk-takers? What if industrial development in mining turns out to be a bubble of promises with irreversible trade-offs? What is in it for Greenland? Will the government ever see a return on their investment? Most of us are "raised on dreams of modernization and progress" (ibid.: 20) but what has been ignored? What was experienced at PDAC did not fit those timelines of progress or media storylines. (Dodds and Nuttall, 2016) point to the element of fantasy and imaginative geographies of the Arctic (and Antarctic) as potential resource frontiers: "Both places have been imagined as 'El Dorado'-like spaces, simply awaiting capital, infrastructure knowledge and labour to combine to create resource assemblages capable of mining and moving resources including fish, seals, whales, oil, gas, diamonds and uranium" (140). But the process of transforming the Arctic (and Antarctic) into resource spaces has never been as straightforward as it is in discourse. (Tsing, 2015) asks an important question: How might capitalism look without assuming progress or wealth? (5). Greenland seems to be the perfect case.

Nevertheless, in Greenland substantial profit from mining has been possible, e.g. by the Ivittuut cryolite mine and the Qullissat coal mine (before the Greenland Self-Government authorities took over the

responsibility for the mineral resource area). As of today, mining in Greenland has far from ended—but the frontier as well as the minerals are still in the making.

4. Analysis II: Making Minerals in Québec: From Resource Frontier to Indigenous Homeland

In contrast to Greenland, mining is not new in Québec, even if the extractive industries only constitute around 3.8 percent of the GDP (Québec 2020). Nowadays, most of the mining is conducted in Northern Québec, where iron, nickel, gold, lithium, and rare earth can be found. Northern Québec is seen as a resource frontier that is sparsely populated and, in most places, not connected to roads or the energy grid. But Northern Québec is also inhabited by the Cree, Inuit, Innus, and Naskapis, who consider that region as their homeland.

On May 10, 2011, Québec Premier Jean Charest announced Plan Nord, an ambitious 25-year plan designed to emulate the 1971 James Bay hydroelectric megaproject of Premier Bourassa. For Charest, this will be the plan for a generation, and he announced an investment of $80 billion for the next 25 years. This plan intended to capitalize on the sharp rise of mineral prices and the renewed interest from the mining companies in the resources of Northern Québec that have been well known since the 1950s, a real mining boom. However, the remoteness and lack of infrastructure of the region have limited the development of a mining economy. The first mine in Northern Québec was developed in Schefferville in 1954 near the Innu community of Matimekush-Lac John. In Nunavik, Asbestos Hill was opened in 1972 near the Inuit community of Salluit. Both mines closed in the 1980s. Other mines have opened since, but at the time of the Plan Nord announcement, there were only two mines in operation in Northern Québec: Raglan in Nunavik and Fermont on the North Shore.

Rodon's first vignette from event ethnographic fieldwork at Québec Mines

Every year the Québec Department of Energy and Mines organizes "Québec Mines", a conference geared towards investors, prospectors, and, more recently, Indigenous people. The event is well attended, even if it is mostly conducted in French. My first foray was in 2012, when I was invited to participate in an event called the "Labrador through Treasure Initiative," a program from the federal government designed to improve Indigenous participation in the Québec/Labrador mining industry. I was on a panel with Réal Mckenzie, the Innu Chief of Matimekush-Lac John, the site of the region's first mine. After the presentation of the program by the federal Deputy Minister, Réal sprung up to the microphone and started to list all the negative experiences he had had with the mining industry; starting with the abrupt closure of Schefferville and the destruction of most of the housing and community equipment and finishing with the many Impact and Benefit Agreements (IBA) signed with mining companies that were not respected. I have attended "Québec Mines" almost every year since there are always at least two sessions on Indigenous issues: One on the legal development concerning Indigenous consultation and consent, and one on the participation of Indigenous people in the mining industry. It is also a great networking event where I reconnect with Indigenous partners and friends. Since the 2006-14 mining boom was short-lived, the discussions are less heated, and we are mostly presented with the success of the few mines that have been developed in Northern Québec.

This illustrates two points: First, mining development is mostly dependent on the market, and after a flurry of mining projects in 2010, the crash of mineral prices in 2013 stopped most projects. Second, these regions are seen not only as resource regions but as the ancestral lands of Indigenous people, and they have become a key player in mining development as an opponent or as a supporter of mining, depending on the project.

4.1. Selling Plan Nord to the Northern Indigenous Communities, Québec and the International Market

"Plan Nord," announced by the Charest government in 2011, could appear as yet another effort by the South to seize the wealth of the North. As Charest said: "We have every resource imaginable up north" (New York Times 2011). It seemed like a replay of Premier Lomer Gouin's vision of the North (April 27, 1909): "I now look forward to the annexation of this vast territory with its hundreds of thousands of square miles, its incalculable mineral resources, its riches of all kinds and its immense possibilities for development" (quoted in (Robitaille, 2011)).

However, there were some notable differences, first with the presence of Cree and Inuit leaders at the launch of "Plan Nord." It was clear to the Charest government that you could no longer ignore the Indigenous inhabitants of this region, so there was a real effort to coopt them in the process. The Indigenous leaders were invited to participate in the development of "Plan Nord". Despite these efforts, the Cree, after years of mistrust and lawsuits with the Québec government (Rodon, 2014), were quite reluctant to endorse Plan Nord but were ultimately present at the launch with the Inuit. The Inuit had a better relationship with Québec, but years of colonization and the government's poorly designed policies (ibid.) made them a cautious partner. However, the Innu, still bitter over the fact that the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA) had extinguished their rights in the northern part of their homeland, refused to participate in "Plan Nord" and used every tribune to denounce it.

The Premier went to promote Plan Nord in London, Paris, Shanghai, Beijing, Tokyo, Madrid, Barcelona, Frankfurt, New York, and São Paulo. At the time of Plan Nord's launch, it was announced that more than eleven mining projects were to open in the next five years (MRNF (Ministère des ressources naturelles et de la Faune) 2011). This plan was short-lived since Charest was defeated in the 2012 election and the new government chose to abandon the plan because of the sharp decline of some mineral prices.

In April 2015, a new liberal government was elected, and Premier Philippe Couillard announced the relaunch of "Plan Nord". In a context of fiscal austerity and falling iron prices, this new version of "Plan Nord" is smaller in scope. Instead of the $82 billion in investments promised over 25 years in 2011, the new plan only includes $50 billion over 20 years (Secrétariat du Plan Nord, Gouvernement du Québec 2015). Similarly, infrastructure spending, estimated at $2 billion in 2011, has now been cut in half to just under $1 billion (ibid.). It shows that in order to attract mining companies, you have to be willing to invest public money to provide for the infrastructure and even to invest directly in mining companies to prevent closure. For example, in 2016 Québec invested $175 million to support the Tata Steel Mine in Schefferville and $45 million to restart the Bloom Lake Iron Mine near Fermont.

Although more modest, its objectives remain the same: To revive Québec's economy by encouraging private investment in the development of Northern Québec's resources. The mining sector remains at the heart of the Northern Plan, but other resources (forest, energy, wildlife, tourism, and biofood) are also taken into account. In the end, the development of the mining industry was much more modest than envisioned in Plan Nord, with two mines in Eeyou Istchee, two in Nunavik, and two in the Nitassinan, a total of six instead of eleven. This can be explained by the mineral price decline but also by the lack of social acceptability of some projects, as was the case with the uranium mine in Eeyou Istchee and the Arnaud mine in Sept-Îles, two projects with radioactive risk (Bourgeois and Rodon, 2019).

Rodon's second vignette: Québec Evening at PDAC

In 2019, I went to PDAC Figure 3 for the first time and was surprised by the size of the conference compared to "Québec Mines". There was an Indigenous people session, but with an international focus, and it was sparsely attended. Most meetings happened behind closed doors between mining company executives, investors, and governments. At the request of a Norwegian colleague, I had arranged such a meeting between the Grand Chief of the Cree Nation and Norway's Resource Minister, who wanted to know how Canada was dealing with Indigenous peoples' right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent. When I finally managed to meet with a few of the Indigenous people that he meets every year at "Québec Mines", I was invited to go

Fig. 3. PDAC 2018 Photograph by first author

to the Québec Evening, a private event held by the Québec government. He was in a small and very crowded hotel room with the usual finger food and free bar. The evening started with a speech from Québec's Deputy Mining Minister, who heralded the investment opportunities in Northern Québec—no talks about the First Peoples and their rights or the environment but only the fact that Québec was open for business. Most of the people present were Québec businessmen and civil servants, and only a handful of foreign investors were present. I chatted with a few people, but as soon as I explained who I was, it was clear I was not part of the circle, and the noise made conversation difficult.

4.2. Inuit, Innus, and Cree Voices

The Cree and the Inuit chose to respond to Plan Nord, but with their own vision of a plan for their region. For the Cree this was summarized in a document called "Cree Vision of Plan Nord", launched in February 2011 (Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee 2011). The Inuit chose to first consult all the Nunavik organizations to outline the main issues and needs in the region in a document called "Plan Nunavik/Parnasimautik" (Kativik Regional Government; Makivik Corporation, 2010) . This document was transformed in a vision of development through an extensive consultation process in each of the 14 Inuit communities of Nunavik(Kativik Regional Government; Makivik Corporation, 2014).

The Cree and the Inuit have also developed their own mining policy, asserting thus further their authority on their land. Both mining policies state that neither the Cree nor the Inuit are opposed to mining but that no mining project can proceed without their agreement. These agreements known as Impact and Benefit Agreements (IBA) are now common practice in Canada since it provides the required consent for the mining companies— however, if the Indigenous people refuse to negotiate or sign these agreements, they can kill a project. This quote from an Inuit resident of Salluit summarizes well the view of Indigenous peoples on mining: "They must respect us. They must respect life because mines have a life. At one point, they'll say they have no more ore and quit, but we'll stay" (quoted in (Rodon and Lévesque, 2015): 32). This quote contrasts the usually short life span of a mine compared to human life but also to the even longer span of the Inuit occupation of this land.

Rodon's third vignette: Nunavik Mining Workshop

Since 2011, the Nunavik Mineral Exploration Fund has been organizing the Nunavik Mining workshop in Kuujjuaq, the biggest town in Nunavik, with 2,700 residents, the majority of whom are Inuit. Here,again, is a chance for the Québec Mining Department, the mining companies, and all the industries related to mining to present their program or projects. It is a fascinating exercise since the audience is mostly constituted by Inuit coming from each of the 14 Nunavik communities and by members of the local administrations. The workshop takes place in Katittavik Town Hall, the place where community feasts are held. Here there are no side sessions, only a succession of plenaries. Québec government representatives usually present Plan Nord and its evolution, the junior mining companies present their mining projects, and the established mines present their program for Inuit employment and all the positive impacts of their mine on the region. In fact, since there are no investors in this venue, all these people are trying to convince the local population that mining will only have positive impacts, thus trying to ensure the social acceptability of their projects by presenting progress stories. Usually I am invited to present my work on the social impact of mining on small communities, thus providing a dissonant voice in this sale pitch for mining. It could also be seen as a way to promote the social acceptability of the conference. There is an interesting dynamic developing; after each presentation, the microphone is brought to the audience, whose members then take the opportunity to remind the presenters that this is Inuit land, that they are still caribou hunters, that this is more important than a job and royalties, and that we need to take care of the land. Some stress that no mine can open without their consent, others recall the numerous environmental impacts of mining exploration and exploitation, and some strongly support mining activities. After "Québec Mines" and PDAC, this is a very sobering experience for miners. Some presenters know their audience well and make sure to acknowledge that they are on Inuit land and are willing to work with Inuit, although some are more used to corporate boardrooms and only talk about the wealth of their claim and the need for investment. Raglan Mine, owned by Glencore, which has been operating since 1994, each year presents Tamatumani, its Inuit employment program, which has been a success at increasing Inuit employment after years of very low numbers. However, the new mine, Canadian Royalties, owned by Chinese investors, has become more and more present. I am comforted to see (as a researcher interested in the

impact of mining) that the Inuit are able to meet the mining companies on their own "turf" - and as such the Nunavik Mining Workshop is very different from the southern mining conference. All the social activities and food have an Inuit flavor, and the population is free to participate in the event, a much more democratic process.

5. Conclusion: The Making of Minerals in Greenland and Northern Québec

The making of minerals in Greenland and Northern Québec is contested. Engaged in event ethnography authors had the ambition to go beyond progress stories. The vignettes introduced the reader to how mining in the North was performed and made meaningful to a wider audience and thereafter it was put into an academic and analytic context. The analysis illustrates that development of the mining industry in praxis is much more modest than envisioned. Nevertheless, the mostly positive progress stories become a catalyst for keeping the projects alive in the public, and they end up having an impact on local politics, the understanding of history, and relationships between North and South.

In Québec, Indigenous peoples have lived with mining for many years. American economic expansion after World War II required steel and iron ore from Indigenous homelands, which were used for automobiles, railroads, skyscrapers, and bridges to reconstruct European countries. It was an extractive industry with a toxic legacy, in many ways reproducing a colonial logic ((Thistle and Langston, 2016): 276). Especially Northern Québec has a longer and complex mining history: It started after World War II with little involvement from the Québec government, but lately, through Plan Nord, the Québec government has announced its willingness to fund infrastructure and to invest in mining projects. It has also been defined by a clash between the resource frontier narratives and the assertion of Indigenous rights, which is still very present but nowadays plays out differently. Now Indigenous people are seen as partners, and no mine would open without an agreement with them; the conflicts, however, often take place inside the Indigenous communities between pro- and anti-mining sides (Fortin, 2019, Rodon and al. In press). Rodon experienced a new development at mining conferences such as the "Québec Mines" and the Nunavik Mining Workshop, one where the Indigenous peoples were able to meet the mining companies on their own "turf", and one where the regions were not only seen as resource regions but also as the homeland of Indigenous peoples. However, comparing our two cases shows us that there are concurrent colonial elements to mining stories in both Greenland and Northern Québec. Today, in Greenland, mining plays a new role in the national project; working towards becoming its own state is part of the presented progress stories and intends to boost arguments for mining investment and activities (through e.g. the video "Hunting for the Future"). Denmark is copy-pasted out of the stories from the past and into the new role as facilitator and "good supportive" ex-colonizer, while Greenland is described and performed as a pro-mining country. Normally, the main audience at PDAC is supposed to be potential future international investors. But at the moment, according to our studies, the main audience for these progress stories presented at PDAC is primarily the Greenlandic and Danish public, which still comprises the primary "investors" in the making of minerals and developing Greenland into a mining country. Other audiences are still to be reached. In other words, Greenland is showcasing a mining industry which is not really in place yet - announcing that the country is "open for business", while still waiting for business to happen. Following the debate *in* and *outside* underline that mining and colonial relations and independence movements go hand in hand in the North whether the projects succeed or not - and so does the affective labour and mobilization of emotions (Bjørst, 2020, Sejersen and Thisted, 2021).

On the question of how the North is entangled into narratives of value creation, our studies show that Northern communities and governments are active in the making of minerals and related progress stories and sometimes co-financing the extractive project and needed infrastructure. Despite the "need" for minerals, (White, 2011) writes, "there is no such thing as a market set apart from particular state policies, institutions, and cultural and social practices "(XXV). What our analysis illustrates, are attempts to make Greenland into a place of mining and thus make a maked. (Mazzucato, 2018) advocates not calling it value creation when in fact it is value extraction, always from somebody or from the land and its future residents. For Greenland, there is still no market or big network of investors, and what can be learned from the Canadian Northern mining legacy is that market alone is no guarantee that a mine would be built (Thistle and Langston, 2016). The inconvenient truth is that mining in the North is framed by a global financial market, and, furthermore, no mine can survive without some public money or infrastructure. In Greenland, it takes the mobilization of public investment and international financial capital to maintain a local ambition to keep on investing money and building infrastructure, for something which no one knows whether it will ever benefit Greenland. In Quebec, Plan Nord is built on the premise that providing public infrastructure will attract new mines, while Indigenous peoples have to remind the extractive industries that they are the rightful owners of the land. To go beyond progress stories in order to understand the politics of investment in Greenland and Northern Québec opens up a cacophony of troubled stories and compromises. They are connected in unexpected ways, silent and sometimes reappearing in new forms and sometimes portrayed to feed into the capitalist frontier speak about future mining (but without much progress). Trouble stories were not so welcome at PDAC. The presentation there wanted to illustrate a break and a new beginning (e.g. the storyline: "today it is different"). For example, one of the key parameters in the investors' assessment of Greenland as a mining country is "political stability", implying that it is not something to be taken for granted but something wished for by the industry (Greenland's Mineral Strategy 2020–2024: 9) . All this in an era when Greenland is in a process of reconciliation, decolonization, and potentially becoming its own state. In summary, the Greenland Business Association's approach to "the future" within mining also necessarily demands a certain picture of the past (Schulz-Forberg, 2013).

In conclusion, Greenland's comparison with Québec's North needs to be read with a critical understanding of resource frontier narratives and the effect of progress stories. On the other hand, the parallel development can be used to ask some of the key critical questions to new extractive projects in the North.

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