UiT
THE ARCTIC
UNIVERSITY
OF NORWAY

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

Homewarding Remoteness

Representations, agency and everyday life in a tundra village (NW Russia)

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A dissertation for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor – September 2017

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Acknowledgements

One summer day I was walking in Krasnoshchelye. A girl of about 10 stopped her bike right in front of me, looked at me and said “Mum says, you are writing a book about Krasnoshchelye!” I was a bit perplexed and answered “Well, yes. I do. But…” She did not wait for me to finish the sentence. Just said: “Cool!”, got on her bike and vanished as quickly as she had appeared. Only I did not write a book about the village. I wrote a dissertation. And it is about what I learned from the people who live there. Therefore, I feel eternally indebted to Valentina, Tatiana, Irina, Vassiliy, and many other *krasnoshcheltsy* who shared their time with me. I hope I will not disappoint their expectations.

Many would say that thesis writing is a lonely process. It is, nevertheless, a social one as well. Throughout the writing process I also felt the strong presence of people backing me up.

Working closely together with Jens Petter Nielsen on the book project “Neighbourly Asymmetry: Norway and Russia 1814 -2014”, taught me a lot about the art and craft of writing. More importantly, I admire the integrity in his texts, the playful control of language and his remarkable ability to write in his own voice. As supervisor, he has given me unwavering support from the very beginning of the project.

My supervisor Rossella Ragazzi has always been there for me for the last two years, wholeheartedly allowing me to benefit from her endless intellectual vitality and personal warmth. Since the first classes in visual anthropology in 1998, Rossella has been a source of inspiration, always pointing out new possibilities, elevating my thoughts, opening new horizons, lifting me up and making me feel wiser.

I am also deeply indebted to Finn Sivert Nielsen for reading through the thesis in the final phase and for providing his invaluable comments – detailed and comprehensive, critical but fair; challenging but appropriate, and sometimes disarmingly witty. I owe him for always intellectually stimulating discussions and pleasant conversations.

Further on, I am grateful to Vladislava Vladimirova and Yulian Konstantinov for conversations both face-to-face and through the texts they have written; to the INPOINT project providing financial support for fieldwork; to the colleagues from the INGA network for making me discover new aspects of my empirical material; to the participants in the writing seminar for dissecting my texts; to Janet Handley for correcting my English; to colleagues from the Department of Archaeology and Social Anthropology, and from the Department of History for comments and support. The long days at the university would not be bearable without the late lunches with my fellow phd-thesis-writing colleagues Margrethe and Velina, and without Einar-Arne Drivenes' daily encouragements in the hallway.

Through the whole project, an important part has been the unconditional support from my mother and my sister. And most importantly, I am so lucky to have Lars, Johanna, Teo and Viktor beside me. Their steady presence filled with love, fun, cheerfulness and generosity has given me strength and inspiration.

Part One

Chapter One: Introduction

Krasnoshchelye

The village of Krasnoshchelye makes an interesting case for several reasons. It is among the less accessible and disconnected settlements in Europe and the European part of Russia. It lies in an area considered and recognized as traditional for the indigenous Sami people (Lovozero District). Yet the village founders and the greatest part of its current residents belong to a Komi diaspora among the vast majority of Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians living today in Murmansk region. The development of the region has been affected by its geopolitical position and geographic proximity with Norway, Sweden and Finland. During the Cold War, the Murmansk region was the only region bordering a NATO country in Europe. For the past two decades, the region has also been part of the Barents Euro-Arctic collaboration and part of the strategic Arctic zone of the Russian Federation. Different political meanings and mobilizations create a dynamic context for state policies, collective enterprises and individual projects. However, at first sight everyday life in Krasnoshchelye remains unaffected by these political facts.

The village of Krasnoshchelye lies in a swampy area in the middle of Kola Peninsula, on the river Ponoy, approximately 250 km from its mouth, at the border between the forest tundra (*lesotundra*) and the forest belt. The inland climate makes the winters cold and dry, and the short Arctic summers rather warm. In summer time, because of the surrounding swamps, the village is accessible only by air. In addition, swarming mosquitoes and gnats (blackflies) invade the whole area. I remember wondering why anybody would choose to establish a foothold there. Many answers have been provided over the years. Oleg Kotov, the Komi-Russian scholar who did the most comprehensive study of the village in the early 1980s,

wrote that sloping banks, pine tree forest, fish lakes, and water meadows make it a perfect place for establishing a village (Kotov 1988). In 2001, the head of the administration wrote that the setting is astonishing with its extraordinary peace [*velichayshee spokoystvie*] (Kiselev n.d.).

Often, one hears that Krasnoshchelye is a Komi village, and the people who live there are Komi or of Komi descent. The Komi are not native to the Kola Peninsula. In 1885 several reindeer herding families migrated from the Komi area, the easternmost part of European Russia, to find new pastures and escape the epidemics of different diseases (such as anthrax and foot rot) sweeping across their tundra. Later, more Komi people followed. They settled in different parts of the Peninsula, but the overwhelming majority stayed in the inland area, by then scarcely populated by Sami people. In 1915 the majority of the population in Lovozero, the largest inland settlement on the Kola Peninsula, were Komi (493 of 690 inhabitants).

According to the historical records[1] Krasnoshchelye (*Görd-shchellya* as they called it in Komi language) was established in 1921. Its founders were three Komi families, three young men from Lovozero who were in search of better pastures for their herds. They were not the first to move onwards. Several years earlier other families had moved out from Lovozero and established the village of Ivanovka in 1917, down the banks of the river Ponoy, and not far from the Sami settlement [*pogost*] Kamenka. Krasnoshchelye was an outsettlement [*vyselok*]. In the beginning, the village was considered a temporary settlement (sometimes described as a camp [*stanovishche*]). People continued to migrate from the Komi area in the 1920s, and many newcomers moved straight in an eastward direction to the new places where the Komi had settled: Ivanovka, Krasnoshchelye, Kanevka, Oksino. On the official maps Krasnoshchelye appeared only in the 1940s. In a manuscript held in the library of Lovozero, the regional historian Aleksey Kiselev (n.d.)

[1] The summary is based on several sources (Ushakov and Dashchinskiy 1988, Konakov 1984, Konakov and Kotov 1991, Kotov 1988, Kiselev , Kiselov 2009, Kol'skiy Sever 2013).

suggests that one of the reasons for resettlement might be Lenin's NEP (New Economic Policy), allowing profit seeking individuals to sell fishing and reindeer herding production to the new cooperatives and state enterprises. However, the outsettlements where "one man, brothers or a family chooses a rich place along a river" have been a longstanding pattern among the Izhma Komi, as the ethnographer Pitirim Sorokin (1911) had already observed in the beginning of the 20th century.

The village is also described as a reindeer-herding village. This is based on the fact that not only were its founders reindeer herders, but for many years its existence has been dominated by the reindeer herding enterprise established in 1930 as kolkhoz “Krasnoshchelye”. It has been through different stages and degrees of collectivization: kolkhoz artel[2], kolkhoz, and sovkhoz. In 1962 the reindeer herding kolkhozes "Krasnoshchelye" and "Krasnaya Tundra" (in the village of Ivanovka) merged in a new kolkhoz named after Lenin – *kolkhoz imeni Lenina*. In 1971, when they merged with the collective farms from the village of Ponoy and of Sosnovka, the collective-owned kolkhoz turned into a state-owned enterprise – sovkhoz "*Pamyat Lenina*" (Memory of Lenin). Such developments were not unique. The restructurings point to problems of the Soviet economy. In the 1950s, the shortages of agricultural production caused by the massive industrialization of the 1930s grew significantly. The deficit of food supply in the urban areas was palpable, and the authorities needed to take action. Merging agricultural enterprises into larger units was one such action.

Merging the kolkhozes also affected the settlement patterns on the Kola Peninsula. The Sami pogost Kamenka and the village of Ivanovka became renamed as Chalmny Varre in 1930[3]. Under the Stalinist repressions several families from

[2] From Russian *artel’* – a voluntary form of cooperative of workers, peasants, hunters, herdsmen, craftsmen in pre-revolutionary Russia and in the first years of Soviet collectivization who shared the means of production and cooperated for carrying out given tasks.
[3] Although the village was renamed, people in Krasnoshchelye used more often Ivanovka. This fact marks the thesis.

Lovozero were sentenced to temporary expulsions. At least one such family returned after the war and settled in Krasnoshchelye. In the meantime, the villagers from Oksino had moved to Krasnoshchelye to cope better with the economic hardship caused by the war. After the war, with the establishment of the school, the medical center, the meteorological station, the mink farm and other social and economic structures in the village, people from different parts of the Soviet Union moved to Krasnoshchelye. Some stayed, others left after a few years. In the 1960s, with the merging of the kolkhozes, the village of Chalmny Varre (Ivanovka) was closed down, and the villagers resettled to Krasnoshchelye and Lovozero. Later, in the 1980s, the village of Ponoy suffered the same fate. The village of Krasnoshchelye is therefore very closely connected with the history of the Komi diaspora and with the history of the kolkhoz, the collective-owned farm which later turned into sovkhoz, a state-owned farm.

Both the village and the kolkhoz had reindeer herding as their raison d'être. In Scandinavia, reindeer herding is a form of subsistence economy linked to the indigenous Sami. In the Russian part of Sápmi, the traditional settlement area of the Sami people, the situation was somewhat different. Before the migration of the Komi, the Sami kept small herds and used reindeer mostly for transportation, whilst fishing and hunting were their main means of subsistence. With the arrival of the Komi the Sami reindeer herding intensified too. Many scholars have pointed out that later, the Soviet authorities embraced the intensive methods of the Izhma Komi reindeer herding, giving the Komi an advantage over the indigenous Sami population. The two existing reindeer herding cooperatives today in the Murmansk region were founded largely by Komi families (in Lovozero, in kolkhoz Tundra, 46 of 58 households were Komi, nine were Nenets and three were Sami). After the collectivization however, the majority of the Komi were not employed in herding, but in transportation, fishing, construction, or just as migratory laborers. In 1982, as

Oleg Kotov (1988) points out, 80 per cent of the Komi living in Lovozero district procured their living in non-traditional professions.

The Soviet regime offered opportunities for education and mobility, but according to Kotov's survey from 1982, the majority of the people who lived in Krasnoshchelye preferred to stay in their home village. As reasons for this, the villagers pointed to: habit, that life was easier in terms of material conditions, the possibility to own a house and a farm, a love for the land and for farming, ethnic belonging, and nature. Even those with higher qualifications preferred the rural area. According to Teodor Shanin (2009), such rural households based on family economy strategies were the only form of social structure that persisted alongside the Soviet planned economy and market reforms. Therefore, this thesis, rather than emphasizing what is particular in the village, seeks to understand the constancies of everyday life and look at the village as representative within a larger Russian context.

Krasnoshchelye is a place of diasporas; its history consists of people on the move and layers of state projects that have been initiated, realized, failed. The course of history, however, has been shaped not only by major socioeconomic order rationales, but also by chance and by individual personal drive. This understanding forms the basis of my thesis. In addition, my overall aim has been to find a balance between what is considered "particularities" of the village and the non-particular: to acknowledge that most people in the village are linked by kinship to reindeer herders, yet the average family is not the reindeer herding family; to acknowledge that the majority of people are of Komi descent, yet most of them have mixed ethnic backgrounds. This is reflected in the thesis as one article is about the Komi and another one – about the reindeer herding. Nevertheless, as a whole the thesis questions idiosyncrasies of remoteness.

This dissertation explores the remoteness of the village and its social aspects. Remoteness is an issue of topography. Topos, in classical Greek rhetoric, means a

line of argument. In daily use it usually means a place, a spatial category. The dissertation draws on ethnographic material from the village of Krasnoshchelye and engages with a long intellectual tradition of discussing place and voice (Appadurai 1988, Gupta and Ferguson 1997, Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, Feld and Basso 1996). Places (and the people who dwell in them) have voices. Although empirically grounded, anthropology nevertheless construes these voices and places. These constructions have been widely debated over the past decades, questioning both the method of anthropological inquiry and embracing concepts like location, situatedness and positionality. Sometimes the voices we seek to understand are muted by political conditions; sometimes they appear as unintelligible; sometimes they are not heard at all. Be it due to an absent sense of hearing, lack of sensibility or because they sound as natural to us as our own beating heart. Voices (the anthropologist's voice included) echo, reverberate, tremble, crack and trail away. They voice arguments, and are part of conversations, dialogues and monologues. Nonetheless, they are temporary. In brief, the thesis seeks to understand remoteness through different voices, movements, drives and affects, that at shifting moments of time have come together in the village of Krasnoshchelye.

Tracking trajectories

In addition to the stated aim, the thesis also plots the trajectory of my own life, my fieldwork and the passing through of different places, localities, locations[4]. I heard about the village of Krasnoshchelye in 1995 when I, as part of a research team, visited the Kola Peninsula for the first time. In 1996, we landed there for several minutes on our way back to Lovozero from a stay at the village of Sosnovka. In 1998 I got to know the reindeer herders of Brigade No 1 from the village at their tundra camp. In 1999 I met their families in the village. Somewhere in-between I

[4] Although these will be understood as synonyms by most readers without anthropological training, they point not only to geographical places but also to social contexts (Appadurai 1996, Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

moved from Sofia in Bulgaria, to Tromsø, Norway. The exotic cold climate, the polar nights and the Northern Lights became part of my everyday life. From being a research assistant, I started my own individual research projects[5]. In 2000 I made the film "Across troubled water" from my stay in the village of Krasnoshchelye. I carried the village in my mind through the birth of two children and other such practical matters of life: employment, house buying and moving until 2004, when I finished my master's degree at the University of Tromsø.

I thought of going back to Krasnoshchelye. While working in the visual anthropology unit at the University of Tromsø, I followed the technological developments of digital cameras and editing software. I wanted to return to the village with better equipment and make a new film. In 2011, I was employed in a doctoral position which made me think “the time has come”. At the time, I was also working on a large joint research project about the historical relations between Norway and Russia during the past 200 years. Through this work I became interested in the historical processes that had caused the deep-seated differences on both sides of the border and also a little frustrated with the fact that social science research on present day Russia in Norway is dominated by state political issues.

Moreover, in 2012 when I started planning the fieldwork, my personal situation was different from the last time I carried out fieldwork – I was a wife and a mother of three. The fieldwork thus became a family enterprise. In March 2012 I left for Russia with my husband and our three children, in our fully packed car. I was not leaving home for the field; I was taking my home with me to a new place. Although, anthropologists have discussed the pros and cons of taking family to the field (for example Cassell 1987) it is nevertheless a demanding task. It led to me postponing the film project. I did not know what to expect and neither did my family, although we are accustomed to moving between "homes". The fact that they

[5] In 1995-1998 I took part in joint-research projects between the Bulgarian Society for Regional Cultural Studies and the University of Tromsø, under the leadership of Yulian Konstantinov and Trond Thuen.

came along marked the fieldwork and the locality; the remote village was not only a geographical site as a necessary part of the research process, it became a family home too. In Krasnoshchelye we stayed in the house of a family I knew from before – Irina and Vassiliy, and they became our extended family there. In a way Krasnoshchelye will be forever etched in our family memories as one of our homes scattered around between Northern Norway, Bulgaria, and the central inland part of Norway.

The fieldwork also reflects a search to find my place in the anthropological field. Between 2004 when I finished my master's thesis and 2012, Yulian Konstantinov and Vladislava Vladimirova had already contributed impressive work on the reindeer herding cooperatives in the area, on the tundra related population and on the ethnopolitical mobilizations among the indigenous Sami people (Konstantinov 2015, Vladimirova 2006, Konstantinov 2005b, Vladimirova 2011). The research project INPOINT (The Socioeconomic modernization in Northwest Russia – The insider's point of view) I was part of together with them, thematically directed me towards the modernization of education in the inland rural area. Yet from the very beginning, the focus upon education opened up a whole field of topics, from extracurricular outdoor activities, upbringing and care, to local history, tourism, festivals, celebrations, handicrafts and patriotism. The focus upon education had one drawback – it put me in a position of eternal compromise with the administrative requirements for research ethics.

Since 1999, the institutional ethical guidelines in Norway had changed. One of the requirements was to document the "informed consent" of the people studied. In addition, my earlier stays had also taught me about the expectations of the Russian administration and authorities. On this basis, I delivered a letter to the local administration and those responsible for the education administrative bodies, stating the purpose of my research. I tried to adapt to the local understandings and I did not ask the lay people to sign any documents. In Russia, the idea that scientific research

might bring harm to people is not widely held. On the contrary, it is considered to be edifying and enlightening. Thus, on the basis of previous experience, I knew that to ask for signatures on paper would be a lost cause and would make people suspicious, especially on a stationary with a letterhead from my Norwegian university. To avoid the problem of gaining parental consent (and in my opinion open up a can of worms), I chose to work with documents, texts and materials accessible through the school libraries and with the teachers, rather than working directly with pupils. Therefore, I became increasingly aware of the role the official discursive practices play in daily life, which also became the foundation of the thesis.

A further dilemma arose with the process of anonymization. When I wrote my master's thesis, I anonymized my informants following commonplace practice. I did this when I wrote the articles included in this thesis, as this is also an expectation of most scholarly journals. I have certain regrets in this aspect though. When I later found photographs of people whom I knew well under false names in the Eastern Sami Atlas, it upset me despite the false names appearing in quotation marks. Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov (2016) in his description of the Soviet system, conjures up the image of the scaffolding being more important than the construction. In fact, following the institutionalized ethical guidelines[6] on anonymization and informed consent reminded me of working on the scaffolding. I accept it is important, but the essential part of the thesis provides my understanding of the life in this particular setting. This understanding is not based on data communicated to me by others that I reveal or expose through the thesis. It is understanding gained with individuals – through communication, spending time together, doing things together both in the field and afterwards – therefore they are not anonymized in the

[6] Research ethics is an obligatory part of the PhD education in Norway. Any research project in Norway should follow the guidelines established by The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH) and be registered at NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

first part of the thesis. Fieldwork involves a significant commitment to the relationship, and this commitment weighs upon me at least as much as following the NSD and NESH regulations. I am also aware that there are differences in what is considered sensitive data in different countries, and that such information changes over time.

Sculpting the thesis

Michael Herzfeld (2014, 3) writes of ethnographic texts as verbal sculptures. They present an argument. Its consistency is achieved by juxtaposing and rendering into text observations, events, practices, and discourses. This does not mean that I have exposed all the data gathered. The text is also informed by choice and silence; the silence of the people I met there, my decision to remain silent on certain topics, the silence of other scholars' texts, the silence of the media. I know there were preemptive silences. In rare cases, I have been told "not to tell anyone". Silence has its agency. This is even more pronounced in Russian literature and language where the meanings of silence are nuanced through different words such as *tishina* (quietness), *molchanie* (the 'art' of remaining silent), *bezmolvie* (the 'art' of being tacit). Such silences clearly inform the dissertation, but do not explicitly rise to the surface. Rather they are hinted at or briefly mentioned in the text.

My earlier work with film editing had familiarized me with the visualization of silence. If one looks at the visualization of sound waves, silence is just a flat line. It reminds one of a horizon; therefore I came to think quite often of silences as horizons. Later in the text, I comment on these horizons, and note that every time I visited the village, a new horizon opened up with a new point of view. Every time, I heard a new story I had not heard before. Horizons and silences are temporary. Time and changing positions make them transient experiences. From this arose the idea of temporary truths; that each truth was only temporary and could be opposed the year after or some months later, or sometimes even on the next day. Getting closer to another person opens up the possibility of temporarily shared horizons.

Such horizons (temporary openings and closures) “determine what we experience and how we interpret what we experience” (Crapanzano 2004, 2). In this way the research process became for me a process of constant transformation and change of position.

The thesis consists of an analytical part and four articles. Although I had formulated a clear plan, the writing was an open process and allowed for unforeseen moments. There was an element of chance, of unpredictability. Inspiration came from different directions and impulses. For example, the release of the documentary film "Tundra Tale" which presented a very different image of Krasnoshchelye to that of mine, provided the impetus for the article on media representations and stories. Similarly, Vladislava Vladimirova's invitation to make a joint presentation at the X Siberian Studies Conference in the fall of 2016 served as a foundation for the article on the Festival of the North.

The first two articles – on the school practices in Krasnoshchelye and on the Komi diaspora, were written almost simultaneously. When I started working through the new federal programs for patriotic education, I ventured into the notion of homeland and its different meanings: little motherland, big fatherland, historical homeland, indigenous homelands. The Komi are a diaspora group on the Kola Peninsula. They had a historical homeland, but did they have a current homeland? This made me look into postcolonial literature, into definitions of home and homeland. Homeland is a spatial concept. In the process of writing I became more and more interested in the spatial turn of social sciences and how it is echoed in a Russian context. At the same time, as an anthropologist I was also determined to promote the perspectives of the people – those who "dwell" in the spaces defined as homelands. The notions of homes and homelands and of remoteness are to a certain degree mutually exclusive. Remote means away from home. Home is associated with the close, the familiar, the everyday. The dynamic relationship between the abstract idea of remoteness and the everyday life at home is developed mainly

through the introductory part of the thesis (*kappa*). However, it also provides the background for the articles. This dynamic relationship affects the body of scholarship (the ethnographic texts), institutions (the school), media representations (as I describe in the article on stories), and cultural events (as I describe in the article on the Festival of the North).

In this regard, two theoretical currents have helped me to look at the spatial aspects and this dynamic relationship: Doreen Massey's (1994, 2005) writings give space an open and dynamic character; Nigel Thrift and Phillip Vannini advance the so-called non-representational theories, theories that capture the onflow of everyday life, and project life as movements, perceptive, generative and transformative, never in position, but always in passing (Vannini 2015, 3, Thrift 2008). Therefore, I rely on the notion of trajectory. Above, I sketched out parts of my life trajectory. Later, as the fieldwork was extended to what Helena Wolff (2002) has called "yo-yo fieldwork" (returning visits, meeting people from the village in Lovozero or in Murmansk, keeping in touch, following the online community in the social network VKontakte), I became aware of how multiple and diverse both the life trajectories and the institutional trajectories were. Their constantly changing constellations lay the foundation for the thesis and render truths temporary.

My argument centers on the ordinary “stuff” of life that in the everyday carries more weight than any political centre, be it Moscow or Murmansk. In the introductory section, my thesis reveals how small things, temporary problems that at first sight seem banal, in fact make the world go round. The caretaking, the genealogies, the handicrafts, the thousands of unfinished projects, the ability to sit down, drink tea for hours and tell a good story – they are arguments for a good life. I have tried to make them as coherent as possible. Although I hint at some of the tragic events that occur, they have not found their place in the thesis. I half-heartedly mention at certain points the alcohol abuse, the Afghan and the Chechen veterans from the village, drugs, health problems, violence. This is not because I want to

idealize the village or circumvent the ethical regulations, but because I want to emphasize that it is even more important to acknowledge that despite tragedies and suffering, one learns to live with loss, with the impossibility to help a loved one.

Such small projects tell us how people envisage what is ‘a good life’. They also have transformative potential. When I call Krasnoshchelye and ask how life is and how they are doing, I usually get the same answer: “*Potikhon'ku*” (translated literally as “quietly” the word also means “furtively” and “slowly”). Life is not about big fights, or constant struggles or ideological projects. Vassiliy, our host, who normally uses “*potikhon'ku*”, once summed up the situation with the saying: "*Za chto my borolis', na to i naporolis'* " (the dictionary[7] translates it almost literally "What we fought for has been our undoing", to me it sounds like “If you play with fire, you get burned”). Vassiliy is far removed from any form of organized political or civic engagement. Therefore, I could not understand whether he envisaged the Soviet fight for a bright future or the fight for democratization and the fall of the Soviet regime when he used this saying. For me, he just denounced the political fights. His quiet everyday life in this context does not mean resignation, but rather makes the argument that transformations may appear in the small minutiae. The ethnographic material in the thesis aims to show the political potential in the practical affairs of everyday life as important statements and transformative engagements.

The thesis was initially intended to be cumulative with peer-reviewed articles and a summary. However in the process of writing, and through the lack of previous examples and experience, it started to take the shape of a monograph. The analytical part and the four articles can be read as separate individual works, but they also build to a coherent argument.

[7] *Bol'shoy Russko-Angliyskiy Frazeologicheskiy Slovar'* (Big Russian-English Phraseological Dictionary).

The first article, *Komi*, started as a review of literature on the Komi and the stereotypes produced through ethnographic and other scholarly writings. It adds to the historical background of the area, describing the history of the Komi and the state policy in the North. It shows how the discourses of scholarly works, state policies and popular stereotypes easily transgress each other independently from the real life on the ground. Therefore for many of the Komi, political mobilization is a lost cause as the above-mentioned proverb implies.

The second article, *School,* describes how the school in Krasnoshchelye follows, implements, appropriates the state programs, and imposes its own view in the educational process. While the educational reforms advance the state claims to restore an absent moral order (which vanished in the 1990s with the dissolution of the Soviet Union), the local school in the remote village envisages its own view of the current challenges and of the future, and through the everyday practices transforms the federal programs accordingly.

The third article, *Stories,* is about the urban media describing Krasnoshchelye as a remote, wild and exotic place, and about the local stories, 'cultivating' these wild places. I argue that the stories can be read as political statements. They do not engage directly with the exoticizing ideas of remoteness, but they cultivate their own image of the world by marveling, banalizing and laughing at the "wilderness".

The fourth article, *Festival*, is about the Festival of the North and the reindeer races. Initially, the festival's inception was an attempt by the authorities to attract people from remote places to Murmansk. Now, the reindeer races with their spontaneity and unpredictability subvert the established political meanings bringing "wilderness and the remoteness" into town.

In the analytical part (*kappa*) the four articles are referred to with their short names *Komi, School, Stories,* and *Festival.* They intend to show how remoteness is enacted onto a discourse, an institution, a practice, and an event. At the same time, in the articles I show the transformative engagements of the people with the same

events, practices, institutions and discourses. Therefore, none of them are constant or stable. The individuals live within this temporariness. They are open to satisfaction and enjoyment. Therefore, temporariness should not only be associated with ruination evoking nostalgia, or ignorance, but also to prospects of the good life.

Still life

A view on the village from the river

Chapter Two: Methodology and ethics

Although widely established as the trademark of anthropology, fieldwork is always a complex, multifaceted experience. Over 20 years of professional commitment to the field of anthropology has taught me to think of anthropological data as relational and intersubjective. However, their firm empirical grounding is prerequisite for the discipline. Such insights call for a broader understanding of methodology: as technique, as philosophy and as autobiography (Hammersley 2011), and this forms the basis for this chapter. Here, I want to address some methodological issues related to my research project. Some of them are inherent in the nature of fieldwork itself: it is both intersubjective and experiential whilst also pursuing objectivity and rationality. In addition, fieldwork is practiced in different ways in different countries. Other methodological issues, as I mentioned in the preceding chapter, were provoked by changes in ethical guidelines and regulations for research. Furthermore, my previous fieldwork in the village and the presence of my family in the field imposed some limitations; however it also allowed for new insights to be garnered.

Fieldwork in Russia

> *Although, the ethnographer may free himself from the narrative of his home discipline, he surrenders himself to the power with which the discipline is understood locally*. (Anderson 2000, 141)

Explaining anthropological fieldwork in Russia is never easy. The official university credentials stated that I would conduct work related to "local history or local lore or regional lore" [*kraevedcheskaya rabota*]. At the same time I co-participated with representatives from the local authorities in a research project on the socio-economic development on the Kola Peninsula. Nevertheless, I used *krayevedenie* in the documents as a strategic choice. In the following section, I will explain why.

Although the terms social and cultural anthropology are used in some institutions in Russia, the higher education institutions in the Murmansk region place anthropology under the umbrella of philosophy as a discipline. Besides, anthropology is often understood as 'physical anthropology'. Therefore, I knew from earlier days that if I presented myself as an anthropologist, people would expect me to either measure bodies or to pore over philosophy books. If I referred to my fellow anthropologists Yulian Konstantinov and Vladislava Vladimirova, who have been working in the Murmansk region for years, people would define them through the main topic of their work as "reindeer researchers" or sometimes as "Sami researchers".

At times, I also felt like my research focus was getting lost in translation. For example, my questions about the presumed inconsistencies between the centralized education and the local, actual relations were considered of no relevance for a scholar; this was the work of an administrator. Furthermore, the educators in Lovozero and Krasnoshchelye did not see any such inconsistencies. If anything, the inconsistencies I perceived were caused by lack of resources (see *School*). When I asked questions about the curricular programs, the teachers considered school education to be my field of expertise; they often started to interrogate me about the school system in Norway, and in particular the Sami school in Kautokeino with which they had earlier collaborated. Whenever I mentioned "traditional knowledge" and "local knowledge" I was met with the understanding that it is the knowledge of the elders, and I was often advised to go and talk to the elders instead. Instances such as these led me to recalibrate my explanations in order to make them understandable to the people I met.

At the time of my fieldwork I was also involved with a large historical research project, on the relationship between Russia and Norway. For this project I was collecting photographs and illustrations for a richly illustrated book publication (Nielsen 2014, Holtsmark 2015). Therefore, it came naturally to me to say that I was

interested in local history, and especially how it is transmitted through material (objects) and 'non-verbal forms' of communication. In addition, it made sense to say that I was an ethnographer. The ethnographers were doing fieldwork and collecting things (I was collecting by taking photographs).

Yet, in this context ethnography also had its local connotations. Ethnographers in Russia were interested in keeping, restoring, and preserving the past. As Alexey Elfimov acknowledges, in Russian anthropology "the struggle with the past has traditionally been a more defining factor than concern with the present" (Elfimov 2010, 95). I was concerned with the present, and looked at the past as being incorporated into the present. The very improvised explanation of being a local historian, or interested in local history turned out to be fruitful explanation for my stay in the field. As I shall explain below, historical documents and photographs opened new doors for me.

I sometimes elaborated and stated that I was interested in the non-verbal, visual expressions of the local knowledge; how their photographs, drawings and handicrafts “speak”. Such artifacts embodied different ideas and sensations, memories and mediations. I could incorporate them into a larger and recognizable concept of folk creativity [*narodnoe tvorchestvo*] and look further at how such creativity materializes in school practices, local museums, and everyday life. Therefore, I spent time looking at things and listening to the narratives they provoked. Was I a folklorist? Exploring Russian literature on folklore led me to recognize that the usual understanding of folklore was rather narrow (often criticized for encapsulating the rural area into a timeless, unmodern state). The Russian folklorist Viktor Gusev defines folklore in the following manner:

> as understood not as a conservative element of spiritual culture that survives during the progressive development of the society, but rather as a dynamic structure in which relics coexist with innovations... relics assume new meaning, acquiring pertinence to contemporary life. (Gusev in Šmidchens 1999, 53)

This was echoed on several occasions in discussions with the participants in the folklore ensemble regarding the *chastushki*, the traditional limerick-like folk songs on problems of the day. As they used to say: "In the morning in the news, in the evening in rhyme" [*Utrom v gazete, vecherom v kuplete*].

The idea that I was committed to folklore was strengthened by the fact that Irina, our host, was an employee of the ethno-cultural centre in the village and took part in the local folklore ensemble "*Ryt Kya*". She invited me to their appearances. I photographed them, and later made some recordings available on YouTube. In this way, for many villagers my field of interest was settled. Indeed, I participated in both performances and rehearsals when they were learning new songs from old and new books, modifying old songs, and practicing. Sometimes, they asked me to evaluate the performance. Did I think it was good? I was asked to comment as an "expert" in a field they themselves had assigned to me. As David Anderson, describing his fieldwork with the Evenki people in Siberia says in the quote introducing this section, I had no choice but to surrender to the local understandings.

Rather than feeling entrapped by these discrepant definitions, I realized that they are useful. They point to national and regional differences in the field of science, revealing not only problems of translation, but of methodology, and particularly of reflexivity and subjectivity as legitimate scholarly practices. In Russia, science is understood as a factual and objective enlightening project. Alexey Elfimov (2014) discusses the differences between Western and Russian ethnography through the different connotations of: science and *nauka* (the Russian term for science). *Nauka* is objective and cumulative, like bricks piling up to a monolithic body. Science, on the other hand, is considered more self-reflexive and as it goes in different directions, probably more self-contradictory. In the context of social sciences, this means rejecting the absolute truth and moving towards the production of knowledge that articulates an emancipatory, participative perspective on the human condition and its betterment (Denzin 1998, 313). However, it is

necessary to acknowledge that some Russian anthropologists have challenged the "objectivist" bias (Antropologicheskiy Forum 2005). Thus, the awareness of different traditions has been part of the fieldwork. In addition, I was repeatedly reminded that I had a "cultural biography". After discussing "*Realnost Ethnosa*" (The Reality of Ethnicity), their annual publication, one professor from Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia jokingly concluded that I had been taught properly in Bulgaria, but "brainwashed with all that Western constructivism in Norway". He was joking, but his remark signaled a divide between the scholarly traditions and their differing approaches.

In the field, on several occasions, village residents reminded me that reflexivity and subjectivity were not related to their ideas of science and scientific research. In Krasnoshchelye I was invited to hold a speech during the celebrations on the Day of the Cyrillic alphabet – 24 May. Although I considered my knowledge of the topic insufficient for a talk, I could not decline – I was expected to do such things. I decided to tell a personal story of what this day meant to me as a Bulgarian, without a manuscript. I told them how we used to celebrate the day in Bulgaria, about the controversies surrounding the nationality of the alphabet's founders – Cyril and Methodius. I told them how I discovered that the statue of Cyril and Methodius in Murmansk was a gift from my hometown of Sofia and is identical to the statue in front of the National Library of Bulgaria (it made me feel at home for a moment), and I proceeded to recount the adventurous transportation of the monument. Following my talk, one of the teachers read a paper on Stefan Permskiy, the founder of the Komi alphabet. At the informal get-together after the talks, I received the following feedback: my talk was good, but unusual. I asked what was so unusual. Two of the older ladies said that it was a very personal account from someone considered to be a "science worker". My talk stood in stark contrast to the next speaker's prepared script. The teacher had read her text in a declamatory style – the facts were presented as objective. One man then approached me and demanded

a clear-cut answer as to whether Cyril and Methodius were Greek or Slavic people? How come I did not know? I felt overwhelmed by the anxiety that they would think me a bad scholar if I did not provide a clear answer. My answer pointed to something objective – I stated that at that time Thessaloniki, the town of Cyril and Methodius' origin, was a Bulgarian town so they were Bulgarians; however now the town is in Greece. It worked and it confirmed their commonsensical understanding that the problems of ethnicity are, as a rule, problems of political borders. In this way I resolved the anxiety, yet the episode points to the emotional entanglements of doing fieldwork.

Entanglements

Interactions, statements, anxieties and many other factors affect our understanding of the field. Such insights have transformed the fieldwork method into one of the major concerns in anthropology. There is no clear definition or prescription on how to do fieldwork or participant observations. Fieldwork entails both disinterested inquiries and painful initiations, objective and subjective data, observation and participation, sensory experiences, and practical engagements (Jackson 2013). The scientific ideal of full intellectual detachment in the name of objectivity is according to many anthropologists impossible. Judith Okely (1992, 8) acknowledges that fieldwork is a "total experience", demanding all of the anthropologist's resources – intellectual, physical, emotional, political and intuitive. It involves so much of the self that it is impossible to extract that self from any part of the research process. Therefore, as Tim Ingold states, the distinctions between knowing and being, data-collecting and theory building, are "fossils of an outmoded distinction" (Ingold 2011, 241).

Moreover, debates about creativity, imagination and performativity have become commonplace in the anthropological discourse. In a recent book on non-representational methodologies, Phillip Vannini writes against methodological timidity, and invites towards performativity, to become "entangled in relations and

objects rather than studying their structures and meanings" (Vannini 2015, 15). As I describe later in the text, I was not only a recipient of the stories or an observer, I was a participant, and not least I became an object of their stories. The data is created through my interactions with people – I brought things and asked questions. Another set of data or insight came from simply being there, from telling stories of my previous experiences, from my fieldstays, from my studies at the University of Sofia, from my life in Northern Norway. I was knowledgeable but also eager to learn and the fieldwork became a transformative engagement with my previous knowledge, competences and experiences.

The following section features aspects of my entanglement with different relations and objects in the field (to use Vannini's expression). I will discuss three important features of this entanglement: its serendipitous character, how it involves emotions and how it relates to multiple contexts.

Serendipity and chance

As I had been working with local archives, I asked questions about ancestors and past events. Sometimes I, without knowing, brought new historical data into my conversations with interested people in the village. I shared old photographs and in turn asked people for their photographs and albums. 'Photo elicitation' is an established method (Harper 2002, Edwards 2005). As I describe in Chapter Six, looking at old albums allowed me to see places that I have overlooked and get new insights about the village. For example, when I asked questions about the river Ponoy, the conversations always focused upon fly-fishing tourism and salmon-fishing quotas. However, looking at the albums I found out that the river was about much more. The photographs captured activities such as farming, hay transportations, wood transportation, excursions to the neighboring village of Kanevka, and sunbathing. A more careful reading of the existing literature bolstered the insight into the importance of rivers. The Izhma Komi have looked for rivers, and their farming and cattle breeding was well described in the older ethnographic

texts from the 19th and early 20th centuries. I also found the vivid presence of farming in the stories (the importance of the dairy farm and the local cream was emphasized, for example, in the stories of the two women telling about how they treated the tourists who used to come, described in Chapter Four). This fact made me reflect upon my own preconceptions. Previously, I thought the dairy farm there was part of the imposed Soviet farming projects, not unlike the failed attempt to plant corn on the Kola Peninsula during Khrushchev's corn campaign[8]. It turned out that dairy farming has always been complementary to the reindeer herding for the Komi. This discovery was partly serendipitous and it made me look at the village beyond its definition as "a reindeer herding community", to that of a rural community. In this way, I seek to expand the understanding of the local relations beyond the reindeer herding – which has been well described in the works of Yulian Konstantinov (2015, 2005a, b, 2009) and Vladislava Vladimirova (2011, 2006).

There were other cases of such accidental insights or changing perspectives during the fieldwork, sometimes from my interventions (as here with the photos), sometimes by accident. When we had to leave the village and the country (we had Russian visas allowing for only 90 of 180 days stay) in June, I realized that all the helicopter tickets were sold out for the next few weeks. I thought most people were coming to the village to spend the holidays as *dachniki*, people who have houses in the village but do not live there. But it turned out that many village residents were travelling – taking exams in Murmansk, going on holiday trips, medical checks or visiting relatives in Lovozero and shopping, and there were no tickets. We had to find a solution. Several people had to get involved. In the end, a passing helicopter from the tourist fishing bases picked us up. Luckily it worked, because we had only a few days left on our visas. However, I probably would not have paid so much attention to the fact that people were travelling in the summer, if I had not stumbled

[8] The corn campaign is part, spin-off of Khrushchev's Virgin Lands campaign to boost the Soviet agriculture. Inspired by the American industrial agriculture the authorities tried to grow corn even in Murmansk region.

upon the sold-out helicopter tickets and the implications upon our personal situation. The local people were not stuck in the village because of its remoteness and inaccessibility in the summer period.

The importance of new insights 'by accidents' is acknowledged in anthropological literature (Rivoal and Salazar 2013, Hazan and Hertzog 2012, Fine and Deegan 1996, Okely 2013). Serendipity and chance mark the discoveries, the findings, the conclusions. Serendipity is found in comprehending and analyzing the research material, in finding the field by chance, in the writing process described by Michael Herzfeld as "serendipitous sculpture"(Herzfeld 2014). As I described in Chapter One, my writing also included unplanned elements such as the release of a film made in the village, or giving a presentation about the Festival of the North. Sverker Finnström acknowledges that serendipity is part of the academic life in general, but also a characteristic that undermines the anthropological project within the "big research agencies of today" (Finnström 2016, 47). Both anthropological fieldwork and social life are unpredictable, and full of improvisations (Hallam and Ingold 2007). People have to work out life as they go along; they improvise and such improvisations are generative and relational. They give rise to phenomenal forms and embody certain duration; they are temporal. The improvisations affect not only how we and they act in everyday life, but also the ways we write in art, literature, and science (Hallam and Ingold 2007).

The unpredictability is to a certain extent related to familiarity. Many anthropological accounts reveal the initial unfamiliarity of the anthropologist with the field, with the place, the people, the objects. The familiarity is not always cumulative. It changes over time. Things, people, objects, once familiar, might become unfamiliar. In the next section, I discuss a couple of cases from my fieldwork when changing aspects of familiarity also touched me emotionally.

Life entanglements and emotions

> And yet like life, fieldwork exposes individuals to the complex interweave of values and emotions in the setting of real-world inexpediency and resistance, so that emotion is almost always multiple, complex, and divided. It is this uncertain, multisided, and often dangerous human reality that we seek to privilege. (Smith and Kleinman 2010, 174)

As I mentioned in the preceding chapter, I consider my main fieldwork to be the three months spent in the village with my family: my husband and our three children. During these months we experienced and shared aspects of the everydayness in the village. As a family we had to make our home there in our own familiar ways. We had to wash and dry clothes, play in the snow, prepare meals, buy bread. The children played outside, went to the store, fished in the river, helped our landlords, cooked, washed, did housework. My husband also went fishing, and helped with planting potatoes, or other household tasks. We did things differently from the local people, who called us the "Norwegians", and we were objects of constant observations and comments in the beginning. After a while, they became familiar with us; in turn we became familiar with the place and the people. There were layers of familiarity and unfamiliarity. According to many anthropologists, the everydayness is the most important characteristic of fieldwork and methodologically it often brought valuable insights.

In 2012 I could sit down and chat with my former landlady, Aunt Panya, looking through the window at people passing and discussing the usual daily chores, grandchildren, and now great-grandchildren. It was as if thirteen years had not passed. It was so familiar. I was often reminded that I have been engaged with the place for more than a decade. Sometimes I was reminded that many years had passed since my last stay there. I met new people of whom I had no previous knowledge. Boys, whom I knew as cheerful teenagers, were now grown-up men. A young man, driving our luggage to the helicopter, said to me: "I remember you. Last time you

lived here I was still a kid, I had not started at school". Now he was a tall and sturdy man. There were old familiarities and new unfamiliarities.

The fact that the Ethno-Cultural Centre[9] invited me as a researcher from the University of Tromsø, Norway to hold a talk was a mark that I had a new status in the village. I was also more confident. During the 12 years I had not been to the village, I had grown up not only as a researcher but also as a mother and wife. I discussed topics in a more self-confident manner, and I intervened and shared my opinions more freely than before. Nevertheless, I also had to acknowledge that some of the old familiarities had become unfamiliar – a fact that brought a sense of uncertainty and anxieties. As I could not recognize the young man who drove us, in the eyes of some acquaintances I had also changed beyond recognition.

In 1999 I spent most of the time in the reindeer herding tundra camp, and felt most familiar with the reindeer herders. In 2012 the situation was different. I was shocked when one of the herders I knew well, seeing me with my husband and the kids, crossed to the other side of the street and only slightly nodded to me. Initially, I took his avoidance of me as disrespect. The episode shook my self-confidence and brought moments of intense anxiety. I wrote in my field diary about "gender barriers" and mourned the "lost connection" with the herders. This new distance made me sad.

As Judith Okely (1992, 9) has pointed out, the intellectual cannot easily be separated from the personal and the emotional. The idea of emotions entered the anthropological discipline relatively late. Nevertheless, today most anthropologists would agree with James Davies' argument, that treated with intellectual vigor emotions can assist our understanding of the lifeworlds in which we set ourselves down (Davies 2010, 1). Returning to the field almost amplified the need for self-reflexivity as it evoked many feelings. Michael Agar (Agar 1996) pertinently

[9] The Ethno-Cultural Centre is part of the Lovozero rural settlement administration.

describes the 'culture shock', when the anthropologist falls from the heights of the ivory tower into the field. Similarly, when I returned to Krasnoshchelye and caught up with people I knew from before, my feelings amplified. Often they oscillated between sadness and anger. There were stories of unexpected turns of lives, undesired and tragic. Sometimes I felt frustrated, sometimes it was outrage. During the 12 years I had been away from the field, young lives had been violated by mobilizations to war, drugs, alcohol. Many stories reminded me how fragile life is, how life can change in a heartbeat.

Michael Jackson (Jackson 2010) describes such field anxiety as heuristic, to show how personal experiences might be used to illuminate the understanding of intersubjective worlds. My anxiety after the encounter with the reindeer herder shows only part of this intersubjective world. The fact that the anthropologist uses herself as the instrument of the method (Nielsen 1996, 16, Davies 2010, 80), might be nonetheless a pitfall. As I shared my shock at the herder not greeting me in the manner I expected, the explanation of my hosts was more than logical: "You know – he is too shy, if it was only you... But think also of him! It could be as simple as that he was drunk". Although such emotions have marked my perceptions of the field, I realized that these emotions were not always shared with the people I talked to in Krasnoshchelye, then and there. They were my reactions to an ongoing story. After my fieldwork, I tried to write about such tragic "events" and stories, that moved me, disconcerted me, or even perplexed me. In the course of writing, I realized that the stories did not stop with the unfortunate event where my reaction culminated. These personal stories flowed into everyday life to the moment I heard the story and continued further. My emotions informed my understanding, and they were as Josephides argues "moral judgements" (Josephides 2003, 60-63). But they are momentary and still mine, and say more about me than about the life in the village. Moreover, they can be a pitfall, because the author is usually willing to

represent herself as a good, ethical and moral person (Spencer 1992, 59). The following story serves as an example.

The day off

One day my family decided to take a day off and go camping up the river. Our landlord took us to a beautiful sandy place where a small river runs into Ponoy. He and my husband took the boat and went into the tributary to find additional stakes for the tent, while the children and I made a fire and started preparing for a barbeque. A different boat approached, and I could see that there were two men floating wood down the river. One of them stepped from the boat and initiated a conversation. He asked me what I was doing there. I replied quite simply that we were taking a day off (I was peeling potatoes). He looked around, registered that there was a fishnet on the other bank and asked me whether the fishnet was mine? I answered "no" and continued to peel potatoes as if not affected by his presence (I was aware of the fishnet; Vassiliy had checked it and concluded disapprovingly that the fishnet has not been checked for several days, and commented that even worse – with us camping there, they won't check it for the next few days). I did not ask the man any questions; I knew that when strangers meet by the river they do not reveal identities (as the story with the Black Prince in Chapter Five shows – such encounters are usually marked by discretion and cautiousness). Moreover he had his own project (floating the wood down river), so I wondered to myself about the purpose of his surveillance as he clearly checked out what I was doing there. The guy said, "Good, relax!" and left. Two days later I met the same man in front of the cooperative office and greeted him. He presented himself, smiled and told me and the three men who were present that I had managed to puzzle him. He had only just come back to the village and did not know of our arrival. As he had been in the transport unit traveling back and forth in 1999 we had never met in person before. He saw a woman, alone with three children, without a boat, without a man, in the middle of nowhere, castaway; he had to check out the situation. He had pondered our meeting that day

on his way back to the village, then heard different rumors about us. What he could not figure out, was where my interest lay: was it the soil or the fish? If I was not interested in fish or soil, or biology what were we doing there at the sandy beach on the river? We talked for several more minutes. In contrast to our brief and almost tacit encounter at the camping spot, in the village – the conversation was far more relaxed. I tried to apologize for being impolite at the river, but he said "nevermind" and left.

At the river, I acted a bit impolitely, and probably appeared annoyed. I can justify my absent friendliness (or impolite behavior) with the fact that it is the usual practice at the river, but I could probably have offered him a cup of tea (maybe they had been out for many hours in the nature). The fact that we met later allowed me to apologize and feel better. This case was resolved in such a way that I could conclude it and manage to recreate myself as a moral person here, in the text. In the process of writing we strive to give closure to our personality and our role as researchers. At the river, I had my own anxieties. Such emotions are part of our relations with others, but they are not always shared with them or with other people. Therefore, I prefer to acknowledge the importance of emotions, emphasizing their heuristic potential to reveal the temporariness of the matters of the day. In the earlier example when the herder did not greet me, I was most concerned with my feelings. In the everyday they faded away. Soon afterwards I got used to the new sense of unfamiliarity. When in 2013 I stopped by the reindeer base for an hour, the herders whom I knew talked to me "in the old way" and I was happy. Maybe because we were in the tundra, maybe because I was not with my family, maybe they just had a better day, maybe because they were sitting and playing dominos and had nothing else to do. Emotions are transitory, and I acknowledge their role namely as transitory. They reveal our entanglements with people and objects as inconstant and temporary.

Intertextuality: Grandma Lyuba

As our entanglement with relations and objects is molded by our prior experience and knowledge, so is our verbal communication in the field. Stories told in everyday life are not only descriptions – they are also texts. As such, they are constructed through other texts, and articulated in ways which depend upon and change with social circumstances (Fairclough 1992, 9). They are intertextual. Therefore, the stories I heard, wrote down, noted, are not only considered as factual data – informative and accurate, but also as stories reminiscent of other texts and social facts. The story of Baba Lyuba explicitly does this, others stories less so. As a participant in the discursive event, when this story was told I undoubtedly changed the story. However, my understanding was also dependent on my previous knowledge, and the associations I held. Intertextuality[10] is a concept developed mainly in the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva, two scholars whose work I became familiar with through my early years of study at the University of Sofia. It means that each text refers, cites, copies, engages with other texts on different levels. As the term is related to postmodernism and literary studies, some anthropologists prefer not to use "intertextuality" and choose other terms such as "narrative connections" (Collins 2015, 100). For me, intertextuality relates to intersubjectivity. Kirsten Hastrup (2010, 191) posits that the ethnographers' perceptions are shaped by "both the intersubjectivity explored in the field and the intertextuality inherent in the anthropological tradition." In what follows, I will complicate this separation – there is intertextuality in the field, and intersubjectivity is also inherent in ethnographic writing.

Before we left for Krasnoshchelye I went to the nearby town of Olenegorsk to get some supplies for our stay in the village. I was driving and Valentina and her daughter joined me. They had to finalize a contract for buying an apartment and

[10] The theory that any text is a transformation of earlier texts, and is involved in the production of other texts.

needed legal assistance. The trip took one hour and a half and we chatted for the whole time we were in the car together. The conversation turned to Ivanovka, the village closed down in the 1960s, and my wish to go there. They started to tell me about Baba Lyuba, the only inhabitant of Ivanovka. Baba Lyuba was born in Ivanovka, but with the resettlement in the 1960s moved to Krasnoshchelye. She married there but the marriage did not work. She left her husband, married a younger man and moved to the old Ivanovka. Then the younger man drowned, and she stayed alone in Ivanovka. Shortly afterwards she remarried, and her third husband moved in with her. Meanwhile, her first husband had suffered a stroke. She took him in to live with her and her third husband. One year later the third husband was dead. She continued to live in the empty village of Ivanovka with her paralyzed first (ex)husband.

The story circulates widely among the travelers writing blogs after tourist excursions to Kola Peninsula, and Baba Lyuba has become an indispensable part of the landscape. One can easily find some literary models of a femme fatale, such as Lucrecia Borgia or Lady Macbeth from Mtsensk, a novel by the Russian writer Nikolay Leskov (1865), later made into an opera by Dmitry Shostakovich. Yet here, the story was told with admiration and mostly laughter. The story was folklore. It incorporated references to 'cultural texts' and artefacts, and it made its way to the regional art exhibitions after Murmansk-based artist Olga Tsyleva painted a portrait of Baba Lyuba in 2012.

At other times, the stories would make references to different cultural texts I recognized or associated. I heard several stories about mermaids living in the river Ponoy. However were these stories a reference to Pushkin's poem "*Rusalka*" (“The Mermaid”) that has for years been on the syllabus of the Russian schools and was inspired by Russian fairy-tales, or were they provoked by the merchandise of Disney's mermaid Ariel that their grandchildren had spread around? What I want to point out, is that the stories open out to what the British anthropologist Judith Okely

(Okely 2010) calls "free association", emphasizing their importance for anthropologists in the analysis. Free associations, whatever comes to the person's mind of random ideas and images, are dependent on the anthropologists' past experiences, and affect his/her initial experiential understanding and the writing process.

The story of Baba Lyuba intrigued me. For the local people it was their own story of the place. I could associate it with the regional rhetoric on tourism development, especially after reading the blogs about her and considering the direction post-industrial tourism was moving in (from a preoccupation with products, profits and services toward personalization and experiences (Urry and Larsen 2011, 16)). Nevertheless, in the car this story referred to a wide range of other stories I shared with them (or at least I was expected to share, such as *Lady Macbeth from Mtsensk*). It was both a storytelling experience to make the time pass and an engagement with a wider field of intertextuality. The story borrowed elements from the hegemonic Russian culture, and as we concluded in the car – resembled a melodramatic TV soap opera.

Part of the fieldwork was therefore hermeneutic and part of it was just a matter of being together. Intertextuality is an indispensable part of the intersubjective experience. The storytelling was not only a 'presentation of self' or an attempt to moralize. It was a way to engage with the world and with me. In this way, the stories I heard in the field such as the story of Baba Lyuba, were not merely local – they opened themselves up to historical events and to the wider world. Encompassing more than the 'ruins of Ivanovka', they also enabled me to see the potentiality and creativity that existed in the storytelling process. This was not only the struggle of a woman dealing with sickness, a harsh climate and inhabiting a forcefully emptied settlement. This individual story became for me an assemblage of meanings, and references to different cultural artefacts not only related to the local context but reaching beyond it.

Appadurai also suggests we include non-discursive practices and look at intercontextuality in the following way:

> contexts are produced in the complex imbrication of discursive and nondiscursive practices, and so the sense in which contexts imply other contexts, so that each context implies a global network of contexts, is different from the sense in which texts imply other texts, and eventually all texts. (Appadurai 1996, 187)

As I described in the previous section, my family became a topic of discussion regarding how we did things 'as a Norwegian family'. This was probably also because of extensive media coverage in Russia of custody battles in Norway[11], where the state had taken into custody several children born to Russian parents. Therefore, their observation and comments often referred to a broader context of national and regional media; the topics of upbringing and caretaking came up regularly. Thus, we were not only placed within the everyday context of the village, but within another more abstract context. Serendipity, intertextuality and emotions are, therefore, a significant part of our entanglements in both real life and the research process. They cannot be planned, included in the research design or avoided, but their heuristic potential has to be acknowledged and utilized. To me they brought the sense of temporariness that marks life, fieldwork, the anthropological data and their interpretation.

Intersubjectivity and Ethics

Although I was mourning the lost contact with the reindeer herders, my changed situation as a wife and mother opened up new possibilities. It gave me fresh insights into the world of women: from experiences of births to exchanging food recipes or discussing health issues. In this context, I recognized some of the

[11] Irina Bergseth's case got especially wide coverage: She lost custody over her son in Norway, and returning to Russia established the organization “Russian mothers” to fight for the rights of Russian mothers abroad. http://www.rosbalt.ru/moscow/2012/04/16/970205.html; http://www.ntv.ru/novosti/333999/. In the following years media wrote about several more cases: https://www.kompravda.eu/daily/26308.7/3185866/

phenomena described by other ethnographers and social scientists over the past few years: Jennifer Utrata's work on single mothers (Utrata 2015); Laura Olsen's work on village women (Olson and Adonyeva 2013); Serguei Oushakine's descriptions on mourning mothers (Oushakine 2009); Petra Rethman's everyday practices among the Koryak women (Rethmann 2001); the role of women in the ethnopolitical mobilization, from the literature on the "female flight" observed in the circumpolar North (Hamilton et al. 1996, Hamilton and Seyfrit 1994). Moreover, their caretaking practices led me to look into feminist care ethics, and added to my understanding of the field. Whilst my thesis is not primarily about gender, the underlying perspective is definitely gendered. The information on gendered performances was important, and on many occasions we concluded that we do indeed do things differently as women. The following story might serve as an example:

My landlady and I were going to wash the laundry in her washing machine and needed several buckets of water. While she waited for her husband to fetch water, she handled other everyday chores. He was busy somewhere else. I hate to wait, and went to fetch the water myself. When she met me outside, she said that I should not do it. I asked: "Why not?", joking that I am still young and strong. She replied that she can do it too, but it was the principle – it is male work. I said laughingly, that I am a principle-less woman. I often did not subscribe to her principles and did things differently, but I never felt that I was putting moral issues at stake. We filled the water tank, washed, drank tea, talked. I gradually realized that the principle is not about men fetching water whilst the women do not. As the wife of reindeer herder she has been fetching water hundreds of times. However, when her husband was at home she asked him for help with everything. It was about doing things together, of having small projects together in everyday life.

Such explanations are garnered from close interactions such as taking part in household tasks. I could have interpreted her reluctance to fetch water with the criticisms from the elderly women in the village. During my previous stay it was

not unusual to hear that younger women do not like physical labor. However, the opportunity to do the laundry and spend a couple of hours with her allowed me to read it differently. My focus moved from our primary task and melted into our just being together. From this point of view I could also see how her everyday life consisted of a series of small projects which confirmed togetherness and good family life, ensuring a sense of partnership with her husband, whether it be making a greenhouse or fixing a flowerbed.

This idea could be developed further into an ethical argument. Irina often used to tell me about how things are done in the village on a general level, but within the household there was a variation. The everyday life offered different “taskscapes” (Ingold 2000, 194ff) and they were performed and accomplished by always changing “we”. Ingold acknowledges that sociality is a salient part of the taskscape, stemming from “mutually attentive engagement, in shared contexts of practical activity” (196). We can extend this argument. Irina did not only assign priority to the completion of the tasks, but also to the sociality of the tasks in hand. Togetherness also defined the taskscape. This togetherness does not point to a common "I", but to a constant refiguration of the “we”; it is not a suspension but a temporary re-figuration. If her husband was there, he would fetch the water and fill the tank when needed. If not, I fetched the water and we did the rest of the work together. I was not only a substitute for the role her husband fulfilled in this context. The task gave us an opportunity to evolve our relationship, to discover differences in the moment of togetherness. In a similar vein, Lisette Josephides (2015b) coins such ethical relationships as "disjunctive synthesis", emphasizing the co-existence of a different "I" in the “we” and the constant refiguration and recreation of dependencies, especially in the context of fieldwork.

Such interpretations direct an implicit criticism towards 'methodological individualism' – the treatment of society as the mere sum of individuals. In anthropological literature, this methodological individualism has been criticized

from different perspectives: from ethnographic descriptions of non-western and marginal cultures, actor-network theory, post-Soviet reinterpretations and feminist ethics, and not least through the intersubjective turn (Jackson 2013, Csordas 2008, Toren 2009). Philosophically the intersubjective turn is grounded in the ethical philosophy of Emanuel Levinas and the intersubjectivity of Martin Heidegger. In anthropology, it also relates to the concept of mutuality. Joao de Pina-Cabral characterizes mutuality (envisaging it as to reciprocate and to hold in common) both as a constitutive principle of personal ontogeny, that is how individuals think of themselves, and as the constitutive principle of fieldwork ethics between the fieldworker and her informants, assigning co-responsibility to the relationship between them. We perceive ourselves through connectedness, relatedness with others. The world is understood not as communicated by others but understood with others (de Pina-Cabral 2013, 259). We become knowledgeable together. With such understanding, engagement and analysis may not be separated (Smith and Kleinman 2010).

As Michael Jackson points out:

> since the meanings and experiences that emerge in the course of any human interaction, conversation, or life history go beyond the relata involved. Although we may identify such relata as individual persons, named groups, or specific events and consider them stable over time, our knowledge of them always reflects our changing relation to them. (Jackson 2013, 8)

On two occasions I have consulted the Norwegian Centre for Research Data when dealing with ethical issues, and asked them what to do when the ethical guidelines in Russia and Norway are so incongruent. The answers always point to the most stringent rules and advise always to consult peers, colleagues and other anthropologists when I hesitate. In the anthropological literature there are numerous cases of hard-earned experiences arising from the unfortunate exposure of small communities by the researcher who has not been challenged by their peers and

colleagues. One well-known example is Nancy Shepherd Hughes, who moved with her family to an Irish village, lived there and in the end published a book where she described inter alia practices of abuse and incest that could be recognized by everyone in the village, even though the individuals were anonymized. While the scientific community praised her, the community where she did her fieldwork almost lynched her because of the publication of the book (Scheper-Hughes 1979). Carolyn Ellis suffered a similar experience and has written extensively upon the research ethics from a fieldworker's perspective. Spending long periods of time in the field, anthropologists "deal with the reality and practice of changing relationships with our research participants over time" (Ellis 2007, 4). In this way the relationships are guided by moral obligations, empathy and sympathy based on a long term engagement with the people and the community. Lisette Josephides appropriately writes that the discipline is guided by the 'magic of presence' defined as the "empathy or the intersubjective, reflexive understanding achieved in the personal relations" (Josephides 2003, 57). She argues for "an understanding of empathy as a virtue, not just a pragmatic strategy but a moral component of our relations with people". She also reminds us that fieldwork transforms the social scientists: "the practical experience of fieldwork with its daily challenges has a by-product: a person whose empathy makes possible the ethnography as an object knowledge" (Josephides 2003, 58). As embedded in empathy, the method of anthropology – long-term fieldwork – also imposes moral obligations that are stronger than any institutionalized ethical guidelines.

The empirical grounding in such an ethical stance has made me focus upon temporariness: serendipity, emotions, intertextuality. They blur the fixed representation of data associated with and demanded by scholarly work. Lisette Josephides (2015a) has described aptly the impossibility of remaining true to both source and audience (to reconcile the requirements and the obligations of anthropology). This is the burden of our intercontexuality, to borrow Appadurai's

term. The researcher is always simultaneously entangled with the scholarship and the field through various discursive and non-discursive practices. Therefore, it is difficult to have control over the data gleaned through fieldwork. Rather than concluding and pointing to practical solutions for taking measures or action that might affect the life of people, I have adhered to the idea that research should be useful for asking questions that are better informed (Finnström 2016).

Here, I have chosen to represent the methods as what John Law defines as "method assemblages" – enactments of relations that detect, resonate and amplify my arguments (Law 2004, 14). By bringing "my home" with me, I blurred the clear-cut distinction between home and the field and opened up the spatial categories. The serendipity, emotions and intertextuality I experienced in the field – all of them point to the temporariness of usually perceived static representations and not least, to the temporariness of the fieldwork itself. In this way, engagement and analysis are almost always, to a certain extent, separated. They are also in "disjunctive synthesis", to use Josephides words. I dare to hope that such understanding might help us to overthrow totalizing and static perspectives (like the 'power vertical' I address in the next Chapter), and look for ways to address and embrace the impermanent character of life, relations and tasks.

The folklore ensemble «Ryt' Kya» at the celebration of 24 May – The Day of the Cyrillic alphabet

Part Two

Chapter Three: Analytical perspectives and research questions

My initial research question asked how the federal modernization projects for northwestern Russia were implemented in the remote village, how they affected the everyday life and how they were perceived from the "insiders' point of view". It did not take much fieldwork time to realize that the everyday life remained relatively unaffected, the modernization projects were rarely mentioned, and the reality did not reflect the new mantras of informational technologies and developing tourism. Was it because of the geographical distance? Does remoteness matter? Or was the ignorance with regard to governmental visions for development, a form of political resistance? I could not give a definitive answer. The programs were implemented with the locally available resources without causing visible changes; the same government remained in power; and in 2012, after a series of social welfare reforms many village residents openly supported the Putin–Medvedev tandem. Geographical distance was seen as a practical matter of everyday life, rather than a salient factor in their lives.

My thesis highlights the relationship between centralized power and the locality, and seeks to understand it from the point of view of the remote village and the people who live there. Rather than recognizing the projected need for modernizations (and accepting a subordinate position of lagging behind), this view points to the transitoriness and fuzziness of the programs. It underscores the importance and the stability of the small grains, the everyday banalities that give meaning to life. The thesis also seeks to question the spatial representations of power: the relationship between centre and periphery, and most importantly, the

strong ‘power Vertical’[12] model of (and for) the Russian society. Spatial representations of power are challenged from many quarters: postcolonial, semiotic, feminist. Here, I want to present the theoretical path I follow throughout the thesis.

One of the first sociological models to engage with the spatial dimension of power is Michel de Certeau's definition of *propre*, ‘the proper’ (de Certeau 1984). He introduces ‘the proper’ (which could be proprietor, enterprise, city, institution) as a centre of will and power that can be identified and isolated from its environment. As a centre of will and power, ‘the proper’ can define itself and is therefore independent "with respect to the variability of circumstances" (de Certeau 1984, 36). ‘The proper’ is also the place from where relations with the external environment become managed and physical places become defined. The 'proper' expands through strategic rationalizations. The places of power articulate discourses or elaborate upon theoretical places capable of articulating discourses. In this way, the spatialisation of power entails both agency and representations. Through them, ‘the proper’ is able to dictate how things should be.

In his work, de Certeau does not directly address the state but rather its 'institutions'. Through strategic rationalizations, these institutions distinguish the place of will and power from an environment that can be managed, and maintain the position of the centre as ‘a centre’. The four articles in the thesis describe such "places of will and power", or at least different forms of institutions and discursive practices, attempting to manage relations on the ground through 'strategic rationalizations' or state simplifications, as James Scott (Scott 1995) calls these attempts. In *Komi*, I show that such place of will and power is ethnographic scholarship; in *School*, it is the school as an institution; in *Stories*, it is the media (through TV programs); in *Festival*, it is the Festival of the North itself.

[12] The “power vertical” [*vertikal vlasti*] is the subordination of the local level, to the regional and of the regional to the federal. In his speech on 22 November 2000 Vladimir Putin pointed out that one of his major tasks will be strengthening the ‘power vertical’ (see for example (Gel'man and Ryzhenkov 2011)).

At the other end of the strategic rationalizations, for de Certeau, are the tactics of the ordinary man defined as "a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus", carried out on a terrain “imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power” (de Certeau 1984, 37). This action takes advantage of opportunities, of chance offerings. It makes use of cracks, of interstices – it poaches in them, creates surprises in them, tricks them. It is an ‘art of the weak’. So is it true that while the state initiates and promotes rationalizations by defining federal and regional programs, the ordinary people are just following the flow, finding the interstices and the temporary openings, activating or avoiding them? The thesis seeks to understand such questions.

At the same time such tactics of resistance among the peasants are well described by James Scott (1985) as ‘weapons of the weak’. While tactics lend pertinence to time and pin their hopes on the 'utilization of time' or the right moment, strategies are aiming at the 'establishment of place' in what Scott calls the "everyday art of war" (Scott 1985, 38-39). He acknowledges that whilst they are never apparent in a clear form, actions can be distinguished whether they bet on place or on time (ibid). The centre bets on place, people grip the moment. There is a separation between strategical rationalization and tactical resistance. However, many anthropologists have challenged this spatial separation and show different forms of interchange between rationalizations and tactics. My thesis is particularly inspired by two such monographs – Anna Tsing's *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen* (1993), and Michael Herzfeld's *Cultural Intimacy* (1997). While the former looks into geographic distance as a salient factor, the latter explores the heterogeneity of language and discursive practices.

Anna Tsing shows how resistance entails accommodation and creativity. Studying the stories of the Meratus people inhabiting a remote mountain area on Kalimantan, Indonesia, she finds that their stories are messy and heterogeneous, and both accommodate and oppose state projects. For her, out-of-the way places are, by

definition, places lacking 'proper locus' in the de Certeauan sense, where the instability of political meanings comes to light. The authority of national policies is displaced through distance and reenacted at the margins: "The cultural difference of the margins is a sign of exclusion from the centre; it is also a tool for destabilizing central authority" (Tsing 1993, 27). For her, destabilization is perpetuated not only through manipulation, tricks and deception, but through the "creative potential of rearticulating, enlivening, and rearranging the very social categories that peripheralize a group's existence" (Tsing 1993, 279). The Meratus appropriate the language of the state and apply it creatively to local practice.

This creative potential also underlies Michael Herzfeld's concept of “social poetics”, the tension between official and vernacular cultural forms and meanings. In his work, Herzfeld (1985) describes how the practice of animal theft is despised and condemned, at the same time as the masculinity associated with these practices is part of the nationalistic rhetoric. Namely, through the heterogeneity of meaning, Herzfeld suggests, marginal communities incorporated in the state could symbolically subordinate state rationalizations to local concerns (Herzfeld 1997, 13). As people become familiar with the devices of power, they then find flaws in the system. People adopt and manipulate the language of strategic rationalizations and other official forms of reification, and attempt to turn the order imposed by the state into an advantage for themselves. This is the space of what Herzfeld coins as 'cultural intimacy'. On the one hand, such irreverence incites the introduction of new official interventions. On the other hand, people themselves appeal to an ideal and disinterested authority of the state and justify their “tricks” as attempts to restore the harmony disrupted by the interventions of state bureaucrats.

The history of Russia, as we know it today, has made people conscious of the constant failures of the system, and thus the failures – part of the cultural intimacy. Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov (Ssorin-Chaikov 2003) has complicated the contrast between the ‘presumed ideal timeless order’ and the practices of the state

bureaucrats described by Herzfeld. His detailed analysis on the work of state among the Evenki in Central Siberia shows how the Evenki themselves internalize and adopt the state mechanisms and thus allow the state to expand and enhance its control. At the same time, the constant failures and deferrals create and naturalize the sense of permanent temporariness of the state projects. He writes of the state order as a construction site "where the end is constantly deferred, the initial point almost forgotten (Ssorin-Chaikov 2003, 207). This creates also a sense of presumed eternal temporariness of the state structures. In Krasnoshchelye I could recognize both ends: a belief in an ideal, disinterested and moral authority on the top of the state and the sense of temporariness of all state projects and structures.

But how to approach Krasnoshchelye and capture the temporariness of the system, the structural power and nevertheless be attentive to the agency of common people? I find Doreen Massey's definition of the spatial to be particularly appropriate for this purpose. The village will be portrayed:

> as constructed out of the multiplicity of social relations across spatial scales, from the global reach of finance and telecommunications, through the geography of the tentacles of national political power, to the social relations within town, the settlement, the household and the workplace. It is a way of thinking of ever-shifting geometry of social/power relations. (Massey 1994, 4-5)

Places thus become open and internally multiple in terms of space and time (Massey 2005, 140). This is exactly how the remote village appears to me – as an open and internally multiple place where different trajectories of individuals, including my own, meet and intersect with the trajectories of social and political institutions and their projects.

There are two points I want to emphasize here. Firstly, by looking at the place as "here and now", we have to acknowledge the presence of the past and of distant places. The past is always incorporated in our "now"; our "here" is defined by other, distant places. Thus, we have to think of "places not as points or areas on maps, but

as integrations of space and time; as spatio-temporal events" (Massey 2005, 130). Secondly, we can define the place as a temporary constellation (coming together) of different trajectories. According to Massey, trajectories are both strategies and tactics. While strategies and tactics give priority either to establishing a space or utilizing time, trajectories integrate them. Tim Ingold elaborates this idea by using the definition of trajectory from another geographer – Torsten Hägerstrand. For him, to be on the tip of a trajectory means both being pushed from behind, and reaching out asking "what shall I do next" (Ingold 2011, 103).

In the following chapters, I will first of all describe remoteness as a simplified representation of geographical distance that involves and unpacks power relations. Later, in Chapter Five, I will describe how these representations affect the interplay between strategic rationalizations and everyday tactics. In the final chapter, I will describe the village through practical arrangements and stories. By using historical data alongside the personal genealogies, I will show how the village encompasses multiple temporal scales and opens in time. By showing the local activities and how they interact with natural phenomena, national policies and global processes, I will show how the villagers attach the village to other places and locations, and in this way how the village opens “in space” (Massey 2005). I will conclude by discussing how this model of open and internally multiple places might help us discover alternative ways of relating places to policies.

Chapter Four: Remoteness as representation

Approaching remoteness

Krasnoshchelye is often referred to as *otdalyonka* (the remote countryside). *Otdalyonka* is a diminutive of *otdalyonnie sela* (the remote villages), the term used in administrative documents. For the media the village is *otdalyonka*. As an example, an article in the regional newspaper *Murmanskii Vestnik* from March 2011 under the column "Delegates' concerns" proclaimed: "Krasnoshchelye is not a hole! Real remoteness, but lives affluently" [*Krasnoshchel'ye – ne dyra! Nastoyashchaya otdalenka, a zhivet spravno*].

Krasnoshchelye is part of the rural settlement of Lovozero [*selskoe poselenie Lovozero*]. The administrative centre of the settlement is Lovozero, and it also includes three remote villages: Krasnoshchelye (located approximately 150 km from Lovozero), Kanevka (225 km) and Sosnovka (295 km). This rural settlement of Lovozero has 3000 inhabitants (of which the remote villages make up approximately 400–500 of the population). Together with the urban-type settlement Revda (a monotown based on extraction of rare metals with a population of 8000) the settlement constitutes the municipal corporation of Lovozero, administratively defined as Lovozero district. The municipal corporation and the administration of the rural settlement which represent the governing bodies, are in Lovozero. As a rule, the administrative centre should be within walking distance from the different settlements, but this is not the case here. No representatives of the administration reside in the remote villages. When necessary, the administrative authorities use helicopters to make short visits. Earlier, the former state-farm had played an administrative role. With the privatization in the late 1990s, its administrative functions deteriorated significantly and today there are no governing institutions in the village. In 2012 there was one local specialist who handled local affairs. She

was appointed after the insistence of the local women's union [*zhensovet*]. This arrangement did not last long. In 2015 this position was removed – or at least it was not taken into account in the administrative structure of the rural settlement any longer. The former representative in Krasnoshchelye became instead the chancellor of the local school.

The absence of governing bodies is not the only aspect of remoteness; others are the lack of indoor plumbing and sewerage and the lack of connection to the national electrical grid. Although 2/3 of the territory of the Russian Federation are not served by the centralized electricity system, in the context of the highly urbanized Murmansk county, where more than 90 per cent of population live in an urban area, the village is rather an exception. In the Murmansk region, the urban settlements outnumber the rural settlements and this is quite unique in a Russian context. This might explain why agricultural production and traditional economic subsistence are hardly priorities in the envisaged economic developments of the region; the governing bodies only occasionally penetrate the rural area. However, the administration has to serve the infrastructure and provide for transportation and communal services. In Krasnoshchelye there is no indoor plumbing and the water supply is from water wells, yet the authorities only sporadically check the quality of the water. The authorities seem to be withdrawing from other services as well. The specialist in the administration told me that the administration in Lovozero has given up waste management in Krasnoshchelye and instead sends money to the village to solve the problem locally (as I show in *School* they resort to old practices of Soviet times). While in the village, people perceive the problems as stemming from ineffective administration, the representatives of the administrative bodies point to the geographical distance as the main source of the problems. These administrative territorial characteristics of the village embody and point to the major characteristics of remote places: absence of authorities, absence of infrastructure and unrealized modernization and political projects (such as the electrification campaign and the

slogan of the 1920s: “Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country”).

Such explanations of “geographical remoteness” might be viewed as a totalizing perspective, or state simplification in the sense James Scott defines "simplification" (Scott 1995): a strategic rationalization informing the governmental interventions. Although the state works through simplifications, it is a complex assemblage. Through its technocratic systems it imposes constraints, but as Michel de Certeau explains, individuals detach "from them without being able to escape them and can henceforth only try to outwit them, to pull tricks on them, to rediscover, within an electronicized and computerized megapolis, the "art" of the hunters and rural folk of earlier days" (de Certeau 1984, xxiv). The thesis seeks to complicate the idea of remoteness as a discursive "strategic rationalization” in a de Certeauan sense: by looking at it as a representation of the centre’s will and power aimed at managing its relations with the environment; and by discussing the relationship between strategic rationalizations and tactical moves.

The four articles in the thesis explore this relationship in different geographical settings and by different means. The remoteness is an integral part of the commonplace practices in the village and its surroundings (as I show in the articles *Stories* and *School*); it is also part of everyday life in the rural settlement of Lovozero (as I describe in Chapter Six). The remoteness also comes into view in Murmansk (*Festival*), and marks the Kola Peninsula (*Komi*). This discourse on remoteness is explored through educational programs in *School*, scholarly ethnographic descriptions in *Komi*, TV media in *Stories*, and cultural events in *Festival*. Thus, whilst my main fieldwork was in the village, my research was extended to Lovozero, Murmansk, libraries in St Petersburg and Moscow, and to the political corridors of local authorities and governing bodies, where administrative documents and strategies are created and abolished.

The remoteness of the village is both real and imaginary. It is also relational. Arriving at what is considered a remote place, one also finds that there are "unperceived pockets of internal remoteness" to be discovered (Ardener [1987] 2012, 523). This is the nature of anthropological knowledge (Hastrup 2007). Ardener's definition of remoteness corresponds to Crapanzano's notion of imaginative horizons:

> when a horizon and whatever lies beyond it are given articulate form, they freeze our view of the reality that immediately confronts us – fatally I'd say, were it not for the fact that once the beyond is articulated, a new horizon emerges and with it a new beyond. (Crapanzano 2004, 2)

What Crapanzano calls “fatal freeze frames” of reality, is to me related to the point Edwin Ardener makes: that in such places, under the intense gaze of visitors, local people feel strangely invisible. The task of the anthropologist is, according to Ardener ([1987] 2012), to see the local people and to narrow the mismatch between his/her views and the local people’s views. For me, after three visits to the village in 1998 and 1999 and three stays in 2012 and 2013, each time the village has opened up to new horizons. Not only because I found hidden “pockets” in the village, but because aspects of life have changed, and with them, what people were up to. This understanding of the village as always expanding and unfinished marks the thesis and the articles.

However, as Ardener observes, "we easily realize our conceptual spaces as physical spaces" (Ardener [1987] 2012, 522). The village of Krasnoshchelye is physically removed, therefore it is easy to make it embody our conceptual ideas of remoteness. Usually, the distance to the village might be measured as 150 kilometers, or let us say in good weather conditions – 5 hours on a snowmobile, or 25 minutes by helicopter. Sometimes, if the weather is bad it might take weeks to get there. For people coming from the outside, overcoming such a distance is not an everyday performance. For them the village is an exotic destination and usually

perceived as a geographical and topographic singularity (in toto). The reality of remoteness often makes not only the natives of such areas invisible, as Ardener suggests, but also their perceptions of the place invisible. The people coming from outside to the remote place measure distance and travel time, but for the people who live there the distance is not a question of metric units or journey time – it is a practical matter of arrangements. For them the village exists as part of different practical considerations – home, family networks, educational opportunities, health services, to mention just a few. During my fieldwork and in the course of research, I encountered both perspectives: the ignorant totalizing discursive perspectives from outside; and the multiplying, disintegrating the totality of the place practices of the people who live there. In the articles I give examples of such practices – educational routines, storytelling, reindeer races, care networks, and I juxtapose them with the external simplifications.

As remote and distant places were the main focus of anthropologists for years, they have been part of major anthropological debates. Remoteness is synonymous and often interchangeable with periphery and marginality. Moreover, remoteness is a non-definition, often described in an apophatic way, that is – through what it is not. One easily points to lacks or absences. Remote places are non-modern, non-metropolitan and non-state. These three characteristics are linked and reinforce each other, thus producing a presumption of emptiness as the above mentioned newspaper title "Krasnoshchelye is not a hole" refers to. Objects and people in the remote areas are also affected by the 'negative presence' or the absences characteristic of remoteness, as many postcolonial writers criticizing the imaginary geographies have shown (Said 1979, Bhabha 1994, Chakrabarty 2000). It is a construction that often permeates materiality through negative characteristics.

On this basis, I begin with a description of the presumed absences in the abstract discursive spaces of policies, media, and development. These discursive spaces are created by the centres (of will and power) and are realizations of power

in its agentive and non-agentive modes (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, 28). They act through "exerting control over production, circulation and consumption of signs and objects, over the making of both subjectivities and realities"(28), and in the forms of everyday life by directing perceptions and practices along conventional pathways, saturating "aesthetics and ethics, built form and bodily representation, medical knowledge and material production" (28).

These absences are not recognized or problematized in the same way by the local villagers. For them, absences are also presences: be it as obstacles or opportunities, or just matters of life. The Danish anthropologists Mikkel Bille, Frida Hastrup and Tim Flohr Sørensen discuss such issues in detail in their book *An Anthropology of Absence: Materializations of Transcendence and Loss*. They argue that absence is not “the logical antonym of presence” because it is never finite; rather it is “entangled in the dynamics of potential reverberation, reappearance, transformation and return” (Bille, Hastrup, and Sorensen 2010, 13). Absences, therefore, might be transformed, counterworked, and materialized in various ways, as we see the local people do. My thesis seeks to understand remoteness through the entanglement between presences and absences, visibility and invisibility, between totalizing approaches and strategic projects, and the microtactics of everyday practices.

Remote places as non-modern

The village is often described as traditional, that is non-modern and non-industrialized. Modernity and modernism are often defined as the faith in science and technology (and more technological advances), and their results in terms of industries, mechanization and industrial productions (Scott 1998). Modernity encompasses the fetishization of commodities and the political modernization of individuals as atomized subjects. The political modernization of the Soviet self and its roots in 19th century Russian interpretations of "spiritual progress" (Kharkhordin 1999), undoubtedly deserve to be discussed further. However, here, I will focus

primarily on the lack of modern advantages such as roads and free circulation of goods.

Postcolonial theories and their discussions of imaginative geography have made us aware that the notion of remote places implies a view on temporality and progress; places become ranked as advanced or backward, or as developing, "interpreted as different stages in a single temporal development" (Massey 2005, 68). As modernity radiated from the North Atlantic (Europe and North America), the rest was considered to be lagging behind. One can say that the Kola Peninsula has been counted among the less advanced places – part of Russia's backyard. Its perceived backwardness has been measured against the Russian central parts and because of its geographical proximity – against neighboring Norway (both through the late Tsarist period and throughout the Soviet period). Practices reminding of orientalism, of thinking of the Kola Peninsula as "a locale, requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption" (Said 1979, 206)[13], have in recent years been realized through the Barents Euro-Arctic cooperation programs and its financial instruments, but also through a number of federal programs and strategies. The development strategies have alternated between large infrastructural projects and attempts to improve everyday consumption.

The proximity to the Norwegian North, where infrastructure and communications were better developed, motivated the drive of the Russian (and later the Soviet) state to modernize this corner of the country. One of the major problems was considered to be its inaccessibility and the distance from the centres of power. Therefore, the authorities initiated the building of the Murman railways in the late 19th century to "wake the hidden forces" of the region as governor Engelhardt envisaged (Nielsen 2014, 547). The project, initiated in 1893, was only completed in 1915-16 during the First World War when the Russian Fleet was

[13] Western here is understood as attention from the Russian capital, but since the 1990s also in terms of increasing attention from Norway, Sweden and Finland.

blockaded in the Baltic and Black Sea. While the Soviet authorities wanted to further pave the road to modernization and overcome the existing lack of connections with the inner part of the peninsula by extending the railroad, the local population, as Zinaida Rikhter (1925) witnessed, were opposed to these plans:

> At the Lovozero *volost* congress they spoke about the possibility of building a railroad to Lovozero. The Izhma Komi and the Sami began to worry and rustle and unanimously declared: "If they build the road, we'll have to die or get away from here". The railroad is the worst enemy of reindeer breeders. Perhaps, even more terrible than wolves. Forest fires, caused by sparks flying from the engines scorch the pasture lands. The reindeer lichen takes 10-15 years to renew, so after a fire the reindeer herders would have to take their herds and just leave. (Rikhter 1925, 34) (*my translation*)

This same argument can be heard in a recent documentary film (Pivkin 2010) where the herder stated: "If there is a road, there will be no life". This is partly discussed in the article *Stories*. Yet in 2010, the federal government proceeded to initiate a "Federal target program for development of the transport system of Russia" and supported the construction of "Murmansk Transport Hub", one of the largest transport infrastructure projects in the program and one of the biggest investments in the Russian Arctic. This partly state-owned, partly private project, however, did not seem to have much impact on the inner part of the peninsula.

The transportation infrastructure in the Murmansk region was also among the priorities of the early Soviet authorities in the 1920s. It was supposed to facilitate the flow of people, goods, capital and resources and not the least power. In the simplified state rationale only urbanization and industrialization of the region would bring modernization to the local population. Through the introduction of new sedentary lifestyles they taught the populations all over the Soviet North how to sit, how to eat, how to sleep in bed (Slezkine 1994a, 230-241, Habeck 2013). In the attempts to establish the new Soviet regime in the 1920s, the authorities brought new consumer goods to most remote places. Most of them were given as gifts. The

articles entitled *Komi* and *Festival* highlight the fact that the prizes given at different sports competitions were consumer goods such as soap, samovars, and rifles. These were items for everyday use and domestic skills. Consumption and progress belonged together.

In the mass media, extensive reports appeared on the changing material conditions and improved way of life in all corners of the Soviet state. In this way, the authorities legitimated modernization as an exclusively Soviet one, yet often deprived the local population of their achievements (such as growing potatoes as I describe in *Komi*) in the process. For the local population, however, the infrastructure of roads and communication were not crucial in facilitating their desired, modern lifestyle or consumption. Zinaida Rikhter, describing the resettlement of several Lovozero families in the 1920s to "more remote and virgin lichen places" (envisaging the establishment of Ivanovka), tells of people establishing modern households. Modern life is possible in the remote places: "they brought urban furnishing, gramophones, hung drapes, oleographs in gilt frames, icons in rich *rizas* (revetments) on their reindeer" (Rikhter 1925, 32). Taking into account the anxiety expressed about the construction of the railroad which she also describes – the resettlement might additionally be seen as a way to flee from and therefore actively resist the threat posed by the building of a railroad.

Later on, as the Soviet authorities prioritized the electrification of the country as their major modernization project (to mark a clear break with the railway modernization of the Tsarist regime (Coopersmith 1992, 1-7)), the threats came in a new form. One such example in the inner part of the Kola Peninsula was the building of the Serebryanskoe Reservoir in the 1960s. Because of it, the village of Voronya was flooded and people had to be resettled. Krasnoshchelye and the other villages on Ponoy were also threatened. In 1958 a scientific report from the Academy of Science concluded that the building of the Ponoy reservoir should be among the first priorities (Vodnoenergeticheskiye resursy Kol'skogo poluostrova

1958). This would mean that the three villages of Ivanovka, Krasnoshchelye and Kanevka would disappear under water. Luckily for the local people, the project remained unrealized.

The infrastructural projects were not only a threat. They had a price – they brought considerable scarcity to the Soviet economy. As Julie Hessler puts it "the 'heroic abstinence' of Soviet consumers was necessary to make possible the 'heroic achievements' of Soviet metallurgy, the multiplication of the means of production, and the rapid attainment of the industrial levels of the capitalist world" (Hessler 1999, 184). Thus, the Soviet planned economy prioritized large infrastructural projects, and its centralized redistributive nature opened the door to large deficits of consumer goods (Verdery 1996, 29). The rural and remote areas suffered constant shortages and scarcity of goods. Although the market liberalization following the breakdown of the Soviet system opened for greater individual consumption, it made the situation in the peripheral areas even worse. There, other types of transactions, such as barter, also proliferated (Humphrey 1991). In Krasnoshchelye in the late 1990s, the shelves of the only shop were always almost empty. Monetary transactions demanded time and resources beyond the market rationality (Mankova 2005).

In 2012 the situation was different. There were several private stores in the village with food, clothing, household utensils. By then, the economy had stabilized, and mail-order catalogues were popular in the village. Two women initiated me into the art of ordering books, multicookers, blinds, embroideries, hobby books, sewing boxes. It was part of their small pleasures in life. The purchased goods could take months to arrive in the village. The women joked that sometimes they even forgot what they had ordered. For example, one of the women had bought a portable camping shower, to be used when on camping trips in the summertime. This surprised me – if they went on camping trips they went sunbathing and swimming in the river, and surely they did not need a shower. Moreover, they constantly argued

that taking a shower could never compare with the pleasure of having a steam bath. Even in the summer months, they used to fire the Russian baths weekly. Anyhow, she had bought the camping shower through mail order. The process involved filling in the forms, sending them in the post and waiting. One of the women said that the postal workers reminded her that her parcel had been in the post office for a couple of weeks without being collected; she in turn had completely forgotten what she had ordered. So whilst there was no scarcity and shortages at this time, the consumption of material goods was not a matter of self-refashioning, or creative expressions of personal identities as many of the theories on modern consumption propose (Bourdieu 1984, Miller 1998, Appadurai 1996, Friedman 1994). Rather, I suggest that this kind of consumption was an engagement with new opportunities; a playful improvisation with the mail-order catalogues. Thus, it was not the commodities that were significant, but the ways to obtain them formed an important part of the sociality in the village.

As modernity is related to consumption, so is the pleasure of consumption. David Graeber in his critique of the ideologies of consumption reminds us of Colin Campbell's distinction between "traditional hedonism" and direct experience of pleasure, and "the modern self-illusionary hedonism" of consuming that creates fantasies and daydreams (Graeber 2011, 495). In Krasnoshchelye the mail-order shopping was not a question of consuming or daydreaming, but a playful exploration of newly acquired possibilities and sociality. The women did not use mail order catalogues out of a desire to appear modern or reject a definition of “backwardness”: it was clear that they were not always interested in consuming the products they bought. There was no sense that they daydreamed about having or obtaining much more. Rather, their pleasure was derived, as far as I could observe, in discovering and discussing the new methods of shopping that had become available.

In addition to the mail order trade, one of the major differences I noticed upon my return in 2012, was the presence of cars. It was as if the village was a museum

of the Soviet car industry: old VAZ, Zhigulis, Moskvitches, and Zaporozhets had found their way to the village. Junk cars were imported to the village without registration, apparently after being scrapped in the other settlements. In the summer months the local men were driving them on the sandy roads in the village, raising clouds of dust or making the mud tracks deeper. For many years the only car in the village had been a Volga owned by a former sovkhoz director, and it was sign of status. In 2012, people in the village were joking that soon they would have to put traffic lights on the streets. It was the younger men who drove cars. Many of them had attained their driving licenses during their military service or during their education at the professional school in Lovozero. There, the profession "reindeer herder" was renamed to "reindeer herder technician" [*olenevod-mechanizator*] and the pupils were taught to drive snowmobiles, cars and tractors. The cars in Krasnoshchelye were used as transport to work or to the store, and to the airport. They were creatively decorated and welded together in numerous ways. The people did not bother so much about the type of car; it was not a symbol of status, but a means to deal with everyday life. Almost all men used snowmobiles in the winter months. In the summer they had started using cars. Of course, when one needs to transport equipment to the river it might be practical to use a car, but often it was hardly necessary as the distances in the village are short.

In the same way as men spent hours tinkering with their snowmobiles and socializing in the winter time, they spent hours tinkering with their cars in the summer and enjoyed it. The social aspect of these activities can be illustrated in the following example. On one occasion, I was asked to translate a troubleshooting section from a user manual written in Swedish (many snowmobiles were second-hand imports from Finland, and the operating instructions were in English, Finnish and Swedish). It was difficult to translate between two non-mother tongues. On top of that, I lack basic technical insights. However, my landlord and his friend, the snowmobile owner, then spent quite a lot of time discussing the translated text and

exchanged several visits. I asked whether my translation was unclear, but my landlord assured me that it was normal to spend so much time on these affairs. What else was there to do?

At first sight the cars seem so misplaced among the wooden houses, the pine trees, and the water wells of the village, however they might be interpreted as metaphors. The cars were imported to the village, and recontextualized locally. They were not subordinated to federal regulations for vehicle traffic or requirements stated by the administrative and governing bodies. They produced a new image of the locality, closer to the normative modernity. They had a practical function and made and maintained social interactions. Sometimes the repairs were a hassle, but most of the time they were part of the male sociality in the village.

In the local stores there were also products that were not finding their way into the homes of local buyers. The merchandise assortment there was often defined by a vendor who lives in the urban area, often a relative to the store owner. Moreover, it was dependent on the available transportation – in summer time, the supplies were limited as the only transportation was helicopters. I was probably the first one to buy a silicon cake form from the local store. Initially I wanted a metal springform pan, but they did not have any so I bought the silicon one. The woman at the store admitted that she never had used one like this, and wondered whether it would melt in the oven. She had seen them on Teleshop. I replied that I had used silicon sheets before and they did not melt, but I would not put them in the wood oven. She said maybe next time they got one in, she would buy it for herself. On another occasion, for a party, I bought a package of instant jelly-powder and made fruit jelly. With vanilla sauce it was rather popular among the children. Two mothers said they had never had thought of doing it, but maybe they should give it a try. However, they were more concerned with the ecological cleanliness of the ingredients and whether it was full of artificial sweeteners, but concluded that as the kids liked it, it was probably no more dangerous than many other sweets sold in the

store. Consumption was not so much an issue of desire and self-realizations – but of knowledge, of scepticism, and of exchange of technologies.

As I demonstrated above, the consumption of different products produced local sociality. This resonates with de Certeau's argument that consumption can also be seen as production, manifested through the uses of products that move across and into different settings and contexts. He posits that consumers "produce" through signifying practices trajectories, that "trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop" (de Certeau 1984, xviii). Products and meanings penetrate the life in Krasnoshchelye, as people are constantly adjusting to new realities and making sense of them. On this basis, we need to keep open minds when we make conclusions. Looking at the female population of the village, I would not say that the younger women who were driving snowmobiles were more modern than their mothers who could ride on the reindeer sleds, or more traditional than me because they were not using silicon forms. It is more that they demonstrate an openness to innovations and new realities as they come and go. Thus, on local terms the village is not non-modern and never has been.

Here, I questioned the idea of remote places as non-modern and in relation to 'consumption'. I demonstrated that, in a local context, consumption reinforces sociality. Both examples of the mail order catalogues and the cars point to an openness and readiness by the villagers to engage with new opportunities. At the same time they show critical judgements. The idea of the remote being "backward", therefore, was clearly a 'strategic rationalization', a simplification from the authorities. At the same time, the examples suggest that the idea of consumption as a hallmark of modernity (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000) also needs to be complicated. On the surface, associated with commodity or techno-fetishisms and substantive economic relations, the import of cars to the village looks like a mimetic attempt at urbanization. Nevertheless, this is not necessarily the desire of the

villagers. They do not mimic the urban modernity; they are rather finding momentary local solutions. The reluctance towards the large infrastructural modernization projects and the dominance of non-alienated forms of consumption in Krasnoshchelye show that there are alternatives to the model of modernity built on individualism, consumption, and technological infrastructures. The problem is not local, or essential to "remoteness". On the contrary, David Graeber (2011) suggests that it is rather methodological – importing notions of political economy (as consumption) into our studies of the social. The strong emphasis on the relation between people and objects often makes us forget that social life is about relations between humans and how they perceive each other and interact with each other.

Remote places as non-metropolitan

Another “iconic” representation of remote places is that they are non-urban and non-metropolitan. They can be perceived as wild too (Coates 1994). John R. Gillis (Gillis 2001) describes remote places in the context of neoliberal modern societies: they have increased value and are appreciated in the developed world because of their scarcity. As he states, not long ago their perceived “backwardness” was something to be overcome, but now it is valued. For those with resources, few places remain remote or inaccessible. Such places represent not only destinations, but points of return. They are particularly valued for what is considered to be their moral and environmental purity; it is this notion of moral attractiveness that is turning them into objects of tourist enterprises (Urry and Larsen 2011, 227).

Similarly, Russian ethnographers have also advanced the stereotype of the rural remote parts as traditional and therefore in opposition to the metropolitan area (Elfimov 2014). For many years the Soviet ethnographers worked mainly in remote and rural areas of the Soviet Union and the only materials they were gathering were traditional folklore songs and folk tales. In this way they promoted a traditional image of the rural. Discussing remoteness in the Russian countryside, the British social anthropologist Caroline Humphrey convincingly argues that its main prospect

is to be rediscovered by the urban residents who see these places as culturally authentic, to be discovered and appropriated (Humphrey 2015)[14]. In some parts of the country, urban dwellers move to the countryside and establish eco-villages: socially, informationally, and economically isolated from the rest of the society (Pozanenko 2016). The reasons are often ideological, anti-modernist, anti-consumerist, and aimed to restore the bonds between people and nature. They might be seen as part of a global trend – from the anthroposophic communities of Rudolf Steiner in the Nordic countries, to the student mobilization in 1968 in the U.S. and other Western countries.

Part of this idea is based on the well-established images of the countryside as morally pure and authentic in contrast to the urban realities conceived as immoral and corrupt (Williams 1973). This discourse on morality is both an external construction but also evoked from within the rural communities. Rebecca Kay (2011) shows how the residents of a Western Siberian village emphasize the virtues of their village as a moral centre and a caring community. They appreciate the small gestures of striving to help each other without any expectations for reward. Her approach builds upon the ways people produce a sense of security through a moral discourse of personalised and caring interaction. Kay acknowledges that "feelings of trust and emotional security are understood as equally significant as material forms of assistance" (Kay 2011, 46). My impression is that this trend was also widespread in rural communities on the Kola Peninsula. Kay's argument resonates well with the educational practices I describe in *School*. However, the elevated moral discourse can also confine. As Kay observes, such moral centralization may marginalize even more those who are already marginal. In her case, the financial problems experienced by unemployed people on welfare benefits were related to

[14] One such appropriation of the rural area on the Kola Peninsula was the village of Teriberka. After film director Andrey Zvyagintsev chose it as filming location for his film *Leviathan*, nominated for an Academy Award in 2015, the village became an object of interest for the urbanites from Moscow. The farmers' collective *LavkaLavka* organizes an annual festival – "Teriberka. New Life" envisaging ecofood, extreme sports, etc.

individual pathologies within a discourse of deservingness. The flipside of the caring community is the "collective surveillance" that some individuals may find more oppressive than comforting.

The following story from Krasnoshchelye might serve as an example. One woman with a mentally disabled child told me that it would be impossible for her to live in the remote village permanently. Every now and then she would hear rumors that suggested she had probably lived an unhealthy lifestyle, or insinuations about alcohol abuse or domestic violence during the pregnancy that could have harmed her child. Neither was the case. At the same time, she appreciated village life because her child could play with the other children and spend much more time outside than would normally be possible in the town where they permanently live. Even so, she preferred the anonymity of the town. Her comments upon the idea that disability is caused by moral fault are confirmed both by research and in the media. Murmansk-based sociologist Galina Zhigunova shows that the majority of the population still believe that disability is related to "poverty, inadequate pre-natal practice, bad health or life endangering work conditions, quality of food and products, unsuccessful socialization, contradictory norms and values" (Zhigunova 2014, 11). While the urban people idealize the moral values from afar – from the inside the moral idyll becomes rather more nuanced.

The moral aspects are at the bottom of what John Urry (Urry and Larsen 2011) calls "the romantic gaze": the desire for experience of new, pure, exclusive sites. Such images proliferate in the presentations of the village in tourist advertisements and TV travel programs. The idealized image is particularly evident in the context of tourism. In the article on *Stories*, I discuss the travel show *Neputevye zametki* which describes the village as 'the nearest exotic place'. This potential is acknowledged in the federal programs for development of the region. Although the state invests in the extracting industries and the transport infrastructure, the rural area of Kola Peninsula is seen as a target for tourist

industries. The Federal target program for industrial development of tourism (2011-2018) envisages the development of fishing tourism, and tourism with a cultural-informational profile: developing local handicrafts, open air museums, hunting/fishing tourism, folklore and event tourism, eco-villages.

The regional government in Murmansk has also pointed to three additional areas for development – religious-pilgrim tourism, fishing tourism bases and tourism related to the monuments of war history. These policies could be discussed at greater length, and they deserve more attention. I only return to them as they inform the contexts in the articles – they are part of the educational practices of the school, they saturate the media representations in the TV programs from *Stories*, and they are part of the rationale behind the winter festival. In the past two years, domestic tourism has come to play a more prominent role. After the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the Western sanctions imposed on Russia, the Russian government imposed counter-sanctions. Among the counter-sanctions are limitations on the state employees to travel abroad. Devaluation of the rouble and persistent anti-Western rhetoric have also restricted international tourism. At the same time, the government has launched new internet portals for tourism and information. This probably had its effect in Lovozero district. Although tourism has been a hot topic for the past twenty years (starting with the fly-fishing tourism), it is only this year (in 2017) that the Lovozero administration published a tourist guide for the district. In it (as I already knew because I had attended a round table organized by the local administration in April 2012), they promoted the idea of "tourism with national colors" or the development of "ethnotourism".

Such ideas receive scholarly support. Two scholars from Moscow State University wrote an article about ethnotourism in Lovozero (Aleksandrova and Aigina 2014). They envisaged "ethnotourism" as an enterprise where the ethnic individuality becomes a major tourist attraction and conclude that "[t]raditions and culture of indigenous peoples living in the region act as the most attractive factor

for tourism development in the area", but also acknowledge the vigilance of the local people:

> The indigenous nations of Lovozero area see tourism as the chance for economic and cultural development of their territory but they are watching this process with vigilance as tourism can bring losses to their authentic culture and national identity. The main task now is to explain to the local population that normal tourism development can bring big profits comparable to mining, metallurgy, trade or reindeer herding, but with less damage to the environment.(Aleksandrova and Aigina 2014, 7)

To my knowledge, the local people hold different views on tourism that are more in line with the Soviet understanding. In 1949, tourism was officially recognized as a type of sport in the Soviet Union. It was a form of mass action performed through activities such as walking, hiking, biking, camping along excursion routes. This understanding of *turizm* reflected long-held beliefs about exposure to the elements, and travel itself, as a source of physical and ideological strengthening (Gorsuch 2003, 763). For many years the tourists who came to the village were amateur tourists sailing down the Ponoy River. In 1960, Mikhail Pelipeychnko published a book on rafting on the Kola Peninsula which gave rise to canoe tourism in the area. Even the first foreigner to come to the village, sailed down the river. Polar explorer Ann Bancroft visited Murmansk region through a USA-USSR school exchange program in 1989 (and commented to the regional newspaper *Komsomolets zapolyariya* that the village of Krasnoshchelye was the only place where she could live if she had to live in Russia). Ann Bancroft's visit may be generally forgotten, but the practice of canoeing is still very much alive. Today, only few canoeing tourists stay overnight at the guesthouse, whilst the majority prefer to camp outside the village.

In his book *Po rekam i ozeram Kol'skogo poluostrova* (1960) Pelipeychenko describes the hospitality of the local people – how they accepted the newcomer and opened their houses to him. During my fieldwork two elderly women, Aunt Zoya

and Aunt Marina shared their experiences of how canoe tourists used to come down the river, and approach their houses asking where they could stay overnight (Aunt Zoya and Aunt Marina were neighbors living close to the river bank). In their stories the tourists were usually hungry, tired if not exhausted, and needed to be cared for. The ladies could send them immediately to the *obshchepit*, the canteen in the village, but they said they preferred to personally offer them local cottage cheese and cream, and then boast about the advantages of the village, the clean food, the clean air, the healthy pine forests around. Afterwards they would help the tourists find accommodation, or let them stay overnight in their own houses. The two old ladies had housed tourists from Moscow and even more distant places: they had made friends with some; some of them came back; others were never heard of again. They talked nostalgically about the conversations in the small hours of the White Nights. Aunt Zoya, would tell how her husband played the guitar, sang and kept the conversation going. This hospitality did not bring monetary income, but cherished experiences of surprise and eventfulness.

This version of active tourism as an individual sports activity, is not easy to make into an industry. The organized tours belong to a different sphere and bring other forms of experience. The owner of the guesthouse, the only registered tourist company in the village, who collaborates with tourist companies organizing tours to the village, had paid a retired herder to keep reindeer around the village and to give rides to the tourists when they came. For the reindeer herder, this became a futile project – keeping reindeer several kilometers outside the village where the nearest lichen pastures were found, meant he had to walk for several hours a day (in the bad winter weather) to check them and change their position. He obtained them in November but the first tourists came for the New Year celebrations. For him, it was a pointless use of time and he took the reindeer back to the herd in the tundra. More than that, the presence of reindeer in the village was against the logic and the nature of reindeer herding. Whilst it might increase the value of the offered tourist

products by making the village seem closer to the wilderness in the eyes of the visitors, it was certainly not good for the well-being of the reindeer.

The two elderly women who spoke about tourists did not consider themselves as essentially different from the urban tourists who came down the river to visit, nor did the reindeer herder feel it worth decorating the village with reindeer in order to fulfil some tourist expectations. Although they acknowledged the values of pristine nature, ecological food, healthy air, they considered them as non-saleable values – as the advantages of the village, in the same way as the town had advantages for those who lived there. By stressing the convivial atmosphere of the meetings between the urban tourists and the local people who lived in the tundra, they also defied any significant difference between the rural and the urban.

Remoteness and the absence of state

A third persistent characteristic of remote places is that they are non-state. As non-state they evoke images of edginess, marginality, lawlessness, informality. They are "sites of disorder, where the state has been unable to impose order" (Das and Poole 2004, 6). A number of ethnographers have contributed to this imagery of threat, violence and resistance. Ruben Andersson (2016) shows how old ideas of remoteness get entangled with new post 9/11 notions of global danger, and the establishment of new no-go zones. Daniel Goldstein (2012) describing the violence in the marginal barrios in Bolivia demonstrates the incapability of the state to intervene in the local ethos of the barrios. Gaston Gordillo describes the space beyond the political reach of the state in Argentina's Gran Chaco as a product of "anti-imperial insurgencies, mobile patterns of confrontation, flows of people, goods and cattle"(Gordillo 2013, 228). He describes this space as a threshold where the state power was negated.

The state is absent, invisible and withdrawn. Rane Willerslev, who did fieldwork among the Yukaghirs in Northeast Siberia states that he "was struck by the almost complete absence of the former Soviet state" (Willerslev 2007, 10).

Caroline Humphrey in a similar manner defines the remote places especially after the breakdown of the Soviet regime: "The remote places are rural lacunae in areas between administrative entities, zones from which the tentacles of the state have been almost completely withdrawn, and where a literally de-modernized life is going on" (Humphrey 2016, 102). The absence of the state also explains the 'informal' practices and economies. Murmansk-based sociologist Victor Tsylev has compared two villages on the Kola Peninsula: Teriberka and Krasnoshchelye. His conclusion is that "lack of control and surveillance" allows the villagers in Krasnoshchelye a degree of self-reliance and relative self-sufficiency by "active uncontrollable use of resources", which is not the case with Teriberka, where inspectors may come and exercise control because of the existing road (Tsylev 2015, 124). My uneasiness with the term 'informal' stems from the understanding that 'informal' practices were produced by the system itself (Ledeneva 1998). Regretfully, there is not much analytical work on the absence of the state in the North of Russia. One particular reason might be, as Habeck et al (Habeck et al. 2009) point out, that research in the Russian Arctic is pretty much intertwined with other sciences, most typically ecology and medical-biological sciences, rather than other regional anthropologies. The result is, as the authors suggest, that the area becomes absent from political and economic theories, or globalization theories.

One exception is the ethnography of Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov's *The Social Life of the State in Siberia* (2003), where he convincingly shows how the weakness of the state in Siberia is what made it thrive and expand. In its attempts to make the Evenki people Soviet citizens, the Soviet state constantly imposed its new projects upon them, insisting on an imagined future order. However, this order was unachievable because of (according to the authorities) the spontaneous and unpredictable lifestyles of the local people. This created a sense of temporariness of its projects, of a constant "already stagnant yet 'new'" condition, of eternal chaos, that made the state invisible in the unprecedented etatization of the indigenous

population (Ssorin-Chaikov 2003, 136). However, the constant need for new projects is not particularly a Soviet phenomenon. As I show in the next part – the northward expansion of the state has been contradictory in a broader perspective. The particular setting where I did my fieldwork can be contextualized in two directions: Northern colonialism and Russian colonizations.

Northern colonialism

The initial absence of the state is also affected by the geographical position – the North. If the remote places are both real and imagined, even more so is the North. It might be seen as synonymous with the remote. The Canadian geographer Louis-Edmond Hamelin in his book *Canadian Nordicity: It's Your North, Too* (1979), shows the North as a moving space, implying that the northernness of a community is dependent upon its connectivity to the market economy. Kenneth Coats (1994) has proposed to avoid the essentialization of the North as unique and exceptional and to look at it rather as a remote place and dynamic site of struggle and opposition, as a frontier of the non-indigenous (state) struggle with the environment and the indigenous inhabitants. At the same time these struggles have added to the nationalist sentiments in the 19th and early 20th century in a number of northern countries. Recent debates and political discussions about post-Cold War Arctic cooperation and climate change have become issues of geopolitics, and give new impulses to national and nationalistic sentiments among the polar nations (King Ruel 2011, Wilson 2007).

The state policies and interventions in the North, here understood as the expanding northern frontiers of the state, have been framed in two different ways and as two adjacent and often intertwined processes: the first is the romantic stretching out of the limits that serve the national feeling; the second is the colonialist penetration into the lives and territories of the indigenous population, often legitimated through discourses of underdevelopment, and restating that progress moves northward in these windswept places. There is a colonialist project,

as well as a nationalist one. Therefore, the North becomes a site of political struggle and regional and indigenous mobilizations. In Alaska there are persistent conflicts between the state authorities and the federal landholding authorities (Ganapathy 2011). In Norway, the welfare state expansion was accompanied by a strong 'norwegianization' of the indigenous Sami population, and vicious colonialist practices were immersed with political projects of modernization and emancipation (Zachariassen 2008). In Canada the remote North is described in terms of underdevelopment and core/periphery thinking, which elucidate the domineering practices of paternalism, and neocolonialism (Powell 2005). As a form of colonization of both territories and local populations, the colonization or the conquest of the North has many names, exposing its contradictory nature. Robert Paine (Paine 1977) calls this development in Canada "welfare colonialism" and Elizabeth Furniss (Furniss 1999) –"conquest through benevolence".

The Russian North is both similar to and different from other circumpolar areas. The Russian North is not only dynamic, it is also seen as multiple and heterogeneous. Referring to its geographical vastness, Myklebost and Nielsen (2016) evoke in the title of a recent volume the Russian saying: “There is not one North, but many Norths” [*Net Severa, a est’ Severá*]. Throughout different periods, the different parts of the Russian North have been under varied and multiple forms of colonialism: from the Tsarist fur tax and peasant settler colonialism, to Soviet industrial colonialism and special settlers [*spetspereselentsy*] in the northern peripheries. Of more importance to consider, however, is that the centre (in the colonial centre-periphery relationship) has also been shifting. Not only was the Russian North underdeveloped in relation to Moscow, it was also considered as underdeveloped in relation to the other Northern countries. Policy-makers used both Norway and Canada as examples for the development of the Kola Peninsula, first in the late 19th and early 20th century, and later in the 1990s after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the

debates on centre-periphery have become central to the post-Soviet moment as a whole (Clowes 2011, 5). Clowes describes the post-Soviet moment as an experience of shifting geography between centre and periphery in a wider context:

> This shift from the relatively protected second world down the hierarchy of wealth and power to the third world ironically put Russians–among the northernmost people of the world–in the position of an impoverished, exploited (southern) colony with relation to its imagined (northern) colonizers. (Clowes 2011, 17)

These contradictory and antithetical relationships between centre and peripheries throughout Russian history deeply mark the Russian North (especially its European part).

The Russian North epitomizes the relationship between Russia and the West. Its importance came to be interpreted in contradictory terms: as both "window to the West", and as a safeguard of the hinterland. In the 19th century, Westernizers [*zapadniki*] in Russia thought of the Arctic as an area to be subdued and colonized in order to come closer to Europe (in *Festival* I describe the popularization of skiing in Russia as triggered by the popularity of the Norwegian polar explorers). In contrast to the Westernizers, for the religious Slavophiles the Russian North was about preserving and safeguarding the Russian way of life. It has been a battleground of ideological struggles. In the early Stalinist period – as a way to beat the Arctic imperialism of the West. And more recently – in 2007, when Russia claimed part of the Lomonosov ridge and the seabed beneath the North Pole (Nielsen 2016) and provoked worldwide uproar. Nevertheless it has been and remains a space of continuous international cooperation between Russia and the West.

The movement of the capital from Moscow to Saint Petersburg (in popular language defined as the "northern capital"), was probably one of the reasons behind the aphorism: "In Russia the centre is in the periphery", ascribed to the Russian historian Vasilii Kliuchevskii (1841–1911). This oxymoron alludes to the

ambiguous meaning of spatial definitions in Russia. The Russian north, although a target of intensive state policies, has not been able to conjure a coherent image. It remains a remote place with a somewhat undefined political substance and charge.

Russian colonizations

Although Soviet ideology criticized the colonial regime of the Western countries Russia in fact colonized itself. In *Peopling the Russian Periphery* (2007) Nicholas Breyfogle, Abby Schrader and Willard Sunderland remind us of the Russian historian Vasilii Kliuchevskii's expression that colonization should be seen as the "basic fact" of Russian history: the "history of Russia is the history of a land being colonized" (Breyfogle, Schrader, and Sunderland 2007, 7). They relate colonization to the Russian peasant migration in different parts of its territory, stressing its diversity:

> In fact, Russian colonization unfolded with such splendid diversity that it is more accurate to talk of Russian colonizations in the plural than the singular. Ever evolving and multifaceted, Russian Borderland settlement was a process in which outsider colonists, native peoples, the natural environment, and the world of state and its representatives influenced one another in ever shifting combinations. (Breyfogle et al.2007:7)

This is also the case on the Kola Peninsula. According to historical accounts the indigenous Sami came from the East in ancient times. Russian peasants who did not recognize the church reforms of patriarch Nikon [*raskolniki*] settled along the coastline of the White Sea in the 17th century. In the 19th century Finnish peasants and Norwegian fishermen settled along the Murman coast. Later on, Komi reindeer herders and peasants looking for new pastures settled in the inner part of the Peninsula. Over the years we can add prisoners of war during the First World War, special settlers under the Stalinist regime, resettlements after WWII and industrial and military migration (Ushakov 1997, Nielsen 2014, Holtsmark 2015).

In fact, the term colonization of the North was a Tsarist term, and the colonization policy was introduced to the Kola Peninsula on 31. August 1860, when the tsar issued a decree allowing Norwegians to settle down on the Murman coast (Orekhova 2008). It was a more or less spontaneous migration of people, and the authorities were positive and benevolent: it was not only beneficial for cultivating the territory, but also as motivating factor for Russians to settle down there.

The secondary wave of colonization on the Kola Peninsula was related to the appropriation [*usvoenie*] of the North through large infrastructural projects during and after the First World War. In this undertaking the authorities used not only Russians, but Chinese, Korean and Austrian prisoners of war. Political prisoners were used for the railway and the industrial mines. The state promoted the idea that productive labor would correct and cultivate the people. In this way, the people become instruments to colonize the territory, and the colonization of the territory through forced labor became an instrument of colonizing people's minds. Nevertheless, in these processes, the differences between the colonists (settlers, newcomers) and the indigenous populations often evaporated.

Aleksander Etkind uses the concept of Russia's "internal colonization" (2011) (Etkind 2011). Internal colonization often refers to the rise of the interventionist state, favoring technocratic elitism. It was "a widespread phenomenon in interwar Europe, where attempts to build new communities on semi- or unoccupied lands were buttressed by a strong belief in progress and in the ability of man to master the nature" (van de Grift 2015, 139). In Norway, the state colonized the northernmost areas bordering Russia through a homestead policy (*bureising*). A major part of this policy was directed towards the norwegianization of the local population – the indigenous Sami and the Kvens (of Finnish descent) – to make them loyal Norwegian citizens (Eriksen and Niemi 1981). This internal colonization was directed towards the people as people, rather than making new territories and land the main focus (van de Grift 2015, 145). In Greenland, internal colonialism is used

to describe the colonialist ideology adopted and internalized by the local Inuit after the withdrawal of the Danish colonial authorities (Petersen 1995). In a similar vein, Etkind in his book explains how Russia has been “both the subject and the object of colonization and its corollaries, such as orientalism", and how "the state colonized its people"(Etkind 2011, 2). That is to say, the state rarely made any difference between non-Russians and Russians when it came to exploitation. Thus, internal colonization is a metaphor revealing mechanisms of cultural hegemony and political domination working together in some kind of coalition, correlation, or confrontation inside the national borders (Etkind 2011, 6-7).

Etkind's analysis of 'internal colonization' resonates with Ssorin-Chaikov's analysis of the workings of Gramscian hegemony and Foucauldian domination as "contemporaneous and mutually constitutive" (Ssorin-Chaikov 2003, 11) in Siberia. In the remote places, the State is absent but radiates its effects of hegemony and domination in one way or another. Such interplay of cultural hegemony and political domination, was characteristic also for the other northern countries.

In this chapter I have sketched some of the basic ideas of remoteness as a "locality" in Appadurai's sense – a lived experience of the spatial in a globalized, deterritorialized world, a general property of social life and a particular valuation of that property, and as embedding large-scale realities in concrete life-worlds. The locality is both relational and contextual, produced mainly in the context of larger-scale social formations, but also by the people who live there (Appadurai 1996, 178-199).

I began by looking at firmly established discourses developed in the political centres (of will and power) defining the remote areas as non-modern. At several points I brought in the differing views of the local people, who live there. I focused upon the fact that their valuation differs from the valuation imposed through larger contexts (North/Russia) and relations (modernization/state policies). Nevertheless,

they also are involved in the production of locality. As Appadurai asserts, "as these local subjects engage in the social activities of production, representation and reproduction (as in the work of culture), they contribute, generally unwittingly, to the creation of contexts that might exceed the existing material and conceptual boundaries of the neighborhood". He sums this up in the following way: "locality-producing activities are not only context-driven but are context generative" (Appadurai 1996, 185-186).

Thus, there are abstract discourses on remoteness and commonplace discourses in the village and its surroundings. The abstract discourses on remoteness, with their ambiguous and often apophatic representations of absences imply a sense of inferiority. In parallel, the commonplace discourse in the village concentrates on the present realities in the village. Both discourses are in constant interplay but do not necessarily engage directly with each other. Through the dynamics of this interplay, the spatial dimension becomes transformed into a factor of agency. It is these dynamics that I explore further in the following chapter.

On the streets of Krasnoshchelye

Chapter Five: Remoteness as agency

Agency at the margins

In the previous chapter, I focused on stereotypical representations of remoteness and how geographical distance turns into complex and complicated forms of agency (colonizations). Simultaneously I sketched some aspects of the everyday life: mail order catalogues, car repairs, boat tourists. In this chapter, I shall look at the abstract distance between the centres of power and the everyday life.

By relegating people to the margins or to a space considered marginal, one attributes characteristics to their agency: strength to the centre, weakness to the margins. Here, I will look closer at "the (voracious) property that the geographical system has of being able *to transform action into legibility*, but in doing so it causes a way of being in the world to be forgotten"(de Certeau 1984, 97 my emphasis). Although de Certeau acknowledges this property, and focuses on the "ways of being in the world" that used to be forgotten – the everyday life, Doreen Massey (2005, 25-26) has criticized his distinction between tactics and strategies for strengthening this model (of legibility as exclusively belonging to the centres). Nevertheless, de Certeau's work is a good beginning point for discussion.

For de Certeau (1984), at the opposite end to the centre stands the everyday life and the marginalized human. I want to explore conceptually and analytically how the human agency in the remote village complements the agencies of political domination and cultural hegemony described in the preceding chapter. I will consider to what extent the lacks and inadequacies of the peripheries, which are the results of varied discursive practices from ignorance to national ideologies and spatial ranking, affect the everyday life.

Both the feminist ideas of positionality (identities mark relational positions, not essential characteristics) and situatedness (Haraway 1988, Rose 1997), and the postcolonial concept of location as a complex and ever-changing constellation of

moving peoples, ideas, and commodities (Bhabha 1994), have exposed dominative forms of knowledge and opened up new possibilities of reflexive awareness in anthropological writing. To counterbalance the West-centric dominance, cultural practice and scholarship have described and describe the remote places, the margins, the peripheries, as political spaces and as sites of creativity and resistance. State ideologies, colonization, and modernization projects are imposed from the outside, from the centres. In the margins they are implemented and appropriated, but also ignored, deferred, subverted, and sabotaged. The impulses for such interpretations of the margins have come from different analytical traditions and perspectives: Russian semiology, social philosophy, feminist studies and not least ethnography. Probably the most liberating interpretation of the margins is offered by the Black feminist bell hooks, for whom the margins are sites of radical openness, places to conceptualize alternatives, to seek new knowledge and experience (hooks 1989).

The above-mentioned examples – Bhabha's third space and bell hooks' "margins of radical openness" – are examples showing attempts at establishing new alternative spaces as centres of will and power, to use de Certeau's expression. Anna Tsing (1993) was among the first ethnographers to advance our understanding of the complexity of the margins through an ethnographic description. In her study of the Dayak in the rainforest of South Kalimantan in Indonesia, she is critical of globalization studies where creativity is often a privilege of the urban, cultural core, opposed to the locally bounded periphery. She argues for the inclusion of the "out of the way places" in the new forms of cultural analysis of globalization. Even the most remote communities are not "self-forming social entities" but have a heritage of survival "as creative living on the edge" (Tsing 1993, 286). They are sites of both constraints and creativity. This resonates well with the call to diversify our understanding of modernity and acknowledge the existence of multiple modernities, implying not only geographical diversity in responses to modernity, but also diversification of modernity projects within Western society. In her work, Tsing

uses individuals as cultural commentators to outline both "disruptive and unifying features without assuming gender, ethnic or political homogeneities" (Tsing 1993, 34). In a similar manner, although I acknowledge the importance of intersectional analysis, my focus in the thesis is on people living in a place, often defined as remote or marginal, without taking into account gender, age, ethnicity.

The everyday life and its political significance

In this section I shall provide a brief overview of how agency in the margins has been characterized in terms of constraints, resistance and creativity. These are tactics, the agency of what de Certeau calls the marginal majority of the ordinary man. For James Scott (1985), these are “weapons of the weak”, for Anna Tsing (1993) – the creativity of the margins.

In theories of everyday life one can generally outline two trends. One of them posits everyday life as commonplace banality, kitsch and profane in contrast to the centre which is defined as the centre, the high culture, the norm, Culture with a capital C. The second trend posits the centre as a power in its various appearances, and makes the everyday life a site of resistance; the study of culture is polemological and should acknowledge the "war-like" model (de Certeau 1984, 16-17). As de Certeau’s work concentrates on urban dwellers, his focus is on the tactics of consumption: "the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong" (de Certeau 1984, xvii). For de Certeau these are found in dwelling, moving about, speaking, reading, shopping and cooking. For Scott and his work with peasants in a Malaysian village, it is about “foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so on” (Scott 1985:xvi).

As Edwin Ardener points out ([1987] 2012), since the 1980s more and more anthropologists have started to move their research sites – from the remote places to the geographically near but culturally distant places, from rituals towards the everyday life as a site of political action. Interests have shifted from studying the

sacred to the ordinary, from talking with local experts to talking with ordinary local people (Gullestad 1991). Marianne Gullestad (1991) points to the political potency of the notion of the everyday life; according to her “everyday life” becomes an exodus from the system, a notion opposed to the system. However, she also acknowledges that the everyday and the system penetrate each other. Her Norwegian informants experience a phenomenological gap between themselves and the system. She interprets this gap as generated by the people themselves, as imaginative construction, as an act of resistance and defensive reaction towards social and cultural change. Another anthropologist, Nancy Ries (2002), has pointed out that the concept of everyday life is Western-centred and a product of capitalist modernity – it is therefore considered banal and commonplace. The trivial, the everyday is something that belongs to Western modernity. Thus the everyday life is a heterogeneous notion and becomes even more complicated in Russian context, as we shall see below.

Russian/Soviet interpretations of everyday life

In a Russian/Soviet context the everyday life has been theorized by Yuri Lotman (1994) and Svetlana Boym (1994). Mikhail Bakhtin's work (1984) upon folk culture also has to be acknowledged. All three of them, in different ways, challenge the assumption that the everyday is the product of capitalist modernity by focusing on the discursive practices of the everyday as the popular, the trivial. In the only theory of everyday life developed in the Soviet Union, Lotman speaks of everyday reality as a text where one can find the semiotic links between the everyday life and the ideal life (*byt* and *bytie*), a distinction that might be traced back to the beginnings of Orthodox Christianity. In his model of the semiosphere the symbols operate as bridges between the everyday life and the ideal life. For Svetlana Boym (1994) the contradictions in the notion of everyday life were increased by the Soviet regime. She is concerned to show that "Russian / and Soviet identity depended on opposition to the everyday" (Boym 1994, 3). Unlike the

Western theories, where the everyday life is seen as the site of resistance to power, the everyday life in Soviet Russia turns into something to be battled and resisted. Therefore she argues that: "in the Russian intellectual tradition as well as in Soviet official ideology, a preoccupation with everyday life for its own sake was considered unpatriotic, subversive, un-Russian, or even anti-Soviet" (Boym 1994, 2). However, of note is that she attributes agency only to intellectuals and literary heroes, not to lay people.

In her opinion, the official discourses in Russia both create a "utopian topography" and turn the common places (the everyday) into a labyrinth. In order to make sense of it, the everyday had to be "novelized", fictionalized. Her book focuses upon "everyday aesthetic experiences and alternative spaces carved between the lines and on the margins of the official discourses" (Boym 1994, 5).

To some extent, Svetlana Boym fails to fully acknowledge the work of Yuri Lotman. Her main critique is that "his emphasis is always on semiotics and structures rather than on the everyday resistance to them" (Boym 1994, 30). However Lotman, in his work on the everyday life in 18th and 19th century Russia (Lotman 1994), includes and makes use of the ambiguity of the symbols. He shows the officers' balls as both parades and carnivals and emphasises the dynamic relation between what is mainstream and what is marginal.

Boym and Lotman have much in common: they use literary and historical texts to approach the everyday life and the language. Lotman places a particular focus upon language, highlighting how the language of the Decembrists was crucial for change in the society of the time: they changed the tone of conversational behavior. This is in a similar manner to what Boym describes as "the change of tone" among the bards of the Thaw generation in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Both Boym and Lotman focus on cultural practices intertwined with power relationships. The latter becomes very clear in Lotman's theory of the semiosphere – the whole semiotic space of a given culture, characterized by binarism, asymmetry

between the core and periphery, and heterogeneity of elements and their functions. His work was used as a model in a recent contribution to the contemporary and historical studies of "Everyday life in Russia" (Ransel 2015, 26). However, as Michael Herzfeld observes, this model does "not satisfactorily engage with the role of agency in the selective deployment of official and subversive codes, and they tend to reify the distinction between official and nonofficial codes on the agency and the social use of these codes" (Herzfeld 1997, 227). In fact, Herzfeld's concept of "social poetics" integrates agency with the semiotic model.

The lack of agency in Lotman's work can be seen if we compare it with the work of the Norwegian anthropologist Finn Sivert Nielsen (1986). In their respective discussions of the everyday life, they both refer to the Inferno and its circles in Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. Nielsen writing on the everyday life in Leningrad in the late 1970s and early 1980s, defines the everyday life as the Limbo (the first circle of the inferno – the in-betweenness between the centres of meaning, where meanings are ambiguous, indefinite, and unpredictable, and where the individuals are in the eye of whirlwind of meanings and try to order them). Nielsen's notion is very close to Henry Lefebvre's concept of the blank, marginal spaces between the marked, named places, ordered by mental and social activity – more texture than text (Lefebvre 1991, 117-118). It is also very similar to Lotman's 'zero space'. All three of them point out that this space releases creative potential from semiotic uncertainty. However for Lotman, the everyday life is like another of the circles in Dante's 'Inferno' – Caïna the 9th (the closest to hell and covered by permafrost). He writes: "The human being freezes in the everyday life [*byt*] as a sinner from Dante's Inferno in the ice of Caïna" (Lotman 1994, 270). The sinners in this instance are frozen in the ice having only their heads outside. Lotman takes this image in order to discuss how the stagnation of the everyday life is opposed to theatricality. Whilst everyday life was frozen and static, packing it into theatrical language enables the individuals to act upon their surroundings. Theatrical language

is used for what is important; the rest (the trivial, the ordinary) was not talked about (Lotman 1994, 280). Svetlana Boym makes a similar argument when she refers to the two words for truth in Russian language: *pravda* (what could be told) and *istina* (that cannot be articulated).

Another work that adds to the idea of everyday life is Oleg Kharkhordin's *The Collective and the Individual in Russia* (1999). Here, he shows how the collective of the everyday life becomes the arena of practices of mutual surveillance, which requires "the individual to transform itself" (Kharkhordin 1999, 128). The production of the individual's enforced conformity is achieved through everyday (horizontal) mutual surveillance (Kharkhordin 1999, 110ff). In this way the studies of everyday life concentrate on cultural practices, power relationships and learned behavior. To put it bluntly – they are more concerned with the structures and the inherent contradictions in the structures, rather than with the agency.

Spans of ambiguities

In his seminal work "Weapons of the Weak", James Scott (Scott 1985) describes the everyday forms of peasant resistance (acts of resistance and acts of ideological resistance), where people (in his case the Sedaka of Malaysia) avoid any direct, symbolic confrontation with the authorities, but utilize their own ways to resist. These are often quiet and anonymous in form. To describe them, Scott (Scott 1985, xvii) uses the metaphor of the coral reef (the accumulated resistances) that can reduce the 'ship of the state' into a shipwreck. Thus, for him it is rather the repetitive, the cumulative working of the hidden resistance that alters the system (turns it into a shipwreck). On the other hand, Marianne Gullestad places the emphasis on the ambiguities. She looks at the everyday life as a "condensed and unifying symbol for a large number of conflicting values" (Gullestad 1991, 481), and finds its political significance in the "span of the ambiguities" (the distance between the different ideas associated with a symbol). Such spans of ambiguities are evoked in a number of the analyses of the Soviet and post-soviet realities.

In his discussion on the breakdown of the Soviet system, Alexey Yurchak (Yurchak 2013) connects and combines both accumulation and heterogeneity. He draws attention to how the repetitive reproduction of ideological messages empties them of their initial meaning; this allows for new forms of interpretation, which both support and subvert the system. In a similar vein, Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov has pointed to the intrinsic contradictions and ambiguities that generate the notion of failure, as stated earlier. Building on Stoler's (2013) concept of 'imperial debris' (the uneven temporal sedimentations that affect the social life), Ssorin-Chaikov describes the concept of 'Soviet debris'. Looking at how the failure of previous state projects still occupies the present, he shows how the failures of the Soviet system were used to incorporate new forms of governance and initiate new reforms. The failures thus became the reason for the functionality of the system "as turning points in a continuous series of projects" (Ssorin-Chaikov 2016, 692). Ssorin-Chaikov demonstrates that it is not the resistance on the ground level that makes the state expand and get stronger, but the discursive practices upon the failures of the state weaved in the texture of everyday life.

Anna Tsing (1993) demonstrates this in her work. She shows how the Meratus themselves made the new Indonesian state expand into the peripheral areas they inhabited. Men, using the state's own rhetoric, were able to claim local legitimacy by relating traditional law to the modern state law. In contrast, the women who both copied and criticized the men, mixed and manipulated the different discursive meanings. Their marginality was thus a heterogeneous zone of exclusion and creativity, of ignorance and opposition. The political significance of this creativity is discussed in varying degrees, but most of the above mentioned anthropologists would agree that the resistance is accumulative (as can be seen in James Scott's metaphor of the coral reef, Ssorin-Chaikov's debris as "layers of residue", or Stoler's sedimentations). In addition, they show that the political potential lies to a greater extent in the ambiguities, in the zones of exclusion and

creativity "in which multiple overlapping (and sometimes contradictory) discourses comingle or collide" (Tsing 1993, 232).

It is important to note and acknowledge that internal forces also add to this ambiguity. In this regard the works of Ssorin-Chaikov (2003)and Oleg Kharkhordin (1999)complement each other. The first has shown the self-refashionings of the system, the latter the self-disciplining individual. The agency of the centres, through its intentional policies or through its failing projects, coexists with many other forms of acting and reacting on an individual level. They vary from creativity, conformity and compliance, to resistance, opposition and ignorance. The notion of compliance and conformity are one-sided versions (Tsing (1993, 232), referring to Judith Butler, reminds us of the fact that whilst a subject is constituted, it does not mean that it is determined). People play with, pervert, stretch, and oppose the very matrix of power that gives them the ability to act and to create and modify meaning.

Therefore many scholars from different disciplines have acknowledged the ambiguity of the everyday life in relation to resistance and compliance, and of everyday practice: as self-protection, as the constant overcoming of obstacles, or as creative activity. Sociologist Olga Shevchenko writes that resistance can be masqueraded as compliance: "The multifaceted and polyvocal character of everyday life makes it particularly suited for diffusing resistance, channeling it through a multiplicity of alternative acts and even masquerading it as compliance" (Shevchenko 2015, 54). At the same time, she states that "the intended function of these arrangements has been, and remains, self protection, not resistance" (Shevchenko 2015, 64). Shevchenko concludes that what we should really consider is “a resistance to the idea of resistance”, because as she states “the resistance of the everyday is in the eyes of the educated observers". Anna Tsing (Tsing 1993, 96) also describes how the Meratus cooked chicken and used the rhetoric of total deference to state authority to protect their settlements. While these forms of deceit can be seen as almost active resistance to the state policy of resettlement, they can

be seen from the point of the Meratus as overcoming the obstacles. In a similar vein, Charles Tilly has nuanced on James Scott in terms of what is compliance: "compliance does not consist of conscious rule following or straightforward exchange, but of pursuing personal agendas by maneuvering among obstacles, obstacles put in place by other people and past experience" (Tilly 1991, 601). In a similar vein, the above mentioned scholars Boym and Nielsen describe such manoeuvring in a Russian context both as self-protection and creativity. Svetlana Boym suggests that the everyday life consists of "arts of minor compromise and resistance" (Boym 1994, 5). Finn Sivert Nielsen calls it the art of balance and states that: "this contemplative attitude is not defeatist, but creative". It appears, therefore, that ambiguity is what unifies the Western and the Russian everyday life; the marginal with the centres, the everyday practices with the discourse on the everyday.

In this sense Michael Herzfeld's concept of "cultural intimacy" (1997) is relevant and useful: it is in ambiguity that distances tend to become reduced and the mechanisms of power – banalized. On the one hand people recognize as "familiar, everyday phenomena some of officialdom's most formal devices" (Herzfeld 1997, 4). On the other hand, "the state conversely uses a language of kin, family and body to lend immediacy of its pronouncements" (Herzfeld 1997, 2).

Ambiguation

Many scholars seek to nuance the dualistic model between resistance and opposition on the one side, and domination and hegemony on the other. Instead of opposition between two elements, often the analyses point to tripartite relations – reminding of the old Hegelian "thesis– antithesis– synthesis". For Aleksandr Etkind, in the colonization process cultural hegemony and political domination work together in coalition, correlation and confrontations (Etkind 2011, 6-7). For Chakrabarty, European modernist ideology exists "in contestation, alliance and miscegenation" with local narratives (Chakrabarty 2000, 44). For de Certeau the

stories work through "the establishment, displacement or transcendence of limits" (de Certeau 1984, 121).

Such three-partite relationships are what characterizes the margins, the remote areas, the periphery. It is in the peripheries things merge, correlate and coexist in dissonance and concordance. In his later works which evolve around his theory of core and periphery in the semiosphere, the Soviet semiologist Yuri Lotman (Lotman 2009), distinguishes analytically between binary and ternary systems. While the binary systems of core and periphery seek revolutionary substitutions (explosions), in the ternary the elements are in constant flux, and the changes – gradual. Whether dual oppositions or tri-partite models, Debora Battaglia (Battaglia 1997, 506) argues for an anthropology that acknowledges the ambiguation of agency and social relationships, in order to explore how it transcends both subjects and sites:

> To approach agency thus as an element in ambiguating social relationships–to take agency as a vehicle or site for problematizing sociality–is very different from a program to situate, fix, attribute, or reveal the "real" or "true" agency or agents of, say, an ideological schema. For one thing, an approach to agency that recognizes indigenous programs of ambiguation and also commits to a programmatic anthropology of ambiguation will tend away from issues of intentionality and free will.1 Likewise, such an approach will tend toward openings of discursive space in which social relationships–and more particularly here relations of power–may emerge in their mutability and their displaceability. (Battaglia 1997, 506)

Nevertheless, we have to acknowledge that people are not always conscious of or consider themselves as acting subjects, or that the meaning they ascribe to events is clear. The following example illustrates one such ambiguation and makes explicit my attempts to understand resistance and compliance in a local context.

"The General Assembly"

On April 19th 2012, my second day in the village of Krasnoshchelye, there was an important event: the general assembly of the cooperative, the old sovkhoz. I was determined to go. I had written my MPhil Thesis about the privatization of the cooperative, and I knew its history of being a "total social institution" for the villagers on every level: catering for employment, lighting, diet, housing, the kindergarten, transportation, cultural events. I also knew about its multiple attempts to cope with the vicissitudes of market privatization in the 1990s. This time, although my focus was not on the cooperative itself, I could not resist the temptation to check whether the present developments supported my old conclusions. Besides, I knew that I would meet many of my old acquaintances there. The cooperative had a new owner – he was not local and his name pointed to a Caucasian origin. He had paid the existing debts and taken over the business. The assembly took place in the Culture House. The owner was present, along with one representative from the administration, one from the bank (*Rosselkhozbank*) – the state owned credit institution, the zoo technician, the equivalent of the cooperative's CEO and a reindeer herder from the Komi republic. The latter was apparently drunk, and had been invited to talk about the successful effectivization of the reindeer herding he had been involved in. The owner insisted on the introduction of a payment for the grazing of private reindeer with the cooperative's herd (on private/cooperative herding see Konstantinov (2015)). He justified this by explaining that when the slaughtering started, there were so many people at the corral[15] that it was impossible for the reindeer herders of the cooperative to work. The introduction of a grazing fee for private reindeer in the cooperative followed the example of the neighboring cooperative in Lovozero (Konstantinov 2015, 245-246). In Lovozero, people had to slaughter their own reindeer or just leave them to the cooperative. As one of the

[15] Corral [*koral*] is an enclosure with different partitions where the reindeer herders work with the herd (Konstantinov 2015).

herders told me "Some people sold their reindeer and with the money they went on holiday to Turkey". For me, such neoliberal effectivization was the ultimate transformation of the reindeer herding from traditional livelihood into a profit-making business activity.

The greatest part of the assembly were reindeer herders and tractor (all-terrain vehicle) drivers, and most of them would be affected by the envisaged changes. When they opened the discussion, only two members took to the floor: the retired zoo technician stated that the business plan to increase the herd was impossible to fulfil at least for the next 5 years, which meant that the reindeer herders would continue to receive the minimal wage of 6000-7000 roubles for the foreseeable future (and the owner nodded that it was true); the retired radio operator started by asking a question about the private reindeer. She had been awarded reindeer over the years for her work for the sovkhoz. She had not finished her question when the new owner of the cooperative interrupted her: "Whatever you say about the private reindeer, I will not change my mind!" She only wanted to clarify the numbers, as retired members of the cooperative could have up to six private reindeer and working reindeer herders up to 12. No other herders, nor indeed anyone else said anything.

At the end of the general assembly, the members of the cooperative were each given a glossy photo album documenting the history of the village from its establishment in 1921 until the present day. People then left without a stir. I could not believe it. I could not figure out why there were no protests. Was it because the new owner had just paid several months salaries – the reindeer herders had received 45 000 rubles, after probably 10 months without salaries? Was it because they believed in his plans to renovate and modernize the reindeer bases? Were they not bothered at all? Was the glossy album enough for them? Did they feel sympathy towards the new owner because of his recent harsh criticism of the head of the local administration who "was selling" territories owned by the cooperative for fly fishing

tourism? To most of the people, it did not seem to be a big deal. Afterwards, I tried to discuss their silence on several different occasions – why did people not say anything at the general assembly? I received only half-hearted answers. Some shrugged their shoulders and said: "Ah, what should we say?" or waved their arms, exclaiming "What can we do?"

The case makes explicit the failures of the cooperative to adjust to the market realities. It also highlights the ambiguous attitude of the herders and the other affected individuals. While Konstantinov has discussed the failures of the sovkhoz as 'turning points' for changes introduced into the reindeer herding (Konstantinov 2015), I want to briefly discuss one "failure" in the privatization process which happened before my very eyes.

An item on the agenda at the general assembly, announced spontaneously or rather post-factum, was to separate the transportation unit from the cooperative. The reason given was to cut the taxes. Agricultural production is subsidized with lower taxes. Transportation services are not. So when the cooperative had both transportation services and agricultural production, higher taxes were imposed upon it. If they had only agricultural production, taxation would be reduced. Therefore the cooperative unanimously voted to separate the transportation unit and establish a new transportation company in order to lower the taxes imposed upon the reindeer herding. However, the new transport company did not pay any taxes or social security, and in 2015 was sued and closed down due to bankruptcy[16]. The tractors were not recognized as an asset. In this way they became no one's property. Not surprisingly, the owner of the cooperative was able to use them privately. This practice is often described as "raiding", and is part of post-Soviet privatization, in which, as in this case, the local people had no part in it. The phenomenon has been given the name *oligarkhoz* (Nikulin 2010). In a way, the new owner can be seen as

[16] The legal documents on this case are available on the internet at http://sudact.ru. The particular decision is in *Opredeleniye ot 22 yanvarya 2015 g. po delu № A42-8837/2014*.

a creative 'poacher' of the existing infrastructure, to use de Certeau's words. His new management alluded to old Soviet (sovkhoz) practices of having the general assembly in the *klub* (partly Soviet house of culture, partly discotheque and tourist centre providing services and entertainment to organized tourist groups), and of introducing local social policy such as paying extra to employees under 30 years of age.

The case of the transportation unit shows how the agency was obscured and its authorship made unclear, hidden, displaced. As it now stands, transportation has been transferred to the administration in Lovozero (as it was before in the Soviet period, when there was no visible division between the former sovkhoz and the local administration). Nevertheless, the remoteness offers interstices in the legal system and people take advantage of it. Most of these transactions are not really visible in the village, and who bears responsibility for the fact that the tractors are not in the cooperative any longer is rarely questioned.

When I later tried to understand what was actually going on with the grazing of private reindeer, and if indeed the proposed changes were in effect – the answers I got were that nothing had changed. This evokes the old saying they used on such occasions to banalize the whole situation of power and authority: "New broom sweeps in new ways". The muted response is one of these epistemological disconcertments I felt in the field as to whether it was an expression of powerlessness or actually strength. What was it about? Was it conformity and Soviet style compliance, or was it a tactic implying the forms of resistance identified by James Scott? The herders knew that in the end they had the reindeer in the tundra and thus access to reindeer meat. When they had to eat, they had to eat, irrelevant of the assignment. This idea is backed up by one of the women in my film "Across Troubled Water" (Mankova 2000). She told a similar story to the one above: once at the transportation unit of the sovkhoz, either during the war or in the early post-war years when they were transporting products, the sled-drivers were hungry. They

had nothing to eat and in the end the brigadier slaughtered one of the transportation reindeer. The report would say that its leg had been broken, hence the reason why they had to kill it and eat it. So even then, in the most strict and controlled system, people 'were poaching'.

Temporariness and unpredictability

The ambiguity makes such solutions never permanent, and always temporary. This is another characteristic of the periphery, of the margins. Their temporariness is related to and defined as their unpredictability. Both postcolonial ethnographers such as Anna Tsing, and post-Soviet scholars such as Alexey Yurchak, acknowledge this unpredictability. The unpredictability is rooted both in the fact that the structure, the centre has its flaws, and the fact that the people who live there are able to act and react upon the reproduction of cultural forms. These human actions and reactions might be seen as continuous ruptures, or “explosions” as Lotman refers to them, or as "friction" as a slight and constant movement as Anna Tsing describes them (2005). For Tsing the essence of the margins is “unpredictability at the edges of discursive stability, where contradictory discourses overlap, or where discrepant kinds of meaning-making converge" (Tsing 1994, 279). Tsing's work is inspired by the work of Marshal Sahlins, whose research focuses upon the unpredictability of cultural reproduction (1981) and shows how local understandings are always reformulated and redefined within new practices and foreign sets of meaning. For the soviet and post-soviet context Alexei Yurchak introduces the concept of “heteronymous shift”, the processes whereby the form of representation is reproduced, but the meaning is changed:

> heteronymous shifts [...] came to involve an element of unpredictability [...][because] the constant internal reinterpretation of the ideological meanings, which were the system's very raison d'etre, contributed to the conditions of possibility for the system's imminent implosion, without necessarily causing this implosion. (Yurchak 2003, 482-504)

In this way, the postcolonial, the feminist (where the ambiguity is generated by discovering and claiming new locations or positions and situatedness) and the postsocialist theoretical impulses (of internal heteronymous shifts) are converging in notions of uncertainty, ambiguity and unpredictability.

Finn Sivert Nielsen describing this unpredictability, appropriately uses the concept of the whirlwind: "When you have nowhere to go, remain quiet and learn to master the art of balance in "the eye of the whirlwind" (Nielsen 1986). Even more important to this, as Nielsen writes, is that in the eye of the whirlwind one also finds peace and harmony. Here, the mastery of the art of balance reminds us of de Certeau's "combinatory or utilizing modes of consumption, a way of thinking invested in a way of acting, an art of combination that cannot be distinguished from an art of using" (de Certeau 1984, xv). Before going on to discuss how people act on this unpredictability and temporariness with concrete empirical examples, I want to draw attention to a side story.

Enjoyment

So far I have outlined resistance, conformity, compliance, resilience, and manoeuvring between obstacles in the following ways: as descriptions of individual agency, as mastering the art of balance, and "the many ways of establishing a kind of reliability within the situations imposed on an individual, that is, of making it possible to live in them by reintroducing into them the plural mobility of goals and desires – an art of manipulating and enjoying" (de Certeau 1984, xxii). Usually, the focus on de Certeau points to the temporariness of the tactics of the everyday life, and on the manipulating or “poaching” that takes place. Enjoyment tends not to get a mention, and even if it does, enjoyment is often only seen in terms of consumption. Such interpretations often stress the underprivileged nature of marginal people. Throughout my fieldwork and my engagements I have witnessed moments of enjoyment, small comments and acts in the everyday of life, unplanned and sometimes unintended. They bring joy and laughter. This comes through most

clearly in *Stories*, but it is also present in *Festival* and *School*. The following story might serve as an illustration.

One of the reindeer herders whom I knew from my stay in 1998-1999 was fishing down the river. Ponoy is one of the best salmon fishing rivers, and fishing is strictly regulated. However, quotas are almost impossible to get in the village[17]. Two tourists in a canoe approached him on their way to the village. When he introduced himself, he said that his own name was not important; everybody in the village knew him as "The Black Prince". This, however, turned out to be an invention. They needed some spare parts, so he suggested that they made contact with a couple of villagers. The next day when the tourists arrived in the village, they went to the recommended house and stated that they were sent by "The Black Prince" [*chyornyy prints*]. Who? For the villagers "The Black Prince" did not make any sense. When the tourists explained that they had met and spent the night with a man camping along the river who called himself the Black Prince, the villagers guessed who they were referring to. For the locals, "this humorous invention" brought laughter. "Just imagine, two young men knocking on your door saying that they have been sent by the Black Prince".

This story was not intended as a mockery of the tourists. It was a story of vigilance in the tundra. You never know when you meet unfamiliar faces, what their purpose might be. Perhaps it is a fishery inspector in disguise; they are told that the

[17] The following example might serve to illustrate this. I was at the administration office discussing my registration. The man in front of me asked about the fish quota. The specialist of the administration said "we have not got them yet". On my way back I met one of our hosts, and mentioned that I had heard that the quotas had not yet come. He or his wife then called to the administration to ask whether they could get a quota. The answer was that the quotas were already distributed. Later we found out the time span between the answers of "not yet" and "already gone" was no more 15 - 20 minutes. In such whirlwinds between “not yets” and “already gone”, the fishing quotas disappear and people have to find solutions and balance their lives. The paradox of “not yet” and “already gone” here could be seen as complementary to Ssorin-Chaikov’s “always new”– “already in stagnation” state projects (Ssorin-Chaikov 2003) and points to the absences discussed in Chapter Four.

inspectors are more and more creative in their ways to discover illegal uses of resources. This precaution was clearly a practical handling of vigilance; it was subverting and maybe even mocking the "mutual surveillance" as a reference to the Soviet crime movie "The Black Prince" from the 1970s. However, it was also an enjoyable story, evoking laughter and playing its part in the sociality of the village. With the story, there was a balance, a temporary sense of harmony. In addition, it reminds us of what Ardener describes as the "peculiar driving force of abortive innovation" in the remote areas which counterworks the 'sense of vulnerability to intrusion' (Ardener [1987] 2012, 532).

To me 'the eye of the whirlwind' as described by Nielsen, resembles the idea of the tip of the trajectory (which I personally prefer as it alludes to the historicity, but also acknowledges the existing impulse and also implies intentionality). Both individuals and institutions have their trajectories. They crisscross and interfere in the daily life. Uncertainties and unpredictability mark the everyday life. Uncertainty is also contained in the centre, with its perpetual “heteronymous shifts” (reproductions of form with changing meanings) and failures. The agencies of both centres and peripheries are constantly ambiguated and reconfigurated.

At the same time it should be acknowledged that our notion of agency is also ambiguous and intrinsically ambivalent. It is as much about dominance and resistance as about intentions, projects, purposes, desires. It is about preemptive interventions and restorative, redemptive processes and its outcome cannot fully be controlled by the agent who had initiated or provoked it (Ortner 2006, 44-45). The story of the Black Prince shows the dynamic simultaneity of coping with the everyday, with the faulty regulations, with the Soviet film culture, and with the neoliberal reality of fly-fishing tourism.

My intention with these two chapters (Chapter Four and Chapter Five) was to place myself within a context of scholarly works describing the location of power as unstable and ever-shifting, but also describing agency as ambivalent. Sherry

Ortner distinguishes between agency as power, and agency as projects (Ortner 2006). Between these two heuristic categories, the agency is ambiguated in various ways – from intentionality to unintended consequences.

Centres and peripheries might be seen as oppositional categories, as in the above cited works of Marianne Gullestad and James Scott. It may be that the relationship between the levels is synecdochical as Lotman's theory suggests. and as Tsing's ethnography provides for, showing that there are multiple centres where the local exists in the national and in the global and vice versa (Tsing 1993). The complexity of these relationships points both to the internal contradictions inherent of the centres (Ssorin-Chaikov, Yurchak), and the agency of the marginalised (Scott, de Certeau). At the same time, by introducing new locations, new points of view, the configurations change and new ambiguities appear. What we observe is the dynamic simultaneity of agency.

In Krasnoshchelye multiple trajectories of individuals, institutions, of stories meet. They have their origins in different locations, on different scales. In their ever-shifting configurations of encounters and entanglements, it is not evident what is centre and what – periphery. Therefore, the village cannot be remote.

Chapter Six: Remoteness in the everyday life

Care

Migratoriness

In the previous chapter I discussed how the idea of remoteness relates to notions of resistance, compliance, ambiguities. In the everyday life people rarely think of their actions in terms of resistance or compliance. The ambiguation is however, an analytical or methodological concern rather than an everyday experience. In this chapter, I shall use empirical material to discuss everyday problems that people living in the remote village encounter. It comes from my observations and interactions in the field. Rather than notions of centre and peripheries, or compliance and resistance, the everyday conversations and interactions concern the needs and demands of people who require care, or things that have to be taken care of. In this way, I have gained insight into the social networks of family members, daily tasks, feelings, and social and economic means linking the remote villages with metropolises like Murmansk, Saint Petersburg and even Tromsø, just to name a few of the places.

Valentina is one of my friends. She is in her late 50s. Born in the village of Krasnoshchelye she owns an apartment in the district centre, where she has lived and now worked for 30 years. In 2012 she was about to retire and spent the summer in Krasnoshchelye as she used to do. She told me then that she was considering moving permanently to the village. The plan, however, remained unrealized. Later, in our sporadic conversations she was always telling me of her various whereabouts: the need to provide care for her unmarried son and her 90 year old mother in the village, and for her married daughter and grandchild in Murmansk. She was considering how to balance the ease of living in town (immediate access to medical services, warm water and central heating), with the strong wish of her mother to stay in the remote village. Her son who is mildly intellectually disabled preferred to stay

in town, but Valentina felt it was better for him to live in the tundra village. Valentina was expected to help her daughter in Murmansk too.

Her son who has "learning difficulties" (intellectual retardation), had for 35 years been living harmoniously with his grandmother (Valentina's mother), in the tundra village. The grandmother took responsibility for cooking and washing, the grandson chopped wood and fetched water. Now, due to her age, the grandmother needs help with the everyday chores and requires medical assistance; this in turn means that the grandson needs extra help too. So for some periods of time Valentina moved back to the village to live with them, for some periods of time (usually the coldest winter months) she took them to live with her in town. When her mother was in town for a medical check and her son was alone in the village, Valentina had to make different arrangements for him. Sometimes relatives (aunts and uncles, cousins) invited him for dinner or lunch; sometimes they brought him food, and came every now and then to wash his dishes. These were tasks previously done by his grandmother. He watched TV, but also helped some of the relatives with bringing water from the well. When Valentina got a short-term job offer, her decision was carefully weighted in terms of the needs of her closest relatives, and the possibilities for rearrangement of care work among the extended family. She made sure that her mother could stay with her sister temporarily, and that her son could live with her for a while in town. Then she could travel between the village and the town for certain periods, alternating the places. Explaining the situation, she once concluded: "Oh well, we are becoming *perelyotnye* (migratory)!"(as of migratory birds).

In her daily life Valentina juggled the needs and demands of her family. She was trying to make use of what was at hand, taking into consideration welfare services, legal entitlements to social and economic benefits that appeared and disappeared at local, regional or federal levels in a seemingly accidental way, and

not least the capacities in her network. In the same way as she was considering whether the federal program for resettlement from the North to the Central part of Russia (to which I shall return in the next section) was an option for her, she assisted her daughter with buying an apartment in a nearby town with the support of the regional program for young specialists. None of her solutions were permanent or pointing to a long term strategy. She considered all her options simultaneously – social support from the state, work opportunities and health care services.

In her case, places carry meaning through the ever changing constellations of care tasks, work, kinship ties and life-course. The social relations evolving around them were ever changing, too. As these social relations act upon the places (produce them as localities), the localities in turn become temporary and transient. For the four years following my fieldwork I have kept in touch with some of the people I met there. During our exchanges, I was almost always surprised to hear how often people changed places of residence, moving from the village to the nearby town, or moving to live on their own, or moving in with needy family members or relatives. The changes were sometimes out of necessity and need such as acute medical conditions, and sometimes just because a new opportunity had opened up. On several occasions I did not understand the reasons. It was like the butterfly effect, an insignificant, at first sight, reason might cause a large re-arrangement of locations of residence. Therefore, I find the expression of being *perelyotnye* (migratory) quite appropriate.

Healthiness of places

The places had qualities, and these qualities played a part in Valentina's decisions. According to her, the remote village was healthier for her disabled son. While in the village the physical work kept him busy and active, in the urban settlement there was nothing to do other than watch TV. I often heard the same refrain from the older women I knew from my previous fieldwork. They would complain that there was nothing to do in the apartment blocks. Valentina's mother

insisted on living in the village because her life there was so much better in spite of the lack of comforts. In the village there was only a squat toilet and one had to fire the wood stove every day. When confronted with the fact that the daily life was easier in the apartment, she would just shake her head and say: "not a problem at all". In the urban apartment she did not like to use the electric stove and therefore did not cook. Valentina confirmed that in the apartment her mother grew restless. I was told that my first landlady, Aunt Panya, already an elderly woman, was also sad and unhappy when she had to spend time in town. She desperately longed for the village, and her relatives had given up arranging for her to stay in town.

The remote village is thus seen as having positive, almost healing effects – for the old, for the sick and disabled. In a strict medical sense, the healing effect of the village is somewhat paradoxical. The health services in Krasnoshchelye have been declining for the past twenty-five years after the fall of the Soviet system. From having a reliable hospital during the Soviet times, in the late 1990s when I was there for the first time, there was only one paramedic and as people would tell me, he was "constantly drunk". In 2012, there were only two nurses or rather the pharmacist was working as a nurse, while a local woman was finishing her education to take over. If there was a sudden illness, a helicopter was sent from the municipality center. The village might be seen therefore, as therapeutic in a metaphorical sense, alluding to the healthy morality of the idyllic small community far away from the decaying urban settlements. In a recent book called "Putting Health Into Place: Landscape, Identity, and Well-Being", Robin A. Kearns and Wilbert M. Gesler (Kearns and Gesler 1998) are using the concept of 'therapeutic landscape' to account for how places provide physical, mental and spiritual healing. The characteristics might be natural landscapes, but also senses, human constructions, symbolic features and not least “an atmosphere where social distances, and social inequalities are kept to a minimum (Kearns and Gesler 1998, 8).

Although I agree that in Krasnoshchelye there were no significant social distances and inequalities, the healthy effect of the village lies elsewhere. From earlier conversations, I knew that besides the considerations of providing care to her closest relatives, Valentina would also have to consider when to sow potatoes in the remote village and then harvest them, when berries and mushrooms were ripe for picking in the tundra, and when was the best time to ask some of her relatives to fix the roof, or help her with other household repairs. She also had to cultivate her plot in the village. For many villagers the potato plots were important. They provided food supplies, but there was also an understanding that it had to be done. In early June, almost everyone in the village was sowing potatoes. It was a good opportunity to walk and talk. One of the women I knew from the folklore ensemble was sowing a third plot with potatoes. Walking past her garden I asked how many potatoes she actually needed for a year – it was a large plot and she lived only with her husband. "Two plots including seed potatoes", she replied immediately. "This one", she said pointing to the third one, "is my daughter's". The daughter was living in a nearby town. She almost never came to the village. However, her mother was planting her potatoes. It was "her" plot, and as she was not coming they could not let it remain empty. However, they could not send the potatoes to her either, because in the small apartments of the big city storage of potatoes was impossible. Anyway, it would look bad if they just left it empty.

I heard the same argument from my former landlady, Aunt Panya, already an old woman: at 85 she was planting potatoes in her backyard. I asked if she needed help and planted the remaining potatoes with her. She explained to me that her children would not let her plant potatoes, they had already planted enough for her in their backyards. Yet, she could not let her garden go uncultivated; she had to have two or three small plots of her own. The idea of cultivation goes deeper than the material and economic aspects of growing potatoes. It materializes as the value of

hard labor and care and the moral obligation "not to leave" the garden uncultivated. It also embodies the capacity to cultivate.

It is namely these capacities that I want to discuss further, advancing the argument that the village is a better place. Both the disabled young man and his grandmother were able to realize their capacities there. Therefore the village had a value for them. This understanding moves towards David Graeber's theory of value (Graeber 2001). It is based on a critique of the economic calculation, which according to Graeber is only a partial explanation, as it does not explain the presence of kindness and altruism in our society. David Graeber suggests that value is "always rooted in generic human capacities", explaining that "it is the way people who could do almost anything (including, in the right circumstances, creating entirely new sorts of social relation) assess the importance of what they do, in fact, do, as they are doing it" (Graeber 2001, 47). Graeber's critique of neoliberalism represents a view which also underlies the Soviet perspective on disability. Unlike Western conceptions of disability, the ideal situation for the disabled in the Soviet Union was not independency, but meaningful life. The emphasis was on the capacity to work and labor was "primary mechanism of rehabilitation and empowerment" (Phillips 2009). Therefore, caretakers of disabled people are also looking for possibilities to generate and design meaningful activities, in this case – the everyday tasks.

As we can see, the cultivation of potatoes by Aunt Panya was not intended to maximize the profit; she did not know whether she would need them. Her children had taken care of this concern. It was not a question of morality (to be considered idle) – at her age nobody expected her to do physically-demanding tasks, and as her older sister, seeing a picture of her working carding wool once noted: "Oh, Panya – she is always working, never resting". However, growing potatoes reassured her functioning and capacity to care for or cultivate. It was her self-realization. In the same way, caring for a disabled/debilitated relative should not only be seen in terms

of lost income, or economic failure but as meaningful. The remote place namely by lacking infrastructure and institutions, by offering life with fewer technological advances allowed Valentina's son and his grandmother to realize their capacities to a larger extent than in the town. For them it was meaningful and worthy.

Extended mothering

Valentina's story evokes the notion of extended mothering as Jennifer Utrata defines: "the intricate networks for carrying out predominantly female care work directed towards childrearing". For Utrata the extended mothering is one of the "major continuities in Russian history" (Utrata 2015, 126). Such practices have their origins in the Soviet regime. For the construction of the Communist society, the authorities called for an increase in population along with full participation of young mothers in working life. While mothers were in productive breadwinning labor, grandmothers were taking care of house-work and child care. Therefore, becoming a Soviet mother also meant developing a network of "predominantly female caring work": a core group made up of the biological mother, her own mother and sisters and kin, and friends and neighbors around them, who shared responsibility for child raising and household work (Rotkirch 2004, 158). In the village, some of the older women would remember that they were working for 14 hours a day and almost never got time with their own children. But they had quite a lot to do with their grandchildren; in the same way they also remembered staying with their grandparents in their childhood. According to Utrata (2015) this is self-sacrifice and the lack of recognition of the unpaid work by the state makes it even worse. I did not have the impression that the caretaking women suffered or wanted monetary remuneration for their care work. In addition, as many of the women retire at 50 and men at 55 (the retirement age for people living in the far North, indigenous people, and a number other categories), they can continue to work and support their families. Often the "young" retirees are an asset for the young families. Aunt Zoya, another elderly woman who had taken care of a disabled grandchild, even joked that if it

was possible to receive a second pension, she should get one. “Thirty-five years of taking care of grandchildren on a daily basis for, is enough for a pension entitlement, isn’t it?” Her satisfied smile suggested to me that she was proud of being able to help.

The fact that Valentina's mother after retiring took care of her grandson is also part of these extended mothering practices. In a similar vein, Tatiana Tiaynen (Tiaynen 2013) writes of the 'prolonged motherhood' of the Russian babushkas who take care and cultivate their grandchildren in the transnational environment between Russian Karelia and Finland. Alongside these continued practices of "extended mothering", Tiaynen shows how such dilemmas of self-sacrifice and self-fulfillment unfold both transnationally, and between Soviet legacies and neoliberal ideologies of self and self-fulfillment. David Anderson sees such practices as an "energetic and idealistic attempt to reinvent the multigenerational household by stretching it over space" (Anderson 2005, 24), alluding to the traditional pre-Soviet multigenerational households.

These practices might be explained with Soviet and pre-Soviet traditions or with their reinvention. They might be seen as social investment, and resonate with neoliberal critiques seeing caretaking as "social investment". If not a 'weapon of the weak' against the neoliberal order, "among the poor, social relations often constitute a much safer investment than petty entrepreneurship" (Narotzky and Besnier 2014, 6). I argue that they are more than that. As I discussed earlier with the term “consumption”, it might be problematic to use terms from the political economy such as investment. Indeed, social investment might sound like an oxymoron, as Elisabeth Povinelli observes:

> Within a neoliberal framework any social investment that does not have a clear end in market value–a projectable moment when state input values (money, services, care) can be replaced by market output value (workers compensated and supported by nothing except the market)–fails economically and morally. And a social investment is

> an economic and moral failure, whether or not the investment is life-enhancing. (Povinelli 2011, 23)

The care practices here also resonate with earlier feminist care ethics (Kittay 1999, Held 2006). The essence of feminist care ethics was that maternal care should be approached not with models of atomistic, self-sufficient individuals, but follow processes of connection and individuation. Valentina clearly prioritizes the needs and the demands of her dependents, but she also gets time to go on vacation, take courses, and do things for herself. Care is part of her realization as a person and considered meaningful. Laura Olson and Svetlana Adonyeva in their study of Russian babushka in the countryside, "the face of the Russian village, the backbone of the Russian household farm" (Olson and Adonyeva 2013, 3), state that caretaking and maternal ability and skills constitute the women's worth (Olson and Adonyeva 2013, 71). Valentina's decisions were framed by care demands: the consideration was not based upon the right or wrong thing to do, but rather what was best for both herself and the people who counted upon her in the opportunities that were available. In her caretaking she embodies an argument of the good life:

> Likewise, to care for others is to make a claim; it is to make a small theoretical gesture. To care is to embody an argument about what good life is and how such a good life comes into being". (Povinelli 2011, 160)

Because the basic care needs are defined through mundane chores, trivial concerns, and petty enterprises, they are often described as petty, frail and fragile. Moreover, as Povinelli reminds us, it is alas because we believe that care is related to how we think of failure and where failure resides. If we presume that Valentina cares for her mother because her health is deteriorating, and for her son because he is disabled, we tend to see these as burdens and fail to acknowledge her argument for a good life. The good life therefore, might be built on temporary, fragile, often jerry-built solutions. It is not only to strive to change the world, but also to remain as one is without being changed by the ever-changing world around.

In this section I advanced the argument that the village is also valued through the capacities realized there. The "art of care" reflects, as Povinelli (2011, 106)reminds us, broader historical and material conditions and institutional arrangements. At the same time the past becomes an object of care, too.

Genealogies

The previous section on care shows the unpredictability and the precariousness of being, of sudden needs for action and jerry-built solutions. As if to search for continuity and stability in the whirlwind of needs, many villagers were engaged in their family history, tracing back the generations. Social relations of the present day were juxtaposed and co-presented with the genealogical. Such genealogical interest could be seen as "care for the related dead" (Cannell 2011, 462). As I will show, family trees, family albums and treasure chests containing memory objects were, not only souvenirs from the past, but became crafted anew in the present and intended for the future.

The genealogical knowledge thus follows and evolves around longitudinal continuities of past-present-future relationships between individuals. It complements the urgency of every-day life described above (in the first part of this chapter), and inscribes itself into grand-narratives and micro-histories. These newly discovered or exhibited forms of interrelatedness may be seen as social commentaries on the present. In this way I follow the anthropological approach of looking at kinship as deeply embedded in social structure and state practices and regulations (Leykin 2015, Khlinovskaya Rockhill 2010), but also through its political potential as new forms of kinship and interrelatedness emerging through new vocabularies (Oushakine 2009, Carsten 2004).

Placing the genealogical relations alongside the present day entanglements, I want to show that the "place called home" is never singular or bounded. The genealogical forms of interrelatedness also show how personal identities and the identity of the place are constructed through this interconnectedness (Massey 1994,

122). Based on the understanding that the identity of a place is always the result of dynamic relationships, and therefore "open to contestation"(Massey 1994, 168-169), all four articles in my thesis refer to different forms of contesting. They describe the interrelatedness between people and spaces as attempts of domesticating spaces. The first article, *Komi*, shows how in the ethnographic descriptions of the Kola Peninsula and the state policies to modernize, a simplified identification between people and geographic space left the Komi out of focus. In *School*, the educational practices recreate the space of the village as a safe haven. In *Stories* the village is domesticated through astonishment and laughter. In *Festival*, the reindeer herders domesticate the urban setting of Murmansk through the reindeer races. Such domestications and cultivations are not only answers to the state policies or parallels to the official histories, but as I show, they are generated within the state and resonate with its policies.

"My Family Roots" competition

In the beginning of April 2012, the municipality of Lovozero organized a two-day cultural event dedicated to the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the Komi on Kola land. It consisted of a parade, raising the flag, roundtable discussions, national cuisine, and concerts. At the roundtable, politicians, activists, businessmen and culture workers discussed mostly present-day problems. There, they also announced the winner of the competition "My Family Roots", a joint project between the administration and the school, and showed the winning PowerPoint presentation to the audience. The competition was not a unique occurrence. Announced through the school and supported by federal government programs, such competitions are used to mobilize parents and grandparents to contribute. This time, the winning work was dedicated to Grigoriy Artiev, but was as much about his father – Ivan Artiev, the founder of the village of Ivanovka. Ivan, the father, had come to the Kola Peninsula at the end of the nineteenth century. Soon after he enlisted in the army and went off to the Russo-Japanese war. Having participated in the Kronstadt

seamen's uprising of 1905, Ivan Artiev was exiled to the Komi region after the war. He returned to the Kola Peninsula with a wife and two children and established himself in Ivanovka. He was the first teacher, the first meteorologist and the only qualified carpenter in the village. However, he suffered a tragic fate, becoming a political victim of the Stalinist regime. The authors of the presentation, probably for this reason, had chosen to dedicate it to his son who became a decorated soldier in WWII.

The materials submitted for the competition were delivered to the school museum in Lovozero, where I had the opportunity to look at them. Most works were dedicated to grandparents and great-grandparents, and even the exceptions (one presentation was dedicated to a soldier, who fell in the Afghan war in 1979 and another one was dedicated to a Komi head decoration, worn by unmarried young women) referred to migrations and movements criss-crossing the territory of Russia, historical events of national significance, private enterprises and to individual and political exiles. The head decoration, a 118 year old 'family treasure', was presented in a homemade book with a velvet cover, where in glittery pen the story of the pupil's foremothers was told with photographs. The head decoration belonged to her great-grandmother, who got it from her own grandmother who had made it before her marriage. The great-grandmother had moved to the Kola Peninsula after she married Arsentiy Terentyev, one of the first Komi to establish himself on the Kola Peninsula. The story of the head decoration tells a similar story as the story of Ivan Artiev – it begins with the two brothers who came to the Kola Peninsula. One of them was drafted by the army. Arsentiy had to serve in the military, and when he was back on the Kola Peninsula, his father asked him to return to the Komi region and marry a Komi girl. The newlyweds moved later to Lovozero, and this is how the head decoration came to the Kola Peninsula. Thus, the ancestors in these stories are anything but rooted in one place; their movements are results of political events and familial obligations.

Genealogies and Ancestors

Both stories, of Ivan Artiev and the family keeping the head decoration are stories about the first Komi settlers on the Kola Peninsula. According to Paul Fryer, stories referring to the original settlers have their political reason as claiming the place of the Komi on the Kola Peninsula (Fryer 2007). I want to show here, that these genealogical stories are not only political in terms of ethnic mobilization. They are political in their intrinsic commentaries about the state, the history, the public discourse. The genealogical knowledge was not only intended for display on official occasions such as the competition and the roundtable. There were people who gathered family information in private.

Several days after the roundtable, I met Tamara in the Lovozero library. The librarian helped her to look up and write down data for the family tree. Tamara kept the information in a small green notebook, in a neatly created system with different pages dedicated to the different families. Another man from Lovozero had already helped her to send an inquiry to the archives in Kirovsk and Murmansk to get more information about the family roots, and she had also made some inquiries into the Syktyvkar's archives. Tamara could trace her relation to one of the four Komi who had first come to the Kola Peninsula. As the family had grown bigger, the members dispersed: living in Kola town; in the vicinity of Pechenga monastery; in Voroninskiy pogost, in Lovozero; in Krasnoshchelye. The genealogical movements of her forefathers and foremothers had crisscrossed the whole peninsula. I knew Tamara from my stay in 1998 and 1999 and her interest in genealogy was new to me, but the work with the family trees in the community had proliferated in the recent years. This was probably because the Komi on the Kola Peninsula had experienced a cultural revival in resonance with the indigenous Sami mobilization (as I describe in *Komi*). Probably even more important than the political mobilization, were the local media and the social activities anchored in the work of the museum where the former director was a Komi woman. She wrote extensively

about the Komi history in the local newspaper. At the same time, the Lovozero-based photographer Vladimir Kuznetsov and his wife made a short film about her ancestors after they travelled to the village of her forefathers in Komi republic (Kuznetsov 2009).

Later, Tamara explained to me that she had only recently become interested in genealogy – when the others had started she did not bother because at that time she was devastated by the loss of her daughter, who died in childbirth. But after a while she started to be increasingly interested. In the literature, present genealogical interest is explained as compensation for "fractured family" (Cannell 2011, 464). For Tamara, who had suffered the loss first of her husband and then of her daughter but had a large family around her, this interest was a meaningful hobby that complemented her activities in the folklore ensemble, the traditional Komi knitting of mittens and socks, bringing enjoyment over discovering new facts about close and distant relatives.

From other conversations with other informants, I understood that additional impulses for the interest towards their family histories came from the possibility to rehabilitate family members who were victims of the Stalinist repressions. The publishing of the memorial lists of political victims on the Memorial's website[18] provided new information and insight. Many families were related to political victims and some families, like the family of the girl who wrote about the head decoration, were rehabilitated as victims of political repressions as late as 1993. People started to attach new meanings to their genealogies and materialize them. This was visible at the cemetery in the village in Krasnoshchelye. The monuments of three political victims were relatively new, and pronouncedly more religious – big wooden crosses with golden inscriptions. The cemetery itself was an amalgamation of old and new symbols such as religious orthodox crosses, communist red stars, decorative details showing natural landscapes or professional

[18] http://lists.memo.ru/

symbols as reindeer. Some of the graves were almost invisible: only the stone outlines suggested that there was a grave there at all. I left with the impression that the monuments there served as an investment in identity, but were also something transient. There was a financial question too, as ordering them in the urban area and transporting them to the village cost money.

Walking with Tanya, a friend and local historian, through the village cemetery I asked about the depersonalized graves, about the wind-blown monuments where the names had faded away. Tanya explained that it was difficult to keep them in good condition. Maybe the dead did not have any relatives in the village any longer, maybe the relatives did not know that these were the graves of their family. She was not sure whether there were records, and if there were, how reliable they would be. Her answer accepted the transience. It also acknowledged the forces of nature. Although the cemetery was in the pine forest, it was difficult to keep the graves in proper shape as the terrain was always changing because of the swampiness of the area and the harsh weather conditions. The situation had worsened. The care of the graves was now a private enterprise – the municipality had withdrawn its practical support, and the newly established church in the village did not want to get involved or even consecrate the cemetery as there had been cases of suicide in the village.

One day in June, the village administration and the Women's committee [*zhensovet*] announced a *subbotnik* (community work day)[19] to build a new fence at the cemetery, and many families showed up, cleaned the area, and painted the crosses. Towards the end, the specialist from the administration gathered the people present and began to discuss the need for additional maintenance of the cemetery. They decided to collect money from each household for further renovations. Some people protested against the principle of collecting money – why not per family

[19] *Subbotnik* relates to unpaid work for the common good conducted usually on Saturdays. The practice was introduced in Moscow in 1919 among the industrial workers. Later on, it was associated with volunteer clean-ups.

member, and the vivid discussion showed the triviality of the everyday life to be more of a concern than the ancestors themselves. These conventional disagreements were so different from what I experienced the last time I visited the cemetery. Back then my landlady and I had walked and thrown grain over the graves of her close and distant relatives.[20] She was talking partly to me, partly to them. The atmosphere then was solemn but not somber. The banal discussions after the *subbotnik* made me see the cemetery as part of the ordinary social life in the village. Moreover it was like most homes, as I describe later, temporary.

This temporariness probably has its roots in Soviet times. Older informants remembered how in the 1960s the authorities destroyed the church and the graveyard in Lovozero, in order to build the new culture club: under the bulldozers one could see human bones. The ignorance and unwillingness to recognize anything sacred, increased the sense of almightiness of the State. Later such narratives were used as an implicit political critique of the Soviet regime. Many political victims of the Stalinist repression did not have their graves – although the official documents stated they were shot in Leningrad, the story went that they were shot somewhere in the middle of the tundra. Resettlements of the Sami pogosts, the building of the Voronya dam and the flooding of the village of Voronya also left many graves unattended or destroyed. Soldiers from the village who died in WWII were buried somewhere in Europe. All this led to an increased awareness about the absence of the graves.

Therefore, the interest for the genealogies of the families and the family histories may also be seen as an attempt at transcending the transitoriness of everything material (absent and ruined graves) and the chaos of everyday life [*byt*] (in its opposition to the spiritual being [*bytie*]) where the ancestors belong (Boym 1994)).

[20] Throwing wheat grain on the grave is related to an old Christian tradition - the idea that the grain has to be laid in the earth before it grows is the same with human beings.

The non-glorious narratives

Genealogy is often analysed as part of the personal identity. Inna Leykin (2015) has argued that genealogical interest has a therapeutic use: it helps people to recognize the mechanisms of social power and to create themselves as ‘neoliberal subjects’. Leykin describes how people in Russia use kinship and family narratives to learn about the self through and not against or despite relations with the state. This genealogical imagination is part of a flourishing self-help culture (Leykin 2015). Further studies point to the role of genealogical interest for the constitution of identities and rootedness (Carsten 2007). Maria Nakshina shows how, in the village of Kuzomen on the Ter coast of the Kola Peninsula, the summer visitors are more interested in their genealogical records "as compensation for their separation from the place once they moved out" (Nakhshina 2013, 204). The phenomenon might result in genealogical journeys as reconnections of diasporic members with the possibility of recovering their own indigenous identity, as Paul Basu (2007) shows in his book on genealogical tourism in Scotland. However, unlike the genealogical journeys in his material, the few Komi who had visited their 'historical homeland' did not find the ancestral land of origin (the Komi republic) as important for their identities as their local roots on the Kola Peninsula (see *Komi*).

As Paul Fryer (2007) has suggested, the narratives of the Komi and of their forefathers, are an attempt to legitimize the presence of the group on the Kola Peninsula, despite being unrecognized as indigenous. He argues that the narratives stress the bravery and determination, generosity and contributions they have made to the community, and not least their skills in reindeer herding. Indeed, among my informants some women would point out their multiple relatedness to the first-comers, the original settlers who, according to Fryer, take on a legendary status (Fryer 2007, 130), but more often in our conversations on genealogical matters, the personal memories of ordinary family members prevailed, along with their emotional characteristics. The genealogical imagination did not only relate to the

dates of births, marriage, and death or the interventions of the state such as conscription, employment, or retirement – it also animated the dead kin by adding personal characteristics. Looking at her great-grandmother as a small child holding a handkerchief in her mouth – in a photograph from the Swedish archeologist and ethnographer Gustaf Hallström's archive – Tanya commented that "she was always having something in the mouth. She was apparently shy, hiding in the skirts of her mother". She looked like her granddaughter, Tanya's mother as a child. I often heard such interpretations of resemblance. Through them the relatives created new forms of sociality and interrelatedness, and made the conversations more lively. It was as if people were, as if, more interested in the characteristic traits than in the social status of their forefathers or foremothers. In this way the dead were brought back to life in memory as whole persons.

Having worked through some of the historical materials and the archives, I had documents on the establishment of the cooperative in Krasnoshchelye from the 1930s. While discussing her forefathers, I mentioned to Tanya that her great-grandfather was one of the founders of the cooperative according to the minutes kept in the archive. She looked at me puzzled and said: "He was not able to start anything. He was a drifter, he was not an enterprising spirit or at least they say so in the family". While Fryer (Fryer 2007, 129) points to the "determination, generosity, and industriousness" in the official Komi narratives, in the private conversations there was also banalization of the ancestors. As Tanya said: "He was a nice person, but a drifter". I knew that the person had died when she was two or three years old, so her comments could not be from her own memory. Yet the image of him as a nice person had been created in memory. Small details were remembered, such as beautiful handwriting. Such characteristics were moving the ancestors closer to the informants as normal social beings. Some used to drink, others just suffered from the fate they met. In these stories there were not only glorious histories of migration and survival, but also painful histories of maternal deaths, accidental deaths. They

included non-blood relatives, and in some cases non-kin. People also took care of the memory of their childless relatives. Tamara kept the memory of her great aunt Nastya. She had left her parents in the Komi territories to stay with her brother who had moved to the Kola Peninsula as a young boy. She found a job in Oksino, then later in Lovozero. She married a local man, but according to Tamara her body was ravaged by heavy physical work and she remained childless. Tamara kept pictures of her in the family albums, and told her story as part of the family. The story of aunt Nastya was complementary to the glorious narratives of the first settlers and of success, growing families and happiness.

While the official texts revealed heroism, in private my informants told tales of their ancestors as real human beings with both qualities and faults. They told of soldiers, prisoners of war who came back to the village and never got recognition. The genealogies accounted for the full variety of untimely deaths, sickness, sufferings, resettlements, people being sent to boarding schools in other regions. Such stories exist but are muted in the public debate, and are unrecognized as political statements. By making the ancestors 'more human', the genealogical stories rather underscore their interrelatedness to the present day. They did not always reveal political claims as Fryer (2007) argues. They were not looking for confirmation of the neoliberal pragmatic self. To the contrary, they made the imperfections of the present more or less acceptable. If one had for instance a family member with alcohol problems, it could be explained as inherited from an ancestor with drinking problems.

Nonetheless, these stories and the discussions had political aspects: they revealed the official discourses as non-objective. For example, I was told that a family member, a political victim of the Stalinist purge, was charged and convicted for state treason – only because he sang a chastushka against the Soviet authorities. When we discussed the drifter who was the "founder" of the cooperative, we ended up discussing whether the list of the members of the cooperative founded in 1930,

was not the same as the list of the villagers from the census in 1926/27. It seemed quite probable that the authorities just used the census data, when they reported on the establishment of the sovkhoz. Such episodes raised the question about the ability of the official archives to record history accurately. Therefore, private family archives were greatly appreciated.

Album & photographs

Family trees were complemented by family photographs and albums. As I already mentioned, the digitalization of some archives in addition to my work experience and equipment, allowed me to contribute to the genealogical stories of some villagers. I showed archival photographs gathered at the Russian Ethnographic Museum and Murmansk regional museum of local history, and some of my informants were able to recognize family members or of different locations. In return, I was also shown their family albums. They have invaluable methodological potential. In the same way as genealogical stories, the family photographs "create spaces where personal and family identities are constituted, negotiated and revised (Roberts 2012, 92). The photographs are not only photo-graphs (descriptions) but also photo-objects (Wright 2004), they not only represent but also evoke (Edwards 2005). They connect the spaces they display, and the events they display. Through their entanglements they reveal social relations and add to the identity of the place through "multiple intersections of intention, process and action" (Edwards 2005, 31). They also showed the village of Krasnoshchelye within multiple spatial scales and historical periods. One such photo-object was the album of Schesnovich.

Vitaliy Borisovich Schesnovich had visited the inner part of the Kola Peninsula in 1930, 1933 and 1934 when the Leningrad bacteriological institute sent an expedition to the Kola Peninsula. The expedition stayed in Ivanovka. In 1979 Schesnovich sent a photo album with photographs from these expeditions to the village of Ivanovka. Since at that time the village was already closed down, the album was sent on to the neighboring village – Krasnoshchelye. One of the teachers

together with the pupils responded to Schesnovich. The correspondence between the pupils and the retired scientist lasted for several years until Vitaliy Borisovich Schesnovich apparently died. The album was kept privately in the house of one of the teachers. I asked whether I could have a look at it. We made some arrangements and she brought it to the school one day. I asked whether it was possible to make a copy by using my digital camera. She hesitated, but agreed if I did it in the library: she had once given it to the museum in Lovozero, and the album came back with several photographs missing– they had just taken them away.

After I made a digital copy of the album different people asked me to make copies. For some of them, the album did not contain photographs of close relatives; in the photographs there were none of their ancestors. They recognized places. The album helped them to reconnect with the historical past of the geographical setting and made their histories more complete. For the teacher, the photo album connected the village with the wider world (where she also came from). The album had its own trajectory, but it was also an object where multiple trajectories met: a scholar from Leningrad, a teacher from Central Russia, local people, an anthropologist.

At the same time, the family albums revealed family histories in different locations of the Soviet Union: places where fathers were serving in the military; families were on a trip to Leningrad or on vacation at the Black Sea; visits to the Komi republic. The photo albums told of individual family histories spread geographically as family members travelled, moved or were sent to different places. They narrated family histories of people moving, and often looking at photographs was part of their discovery of who they were. Looking at their grandmother, Tamara and her sister concluded that she did not look like Komi. Checking the family tree they suggested that rather her mother (from whom she had probably inherited her round face, dark eyes and dark hair) "was not a Nenets, probably Eveny, Ostyak, Vogul?" They commented on the practices of exogamy evoking a saying they had heard from their grandfather regarding the Komi: "You go through Lasta to find a

wife". Lasta was the neighboring village, and the saying reveals certain expectations to marry outside one's own village and even beyond the neighboring village. Another woman in the village mentioned that she had heard that her family name came from a Jewish shoemaker at the tsar court, who apparently was sent to exile in the North; she smiled to think that she might have Jewish blood in her. In a further example, a Sami commented that she had a Roman nose, but looking at the photographs she concluded that it probably came from her Belorussian forefathers. Such stories and speculations often evoked laughter but also acknowledged the existence of migrations, movements and mixtures as normal in the context of local belonging. Exogamy, migrations – the genealogies never ended or stopped at one point or at a place. They were made up of trajectories of lives, of movements of people, and as I shall discuss in the following section – of moving homes.

Homes and houses

Housing in the Soviet Union was a state issue and government concern. There were many memories showing the intrusion of the state into the homes of people. Houses were divided, households merged. Once I asked Zoya Dmitrievna, who was particularly interested in family history and knew a lot about Lovozero history, to look with me at several old photographs from Lovozero. I had picked them up at the Murmansk regional museum of local history and the information on them was insufficient or missing. When looking at the big wooden houses in Lovozero, Zoya Dmitrievna told me that the house where her family used to live when she was a child (before they moved into a block of flats) had initially been very big. It had consisted of two large parts – one for the household, and the other for the domestic animals – cows and lambs. In the latter part on the second floor, they had a large stairway with an equally large entrance – they used to take the fodder (hay and lichens) up to the second floor on horses, because there, over the house and the stall, it dried out easily. After the dekulakization, when all property

of the rich was nationalized and the cattle delivered to the kolkhoz, the house was reassembled into two smaller houses.

In what follows I shall continue the discussion from earlier in the chapter, where needs and demands made the households multigenerational, multi–sited, and spatially extended. I will look at how this relates to the rather shifting and contradictory housing and settlement policies. My aim is to get closer to the notion of home in a local context. Home is related both to kin, but also to the material (houses, land) as two complementary forms of dwelling (de Certeau 1984, 55). In the previous sections I discussed the individual relation to kin and relatives through care practices and genealogical links. This section examines the materiality of the homes, the houses and the state policies that inform them.

Rebuilding houses

The house is related to the everyday, but is also a complex idiom for defining social groupings and naturalizing social positions. Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones (1995) using Levi-Strauss' and Bourdieu's ideas for the house as a "spatial text", call us to look at the linkages between the architectural, social and symbolic significance of the houses, but also to approach the house in processual terms, to see them "together with the people who inhabit them as mutually implicated in the process of living" (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995, 45).

My friend Tatyana, a local historian, took me around the village to show me the oldest houses. Many of the oldest houses in Krasnoshchelye had actually come from the village of Ivanovka after the authorities closed down the village of Ivanovka (Chal'mnye Varre). The houses were moved and used both for private housing but also for public services such as a warehouse, a hospital, a culture club. In 2012 one could still see the number marking of the logs on the houses that were moved: numbers and a letter to make the reassembling easier. Now, they have been there for many years but these small signs remind us of their movement and therefore of the transience of their place.

The reassembled houses were not only haunted by the state policies. They were part of the local knowledge and of practical use. Valentina's bath house in Lovozero was built with numbered logs. Her brothers had originally built it in Krasnoshchelye, then they disassembled it, transported it and reassembled it again in Lovozero.

Sometimes, houses in the village were moved because the river banks collapsed. During WWII they had to move several houses. Tamara remembered that her grandmother would take her to the river and show her the foundation stone in the water, and tell her: "Here was the house of my parents". Over the years the villagers had dug drainage canals through the village to lead the waters towards the river. Now the riverbed migrates once again to the village, and the swampy areas are expanding towards the houses. In the past they used to fortify the banks, now the administration had withdrawn its resources. As Tamara concluded: "Anyway, you can never master the natural forces!"

The houses have physical lives, they are like bodies, as Carsten and Hugh Jones (1995) observe. They also die. Walking around the village with Tanya, I saw an empty space and commented that I could not remember this empty space here in the middle of the village. I could not remember either if there had been something there in 1999. She confirmed that there once was a house. It had burned down in the year 2000. Twelve years later, there were no traces of it at all. It was now a grass field. Another woman pointed to an overgrown heap with some wild flowers and said: "Imagine, this was the house of my godfather, it burned down". I would never have guessed that beneath the ground were the ruins of a house. Such stories reminded me of the transient materiality of the houses, of their impermanence.

Besides resettlement policies, and natural forces, the cars were seen as a problem. They were damaging the drainage canals. As it was not possible to drive on the wooden bridges, the cars were driving over the canals; they were spreading the mud and making the village mucky. The cars were not the only problem either.

The village was also expanding – people were building new houses and there was a need for new drainage canals to cope. "But who is going to dig?", asked Tamara rhetorically. The state and the administration were hardly interested in investing resources, although they provided building sites for young families in the village. Thus the houses related to a number of factors, both natural and social, but also to memories and imaginations.

The work of Carsten and Hugh-Jones later inspired several scholars to explore “the house” in the circumpolar region. The results came out in the edited volume *About the Hearth: Perspectives on the Home, Hearth and Household in the Circumpolar North* (Anderson, Wishart, and Vaté 2013). In the concluding chapter, David Anderson acknowledges that as part of its colonial history "the North had been most constantly criticized for lacking stable architectural structures that could be recognized as homes" (Anderson 2013, 262). The authors show that this is at least partly because of the living patterns of the northern populations:

> Northern living patterns, be they in the ‘pre-contact period’ or today, are also extremely flexible, involving strong seasonal movements across space and often breaking apart discrete activities across a number of sites. It would seem that there is no physical structure elaborate enough to span these seasonal rounds, although words, place-names and narratives do exceptionally well in weaving these places together. (Anderson 2013, 265)

Anderson distinguishes between the spanning of space through permanent architecture and the non-spanning type of architecture of the northern populations. While the Komi were known for building log houses, not necessarily for permanent use (Sergel' 2011), their practice of assembling and disassembling the log houses also remind us of these 'non-spanning' ways of life.

Almost at the same time as Anderson et al. published their book, another group of scholars published the volume *Nomadic and Indigenous Spaces: Productions and Cognitions* expressing a similar idea (Miggelbrink et al. 2013). In

their work, they use Deleuze and Guattari's model of smooth space and striated space (1987). The former is the nomadic space, endless, vectorial, infinite, ever-changing, rebellious. The latter is metric, divided and delineated under the surveillance of the state. The authors nuance Deleuze and Guattari's view by saying that each space has its smooth and striated qualities. Therefore the relations between the people and the state are manifold and ambiguated:

> Solidarity, cooperation, complicity, make-do, and multiple hidden and open forms of resistance all form part of a wide range of responses and proactive strategies and policies that nomads and indigenous groups employ in their dealings with sedentary or external groups and their institutions. (Miggelbrink et al. 2013, 14)

I do not see this as entirely northern perspective. However, in terms of housing, the state has always provided many rules, and enforced not only resettlements and sedentarizations but also strictly regulated the domestic spaces. Needless to say, this has been carried out in heterogeneous and contradicting ways.

Redistributing homes

Tanya and I stopped at one of the oldest houses in the village. The woman who lived there (she must have been in her eighties) saw us. Tanya explained what we were doing and Nadezhda Petrovna, the owner, allowed us into the oldest building, which in 2012 was used as a service building [*saray*] for storage of different utensils and food. Nadezhda Petrovna's memories went back to the years before the war, when for several years they had to share it with another family until the other family got a house further down the road. The house was small. She showed us how they slept and where the children were kept together. The only room was divided between the two families. They had their half-parts and used them. Sometimes they shared meals; she remembered that both mothers were making food together. While such forms of forced intimacy in the communal apartments [*komunalka*] in the city are well described by Svetlana Boym (1994) and Ilya Utekhin (Utekhin et al. 2007), they are usually perceived as an urban phenomenon.

The forced intimacy of the rural houses seems to be a neglected phenomenon, probably because of the presumption that such communities are already intimate and face-to-face anyway. Svetlana Boym even compares the communal apartment with the ideal "village commune" (Boym 1994, 149).

In the Soviet state, housing was both a citizen's right – the state should provide it to all its citizens – and it was given as a reward for work and other contributions (Zavisca 2016). In Krasnoshchelye, these two processes were almost inseparable. As the kolkhoz grew, they started to build more houses, and more and more villagers got their own homes. Therefore, the housing was seen as the result of rewarding labor in the village, but also as a community achievement. On this basis, most of the houses in the village were owned for years by the sovkhoz, but perceived as private by their dwellers.

Today, housing in Russia, as Jane R. Zavisca (Zavisca 2016) shows, is still "a painful question". Until 1991, there was no private property with regard to housing. Since 1991, the state has tried to privatize housing, but this is still an ongoing and contradictory process. For most people who lived in Russia "long term and inalienable usage rights are intrinsic to ownership" (Zavisca 2016, 5), so many experienced the privatization of the houses, especially in the small towns and the rural areas, as hassle. However, in 2012 most of the villagers of Krasnoshchelye had privatized their homes. The privatization was essentially free, but the administrative services had to be paid for. It was a rather complicated juridical transaction and the villagers had to travel to the nearby towns; they had to pay both to get juridical help, and the administration fees.

In 2014 I met my old landlady in Revda, with her son. She waved her arm in frustration and said her son took her around, to sign papers in order to privatize something they owned. What mattered to her was not the privatization but the rare opportunity to visit the graveyard in Revda, where her sister was buried. What mattered to her son was not so much to become able to partake in the real estate

market, as probably to be sure that no one could come and claim the house. There was no public real estate market in the village of Krasnoshchelye. I asked several times whether there were houses for sale in the village and the answer was always "no", but houses were sometimes swapped especially between kin.

However, people from Krasnoshchelye had their ventures on the real estate market in the nearby towns. Such ventures often had a hazardous character and did not imply any long-term market strategy. A family from Krasnoshchelye bought a flat in the town of Revda for their son. At that time he was living there, but he soon found himself a wife and moved with her to another town. So the flat was empty. They wondered if they should sell it, or if they should keep it. It was convenient to have a place to stay when one was en route to the village or from the village. Moreover, if they needed medical help (and with age these problems were more likely to increase), and had to stay in Lovozero or Revda where the medical centers were, it was good to have a place to stay. Ownership, in this case, was a practical matter and a preemptive measure. Yulian Konstantinov (Konstantinov 2011, 197) explains such home buying as multi-local family extensions and economic investments, showing that privatization had to a certain extend succeeded – in Lovozero the prices were high and there was demand on the market. People could make money by selling, but there were not many apartments for sale in Lovozero. However, there were a great deal of empty apartments in Lovozero, because their inhabitants had left the area; often they would leave without selling.

In 2010 the federal government started a resettlement program from the North to zones with a better climate (Central Russia). I was surprised to find out that old villagers, who had been born in the tundra and spent their lives there, were in a queue for resettlement. This would entitle them to buy a house (or at least to get financial support to buy property) in the central areas of the country. Today, there are 4500 families in the Murmansk region who have applied to resettle, making up 8500 people in total. I have to admit that I doubt all of them intend to resettle. Rather,

and as one woman from Lovozero did, many used the opportunity to buy a home somewhere else and continued to live in Lovozero, renting out the new apartment they had bought in the Central part of Russia.

With the policy of privatization, the state intended to create a working real estate market of buying and selling homes. At the same time, the state continued its old practices of rewards, promoting housing support as part of its welfare policy: giving plots and apartments to young specialists, families in need, families with three or more children, invalids. Thus, as far as I understood, a young specialist (with higher education) could get financial support to buy a one-room apartment. A three-children family I knew of, were given first a building site, and then before they started building – they were given an apartment. In this way the state enacted old Soviet practices.

Another Soviet practice that came up in our conversations were the regulations imposed on living space. Before it was important not to have too much space, because the authorities could come and divide your home. At the same time, the Soviet authorities set minimum standards of minimum living space – about 10 square meters per person and 13 square meters per family (Boym 1994, 124). Today the laws regulate the minimum requirement space for children. According to the new laws and regulations, every school child needs a room with a work space, and space for play – 12 or 18 square meters. This fact is especially important when the custody for children is discussed. In cases when the custody was disputed, inspectors might show up and check the living conditions, specifically checking on and measuring rooms. This is, once again, a way to pressure people to buy bigger homes. Yet, for families with three children it was almost impossible to get an appropriately sized apartment, as many apartments had been built in the 1960s and were too small. In order to meet the requirements of the new laws people sometimes registered pro forma. In many cases, especially in the villages, the official home residence did not answer the actual home of residence.

All these factors contribute to the idea that the home is something transitory. Buying a house or getting the documents did not necessarily mean that you were registered there or lived there. It was neither investment in the future, a purely economic enterprise, nor related to your identity. Homes were practical arrangements for the time being – either to answer some requirements, to find a solution for a particular phase in life, or just to seize an opportunity and see whether it would pay off. The inconsistency of the state in the housing policy and other factors made the homes not stable, but transit places. Moreover such inconsistencies continue to obliterate and intrude into the homes as private spaces.

The balagan & the tent

Once I asked Aunt Marina, an elderly woman, about her home (the house in Krasnoshchelye). When did they build it? How was it to move into their own house? Her memory at that time was deteriorating. She said "I do not remember much," and then added instantly, "but we were never at home, we were sent here and there, and everywhere. There was always something to do for the kolkhoz, and we were never at home…" Aunt Marina was a Komi and she had been with the transportation unit and with the reindeer herding brigade for many years. She had spent years there and lived in tents. She had even given birth to some of her children in the tundra. She had recently assisted her daughters in making models of the reindeer herders' tent [*chum*], both in its winter variant and in its summer variant. To me, it was easy to conclude that for Aunt Marina, the tent was much more representative of "home" and more important than the house. She denied this: "Of, course it was much better to live in a modern house with its comforts".

One of the most precious objects to her was the *balagan*, and her daughters kept it in a treasure chest. The *balagan* is a canopy – used in the tent to delineate a private space for the family when the parents worked in the reindeer-herding. Their canopy was made of two or even three different fabrics, darker fabric on the outside, and a lighter (with nice flowers) fabric on the inside. The *balagan* was, according

to her daughters, the proof that you always try to decorate, and that decoration is the most important issue for any home. This applied even when you lived in a tent.

They showed me the beautiful models of the tents, both the winter one and the summer one. The summer one was made of birch bark sewn together with reindeer sinews. They had to ask their mother how to prepare the bark. They had also read some books and tried out wetting and drying the birch bark until they managed to make the model. The model was then used in the school to show the school children aspects of Komi culture, and during festivals and celebrations when they sell handicrafts: woolen mittens, and socks, and some reindeer skin artifacts. The models were part of their genealogical past, and they had a practical hands on knowledge of it. In the same way as the photo album connected them to the genealogical past, these models had the same function. The model of the winter *chum* was bigger. The original tent was made of two different parts each of 25 reindeer skins and it was as big as "49 square meters". It was even larger than the one-room apartments the daughter concluded. In the models there were no canopies [*balagans*], no private spaces – you had a female tent worker [*chum rabotnitsa*] on each side of the fire place, and then several herders. The tent workers were responsible for the herders. This version was more congruent with the times when the herders were already organized in brigades, and there were less and less women in the reindeer herding. Thus, the model had one version of the story and the canopy showed another. Both coexisted in their genealogical imagination. In a way, this complementarity of reproducing facts from the local historical writings and from their own memories (or the memories of their family members) sometimes harmonized and sometimes were incongruent.

The tents allude to the genealogical past, but they also have a practical side. In fact, the tent is not only part of the traditional material culture of the local culture with a symbolic function, reminding them of their reindeer herding identities, but it had also a practical significance that changed with the years. Being the standard

shelter for the reindeer herders in the 1950s, tents were only rarely used by the 1980s[21]. At that time they were light-weight, made of canvas for shorter stays in the tundra. Aunt Marina's son, a reindeer herder, kept one and used it when fishing or in the village for smoking fish.

The tent, the non-permanent home, was thus part of their personal belongings, had a practical function, pointed to their genealogical belonging and inspired crafts creativity (the models). It also points to the heterogeneity of meanings and their temporariness. Not only were these homes non-permanent, but their significance was also shifting as a result of technological progress, state policies and individual decisions. I think these problems show not only particularities of the northern living patterns as Anderson (Anderson 2013) observes, but are rather indicative of an all-human condition.

Remoteness into intimacy

The stories above emphasize the entanglement of personal histories with local history, state institutions and interventions and in this way reinforce the sense of temporariness of the home. I started this chapter with the needs and demands of care. Valentina's case showed her constant movements between different homes. She was as “at home” in the village, as she was at home in Lovozero. Home could be understood as the lived experience of locality (Ahmed 1999, 341). For Valentina, these were not processes of uprooting and regroundings, inclusions and exclusions, but forms of encompassing different places. Her places both encompassed larger social processes and were encompassed by such. She was at home within her caretaking, within different locations and social policies. Care and demands intermingled with resettlement programs, privatization, war, and educational opportunities. However, they also were familial obligations in the context of family relations and family histories revealed through genealogical investigations. These

[21] The tents were replaced by reindeer herding bases – log-cabin camps in the tundra (see Konstantinov 2015:280).

genealogical investigations are also a form of belonging, realized through migrations, resettlements, passing through, of being both here and there, of being from here and being from somewhere else. This is how people belong:

> Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the constructions of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become, an order that does not demand forgetting. (hooks 1989, 19)

In a similar manner Doreen Massey observes:

> The geography of social relations forces us to recognize our interconnectedness, and underscores the fact that both personal identity and the identity of those envelopes of space-time in which and between which we live and move (and have our 'Being') are constructed precisely through that interconnectedness. (Massey 1994, 122)

As Sarah Ahmed (1999, 339) points out, home and away are usually thought of as divided, separated spaces, as different modes of being in the world. We use home to define remoteness. The remote is always distant from home. In this chapter I have demonstrated how both people and social policies have catered and cater for an understanding of home as dynamic and never static. In Krasnoshchelye and its urban surroundings, the homes are both permanent, and non-permanent, privately owned and organized by the state policies. They are the crossing points of state policies and personal life trajectories.

They are proper places (in the way of de Certeau's model of proper place). They embody two complementary forms of dwelling – the material (the houses) and the body (the genealogical). These two forms are characterized by temporariness, and accentuate temporariness and transience. They also become autonomous (and meaningful) through this temporariness. This temporariness resonates also with the

constant policy changes and failures of the state policies. The housing policies have ambivalent and contradictory effects. On the ground they are manipulated and used by individuals in various ways. Houses are rebuilt, dwelling structures preserved, made into miniature models, or ruined. All this suggests that the above described practices not only cut short the distance between home and away, but also that homes are sites of intimacy, and particularly of cultural intimacy, in the way Michael Herzfeld (1997) defines it.

In that way, as sites of cultural intimacies, home appears also in the following four articles. *Komi* is about the Komi diaspora in their endeavors to make a home on the Kola Peninsula. In *School*, the school is described as the second home. In *Stories* I describe how the stories serve as redrawings of home and the rest of the world. Finally, in *Festival* I describe the practices of welcoming and hospitality at the races.

Conclusions:

”Homewarding” remoteness

In the introduction I stated that my aim is to understand remoteness and its social aspects. I started with an overview of remoteness as geographical distance, and described how the spatial representations of this geographical distance are filled with disjointed images serving political or economic interests of the centres or justifying their interventions (Chapter Four). Subsequently, I discussed remoteness as distance from the centres of power and how such distance saturates the social relations with notions of resistance, compliance and unconnectedness (Chapter Five). These two perspectives were complemented with a third one, which through the empirical material shows how the idea of remoteness loses its momentum and disappears in the small details of everyday life, and becomes suspended in the banality of most transient things (Chapter Six). Through movements of houses, movements between homes, genealogical trees spreading over different times and different places, distances become filled with the lived experiences of the localities through the social relations that evolve there. Nonetheless, representations of remoteness still exist and meld into the everyday life. The four articles show these processes in different ways.

In *Komi* I show how ethnographic representations and state policies essentialize and perpetuate stereotypes of the Komi diaspora as non-native to the Kola Peninsula, as if still belonging to a distant historical homeland. This contradicts the lived experiences of most Komi people living on the Kola Peninsula today. Likewise, emphasizing that they are reindeer herders, is ignoring the lived experiences of the majority of the Komi. The problem is, I argue, rather methodological and ideological, inherent in the ethnographic writing and in the state policies. The genealogical interest I describe in Chapter

Six, shows that memory of the forefathers roots the Komi more widely to the Kola Peninsula, and complements the ethnographic descriptions and the state records and definitions.

In *School* – I show how in the village school, the federal programs for patriotic education are filled with curricular activities promoting the local, which is close and understandable. The notions of the big fatherland and the little motherland are intertwined through the intimacy of the teaching and experiencing people and places as familiar and close. The intimacy of the lived experiences in the school stand in contrast to the political demands that education should cater for the modernization needs of the society, the development of high-tech infrastructure and information technologies stated in the regional documents.

In *Stories*, the media representation of remoteness stands in contrast to the lived experiences in the village surroundings. There I also show how the local stories matter more than the external representations circulating in the global mediascape. The article points to the contrast between the sense of mourning and nostalgia imprinted in the TV programs, and the laughter and the astonishment of the local narratives. The TV programs project a romantic, and even exotic image of the remote village; the lived experiences welcome, engage with and banalize the new things. The article to a certain extent complements the connection between consumption and modernity, discussed in Chapter Four.

In *Festival*, I show how the lived experience of the races overshadows the political projects behind the Festival of the North as a political instrument in the hands of the authorities throughout different time periods and political regimes. In this way, the festival also becomes to a certain extent an indigenous enterprise as well.

All four articles show discrepancies between the lived experiences (the everyday life) and the public (political, scholarly, media) representations. They also illustrate how these discrepancies contribute to the heterogeneity of the lived world: institutions, practices, events. This heterogeneity imposes some

constraints, but most of all allows for creativity and ambiguations, be it expressed through jerry-rigging some solutions by the school, rearranging homes, improvising at the Festival of the North, or not-protesting against unfavorable changes in the management of the reindeer herding cooperative.

Throughout the thesis, this heterogeneity is manifested mainly in two ways: temporariness, or the incongruity between long-term perspectives and short-term solutions, and secondly, visibility through the relationship between presences and absences. To me, it seems that they unpack problems related to the use of spatial and temporal models.

I have focused on remoteness as representation created discursively in a centre – mostly as state simplifications and strategic rationalization. Through these strategic rationalizations – projects initiated by central state or regional governmental bodies, the centre, as de Certeau suggests (1984), tries to establish itself as timeless. Most of the presented empirical material shows that on the ground everyday tasks dominate. They are short-term and utilize the moment, by trying to make use of the state programs or of the interstices. Therefore one can easily conclude that, as James Scott argues, time is actually among the "weapons of the weak"(1985). What distinguishes the centre and the margins is that they are betting on different spans of time: the moment versus the eternity.

While according to Scott, the weak will always be dependent on the centre and its strategic rationalizations, I have demonstrated how people first and foremost consider the needs of their closest relatives and friends. They might embrace, but also ignore or resist the strategic rationalizations, the state programs and modernization reforms. They do not poach or trick. The empirical material also provides examples that people believe in the distant centre, its power and its benevolence (demonstrated when the pupils from the school wrote a SOS letter appealing to one of (then prime minister) Putin's departments).

Moreover, as I describe in Chapter Six, people on the ground also look for historical durability, creating their own genealogical continuities. Caring for children and parents, disabled and dependents is equally timeless and eternal as

the attempts of the state to perpetuate its power. Against the needs of the everyday life, the state interventions appear short-lived and always transient.

With the thesis I show the village of Krasnoshchelye to be a place where different strategic rationalizations and tactics meet. In order to solve the problems of temporal scales and spans of duration, I proposed in the introduction to use the notion of trajectory. I presented the village of Krasnoshchelye as a compound of different trajectories: people who come and settle down, specialists who come and leave after a few years, filmmakers, and anthropologists, tourists and tourist entrepreneurs. There are different trajectories of objects (cars, silicon baking forms, mobile phones, rifles, tents and houses, fur shoes and souvenirs), of state projects (collectivizations and resettlements, privatizations and reprivatizations, of animals and plants – potatoes, different kind of fish, reindeer) and of resources and financial instruments, of written histories and told stories.

Analysing oracles and divination practices in Havana, Martin Holbraad (2012) proposes a conceptualization of truth as an event in which trajectories of divinatory meanings collide. Some of the explanations vested in these meanings are based on causality and some of them on coincidence. For him, the truth is an event, resulting out of the meeting of trajectories of meaning. In Chapter Two, I brought in a similar idea – the temporary truths – the interplay of meanings that come into being instantiated by the particular constellation and interplay between causalities and coincidences. This increased awareness led me to complicate the idea of temporariness and to question the strategic rationalizations and broad spans of time that make us perceive reality as static, and see them as nevertheless temporary.

While the static representations are implicit in *Komi* as tenacious stereotypes, the interplay between different trajectories provides heterogeneities as discussed in *School* and *Festival*. To me, *Stories* offers the best comment on temporary truths and on the heterogeneities of being. With their stories, the village residents told me about the illusoriness of reality, the visual puzzles that one stumbles upon in the everyday life: you might think you see a sea lion and

then discover that it is the carpenter diving with a wetsuit; when you get enclosed by the forest, your brother then comes and the path mysteriously appears again. The lesson learned is that there might be an illusionary moment even in the most familiar details.

In the beginning, I stated that the thesis is about presences and absences, visibility and invisibility. Therefore, I find Doreen Massey's argument that "the specificities of space are a product of interrelations – connections and disconnections and their (combinatory) effects" (Massey 2005, 67) to be apt and apposite and have followed it throughout the thesis. In the introduction I referred to the idea of the horizon and the new ways to see the world. I described how along my own life trajectory, new horizons opened up and that they became sources of both familiarities and unfamiliarities. However, it has to be acknowledged that the notion of horizon does not only open spaces. It points to breaks, to discontinuities in space. Although I have tried throughout the thesis to show the continuity of the social space, there are also disconnections and discontinuities to be realized.

In 2012, after some attention in the media, the local people discussed the then president's (Dmitriy Medvedev) *dacha* on the river Umba on the Kola Peninsula[1]. I was told that the cabin was surrounded by a fence with a forty-kilometer radius around the cabin and that locals were not allowed there. For me, it is hard to believe that there was a 250 000 meter long fence there. The rumors, however, show that even there, in the depths of Kola Peninsula, in their own backyard, – the centre of power was nevertheless out of reach, out of sight, beyond the horizon, in the realm of the imaginary. With such discontinuity between the lived world and the centres, the Power Vertical would never be able to be strengthened or even to be effective.

In Chapter Two I stated that I believe our task as anthropologists should be to ask better questions. Throughout the thesis, I have pointed to different

[1] "Finny podgotovili "medvedya" dlya Dmitriya Medvedeva." 19 September 2011 https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1777034

forms of heterogeneities, and temporary truths as critiques of the static representations. What gives me a sense of the most stable ground in the material presented in the thesis, is the notion of care: teachers care about the pupils, locals learn to care about the village or the war veterans, the reindeer herders show just care and openness to the urban audience in Murmansk, mothers provide care for their children, daughters provide care for elderly parents, and the authorities "care" and subsidize people's vacations. It is also important to acknowledge that even if you care, sometimes you fail, and the results are not always what you desire. Care teaches us to deal with the frailty of everyday life, but also emphasizes its positive features.

The spatial models and the notion of care with their trajectories of meaning, intersect in the concept of home. Home is also a very heterogeneous and polymorphous concept. It can be associated with freedom – at home one is more free and unconstrained by political and social requirements. However, it is also a place often regulated by the state policies and external economic factors. Nevertheless, it is a source both of the daily activities that take place, but also where you belong in a wider context. It is different from the "wider world" [*na bolshoy zemle*], the expression I often heard in the field when people referred to the world beyond Kola Peninsula, or sometimes beyond the village. Literally translated as "on the continent, on the mainland", this idiomatic saying points to the fact that home is also the place from where you measure what is remote. Therefore our home always contains notions of distant times and distant places.

Throughout the thesis, I have highlighted two characteristics of the home: or two ideas we use to associate with home – intimacy and hospitality. They are in a similar way heterogeneous. Intimacy applies to the close relationships, to people opening their homes, stories, and photo albums to me, but also refers to the notion of "cultural intimacy" as defined by Michael Herzfeld (1997) where one encounters the heterogeneity of cultural meanings. Likewise, hospitality means to be open and welcoming, and this is a notion often used when the village is promoted outside. Nevertheless, there are elements of "the disquised

hospitality", a topic empirically described in both the monographs that have inspired this thesis: Anna Tsing's *In the realm of the diamond queen* (1993) and Michael Herzfeld's *Cultural Intimacy* (1997). The welcoming of state representatives, of inviting them, feeding them, pleasing them sporadically, ensures an everyday life without much change. We can see this in the way Tsing's Meratus avoid resettlement, or Herzfeld's Cretan shepherds avoid prosecution; they adopt stereotypes in order to pursue local interests. Hospitality is also a matter of degree and familiarity. As I have shown there are elements of scepticism to school reform practices, to jelly powder, to organized tourism. Maybe also the general assembly, described in Chapter Five, was just one such example of disguised hospitality to the new management.

After carrying out this project, I feel more comfortable using concepts related to the social relations such as care, intimacy, and hospitality and that imply temporariness and transience, instead of spatial models. Therefore, I feel "at home" with the notion of home as the place which is filled with manifold social relations, and is always on the tip of trajectory, where impulses meet resistance. At the same time it is the place that defines what you see as a horizon.

Initially, I thought of entitling the thesis "Homing Remoteness", probably influenced by Avtar Brah's notion of 'homing desire'(Brah 1996). A friend of mine who is a native English speaker, suggested that in English, the word "homing" is associated with military terminology, such as in "homing missiles". Although in several places I refer to the "weapons of the weak", I find it difficult to define the everyday as a struggle, fight or any other such form of revolt. As people in Krasnoshchelye say, life goes there "*potikhon'ku*" (peacefully). Therefore, I propose a neologism – "homewarding". By "Homewarding Remoteness" I mean the process of accommodating policies and representations of remoteness within the everyday life. Methodologically – of paying attention not to the big policy slogans, but to the minute movements in the everyday life at home. I hope that this neologism also encompasses the hospitality and the intimacy discussed above. Yet to me it also alludes to the idea of "warding" the

remoteness, of both staying there in the remote village and of keeping it alive, and also the opposition to the idea of building roads to the village. At the same time I did not find it fitting with my argument to add the usual adjective – and use “homeward-bound”, namely because I wanted to show that home consists of trajectories that are not bound to a certain direction, but are always open.

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