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Thinking with place making in V-Barð, Iceland

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Thinking with place making in V-Barð, Iceland

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of a
Philosophiae Doctor degree in Tourism Studies

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Abstract

Places are mobile and becoming, they are constantly changing and dynamic. Places on the margins sometimes seem to take on another image and are thought of as static and homogenous. In the thesis, I look at Western-Barðastrandarsýsla county, Iceland (V-Barð) through the idea of place making which tells about how places are made through mobilities and dynamic relations, and there V-Barð is no exception. Using a relational materialistic approach, which recognises that humans are but a part of nature, and the idea of place making I examine how V-Barð is differently created through human–nature relations, mobilities and tourism.

My findings show that places on the margins are no less dynamic and mobile than places closer to the centre. The relational materialistic approach allows for different methods of listening and looking at places and thinking about them, as it recognises a more-than-human agency. Through these lenses V-Barð emerges as a multi-layered and multivocal place where different stories of more-than-human encounters meet and make a place. V-Barð, as other places, is therefore messy and holds agencies which are crucial to recognise when negotiating about the place or researching it, for the more-than-human relations that it consists of to emerge.

Keywords: V-Barð, place making, mobility, more-than-human relations, hospitality.

Útdráttur

Staðir eru hreyfanlegir og verðandi, þeir eru síbreytilegir og kvikir. Ásýnd staða á jaðrinum hefur á stundum viljað taka á sig aðra mynd og ímynd þeirra verið tengd við stöðnun og einsleitni. Í ritgerðinni skoða ég Vestur-Barðastrandarsýslu (V-Barð) á Íslandi út frá hugmyndinni um það hvernig staðir verða til í sífelldum breytileika og hreyfingu og þar er V-Barð engin undantekning. Ég skoða V-Barð út frá mismunandi sjónarhornum á forsendum efnislegrar tengslahyggju, en hún gengur út frá því að manneskjan sé einungis hluti af stærri heild og að þar skipti tengsl höfuðmáli. Þannig skoða ég V-Barð út frá tengslum fólks og náttúru, út frá hreyfanleika staðarins og ferðamennsku.

Niðurstöður mínar sýna fram á að staðir á jaðrinum eru engu síður kvikir og síbreytilegir en staðir nær miðjunni. Aðferðafræði efnislegrar tengslahyggju gerir ráð fyrir mismunandi aðferðum til að hlusta og skoða staði út frá og hugsa um þá. Í ritgerðinni birtist V-Barð sem marglaga og margradda staður þar sem ólíkar sögur meira-en-mennskra radda koma saman og móta staðinn. V-Barð er því óreiðukenndur staður tengsla líkt og aðrir staðir, sem býr jafnframt yfir valdi þessara tengsla sem ætti að taka tillit til í mótun staðarins til framtíðar eða í rannsóknum á honum.

Lykilorð: V-Barð, staðarmótun, hreyfanleiki, meira-en-mennsk tengsl, gestrisni.

For my daughters,

may you always know your strength and passion

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Abbreviations

A-Barð – Eastern Barðastrandarsýsla county

AMI – The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies

ANT – Actor-network theory

CTS – Critical Tourism Studies

EAI – The Environmental Agency of Iceland

EBE – Elva Björg Einarsdóttir, author

ENRBA – The Environmental and Natural Resources Board of Appeal

IEA – The Icelandic Environment Association

IINH – The Icelandic Institute of Natural History

ILA – Intra Living in the Anthropocene

IRCA – The Icelandic Road and Coastal Agency

ITQ – Individual transferrable fishing quota

MEEC – The Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate

MFRI – The Marine and Freshwater Research Institute

MoM – Mobilities on the Margins

NPA – The National Planning Agency

RÚV – The Icelandic State Broadcasting Service

V-Barð – Western Barðastrandarsýsla county

WRDO – The Westfjords Regional Development Office

ÞEH – Þuríður Elvu Hannesdóttir, maps

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1 A place: Introduction

This thesis, looks at place making and how the place V-Barð, Iceland, is differently created through diverse mobilities and perspectives. In this chapter, Chapter *1 A place: Introduction*, I will set the scene for the analysis of place making in V-Barð. The structure of the introduction chapter is as follows, I begin by setting theoretical groundings of place making in Chapter *1.1*., *A perfect spot*. In Chapter *1.2., Aim of research and research questions* I introduce the aim of the thesis and present the research questions. I position myself in the research field in Chapter *1.3., Positionality*, and in Chapter *1.4., The research field*, I introduce the place of research. Chapter *1.5., Methodology*, is dedicated to the methodology of the thesis and subdivided into three parts, *1.5.1. Reflexivity, 1.5.2. Ethnographic field research*, and *1.5.3. Vignettes*. The concluding chapter *1.6., Structure*, presents the structure of the thesis.

1.1 A perfect spot

This is a perfect spot! I've managed to find a place near the bushes on the shore of the lake, and nothing is in front of me but the small scrubs. It is convenient because I am only eight and my view is easily blocked. I look around me, there are thousands of people, and I see my parents and siblings just behind me. I feel secure and I have an overview of the landing of the Viking ship on the shore of Vatnsdalsvatn, the lake in Vatnsdalur valley.

I am excited. We have been watching the Viking ship approach from the other end of the lake and it will soon be on our shore. It is a great ship, a real Viking ship with red and silver shields on its side, and a dragon's head and tail on its prow and stern. There are Vikings onboard, and they are dressed in colourful clothes, and some have helmets. I especially notice the one standing in the prow, the leader of the Vikings. He is wearing a red robe, and he has a helmet with horns on his head. A raven sits on the man's shoulder, and he releases the raven just before landing, and it flies up in the air. It is magnificent! The reproduction of the Viking landing is successful.

Local people and guests are celebrating 1100 years of settlement in Iceland. Similar celebrations are taking place in each quarter of the country. Here, in the Westfjords, a two-day outdoor festival was held on July 13 and 14 1974, in Vatnsdalur valley in Vatnsfjörður fjord in the Westfjords of Iceland. It is a rural place far away from any densely populated areas. According to the National Celebration Committee, the reasons for the choice of the location for the celebration were:

> […] no coincidence […] mostly two things, Flóki Vilgerðarson (Hrafna-Flóki [English Raven-Flóki]) landed in Þrælavogur [E. Slave cove] in Vatnsfjörður fjord and settled there for one year, and the other thing is that the natural beauty of the place is the same as when Flóki was here, it is a charming place for young and old to enjoy. On the mountain Lónfell in Vatnsfjörður, it is said that Flóki and his people stood when they named the country.
>
> (Þjóðhátíðarnefnd, 1974, p. 2)

Landnámabók (Þorgilsson, 1986), one of the Icelandic Sagas, tells the story of Flóki Vilgerðarson, and his settlement in Iceland. Flóki was a Norwegian who sailed to Iceland in the ninth century. His people, domestic animals and three ravens were with him on the ship, and he used the latter to help him in navigating to a new land. Early on in the voyage, Flóki decided to test the navigation skills of the ravens by releasing the first one, but it flew back astern. Later, he released the second raven which flew up in the air and simply disappeared. The final raven released by Flóki flew off and guided his journey to the shores of a new land. Flóki would later name that country Iceland. The major settlement of Iceland is said to have happened some years after Flóki and his people landed in Vatnsfjörður, in 874, when Ingólfur Arnarson settled in Reykjavík. However, it was from the mountains of Vatnsfjörður upon Flóki's explorations that the country acquired its name, and thus, as the National Celebration Committee stated, the location of the settlement was a matter-of-course (ibid.).

Flóki's special navigation technique with the ravens earned him the name Hrafna-Flóki, Raven-Flóki. His name is reflected in the names of the places he went to and later settled, for example, in the names of Flóka-Grund and Flókadalur. However, Hrafna-Flóki did not do too well in his new country. He built his house in Vatnsfjörður and Landnámabók tells how he became involved in fishing and hunting, as the fjord was filled with fish and seals. Unfortunately, Flóki forgot to think about harvesting hay for his domestic animals, probably because he was new to this land and not aware of the harsh winters on its shores. When winter came he lost both people and animals (Þorgilsson, 1986). The next summer, before sailing back to Norway, Hrafna-Flóki climbed the mountains to the north where he had an overview of a large part of the Westfjords. Landnámabók says that when he did so, he saw a fjord filled with pack ice, and he chose to name the country Iceland. Iceland would be a good name for the country that had given him such hard times the previous winter. Back in Norway, Hrafna-Flóki's companions on his expedition to Iceland did not agree with him regarding the qualities of the country. Some said that it was a rather nice country, and others said that it had its pros and cons (ibid.). Later, Flóki returned to Iceland and built his home at Flókadalur, a valley in the north of the country, where he died in old age (ibid.).

Academic discussions about places have taken on diverse forms and relations. For example, Casey (1996) describes places as events that "happen", and (Campbell, 2006) talks about how places are built up in layers through the acts of many. Overall, places are said to be mobile and in association with the ones that experience them through time and space, and as such, they are relational and have many layers (e.g., Jóhannesson, 2023; Lund & Jóhannesson, 2012). "[R]elationships between people and places are interactive. The making of a place is based on the relationships it has, for example, with residents and tourists" (Lund & Jóhannesson, 2012, p. 2). Hetherington (1997) encourages us to look at places as though they are ships which sail around in time and space among people and other actors. They appear, change, and move around in networks that connect diverse actors and, thus, he stresses that places are about relationships and are ongoing, becoming (ibid.). Hetherington's metaphor actualises in the settlement of Hrafna-Flóki and his people in Iceland. The Iceland named by Hrafna-Flóki arose from the mobilities of people sailing on a ship from Norway to Iceland on a land-search-expedition tour. Their travel was governed by the weather and winds, but also by navigation skills and the ravens.

By building their homes and residing in Vatnsfjörður for a while, fishing, and making their everyday life in these landscapes, Hrafna-Flóki and his people created the place by their mobilities of coming and going and conducting their mundane lives there. Furthermore, they gave the place a meaning through their cultural processes and practices (Bursta et al., 2023).

They even named the country in accord with their experience of the place and its appearances, before they left for Norway again (Þorgilsson, 1986). Those who know about the origin history recounted in Landnámabók, the aura of Flóki and his people can be perceived around the place, and in the ruins that can be seen in the ground at his assumed settlement. Likewise, the same can be said of the fjord which he is thought to have sailed to, and of Lónfell, the mountain that rises high up in the north, the assumed mountain where the country got its name from.

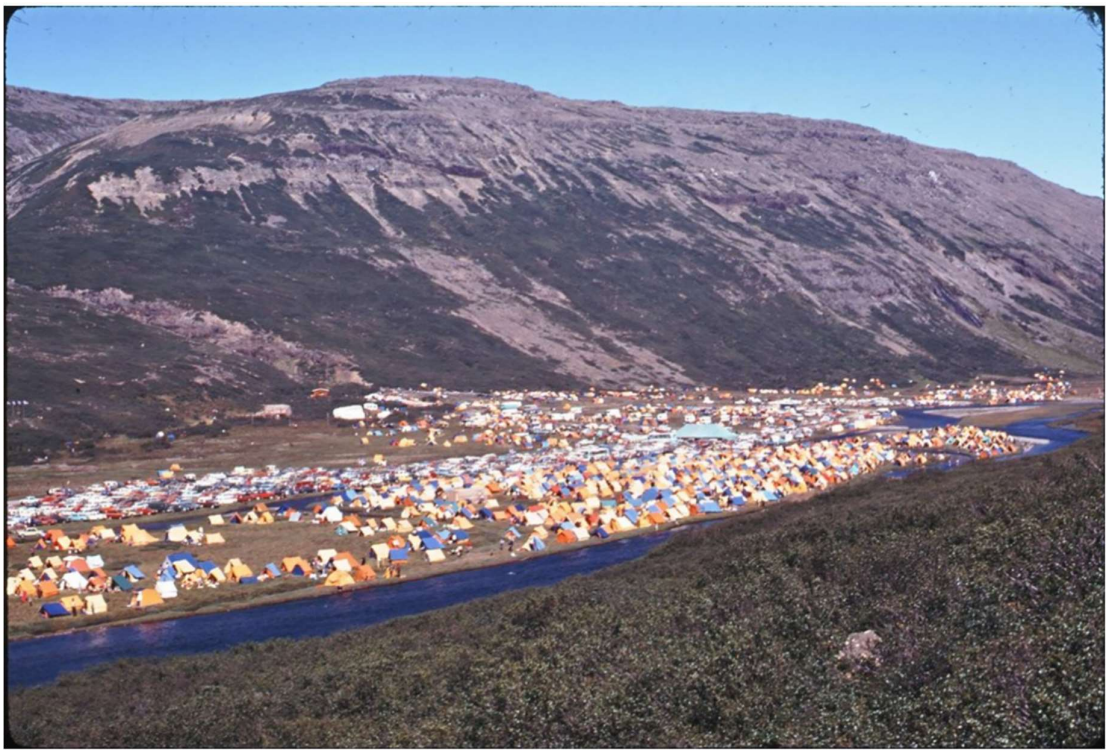


Figure 1 The festival area of the National Celebration of the people of the Westfjords 1974. Image: Guðmundur Sveinsson.

The aura of Flóki can be seen as a layer in the landscape of Vatnsfjörður. It is an origin myth, and as such it serves as a layer in the landscape. Places are layered with ongoing placing, events and encounters with different actors (Casey, 1996; Hetherington, 1997). In that sense, the repeated practices of the inhabitants at a given place in relation to geological processes stack up, through time, layer after layer. The Celebration of the settlement in 1974 applied yet another layer to the landscapes of Vatnsfjörður. Until the celebration, there was only a narrow road leading to the end of the lake in Vatnsdalur where the celebration took place. It was a rural farming area and rather isolated. An outdoor town was established at the end of the lake for the two-day celebration, where over 13,000 people stayed in tents over the duration, see *Figure 1*. The road had been rebuilt, and car parks and camping sites were constructed. Furthermore, toilets, a big green catering tent, stage, dance floor, facility house, post office and a grocery store had all been set up. Additionally, souvenirs were on offer, and special postage stamps were manufactured, with a regional postmark being released to commemorate the celebration. The celebrations' program was composed of, for example, dancing in the evenings, drama, folk dancing, and gymnastics during the day, with a Mass taking place on Sunday morning, in which three couples were married.

While places may be seen as stacked up layers of activity through time, this is not something that happens at an even pace or even in a linear way. Casey (1996) talks about places as events that happen in action and mobilities, as mentioned earlier. He argues how "*places*, far from being inert and static sites, are themselves continually changing in accordance with their own proper dynamism" (Casey, 1996, p. 44). Casey's conception can be related to Vatnsfjörður, with the celebration being seen as the event that established the celebration place, Þjóðhátíð Vestfirðinga (E. the National Celebration of the people of the Westfjords). The place was thoroughly established in time and space (Edensor, 2010) through the experience and mobilities of many people with connections to the Westfjords (Lund, 2008). The celebration laid sediments which the place was partly built upon and lived through. In hindsight, it could be said that the celebration was an event where we, the inhabitants of the region and the visitors, were practicing our heritage and renewing our kinship. The placing of Vatnsfjörður during the celebration in 1974 resulted in Vatnsfjörður becoming a conserved place a year later, in 1975. The conservation aligned with the spirit of the celebration where people enjoyed being together in nature, that is, "to protect nature in such a way that people have the opportunity to enjoy it" (EAI, 2023, paragraph 1).

Rural places are often seen as homophonic, immobile, and frozen (Jóhannesson et al., 2023). This is repeatedly shown to be the case when rural places are researched using the socio-economic perspective as the viewpoint (ibid.). This research takes on another point of view, that of looking at places through with Vestur-Barðastrandarsýsla county (V-Barð) as a case. I look to the future and back to the past, also examining the place through present times and human–nature relations to see how V-Barð has been and is being created through mobilities and actions, cultural processes, and inhabitation through time.

1.2 Aim of research and research questions

V-Barð might seem like immobile and frozen to many with its mountains and sea, fauna and flora. Even the settlements are in a way genetically stable as my genealogical tree clarifies, but my family comes from this place and the surrounding places in Breiðafjörður fjord generations back (Íslendingabók, 2024). But a place mobility varies due to what perspectives it is looked upon and who is looking. Knowing the place quite well, being born and bred there, the place surprised me when I started walking there in my thirties, connecting places and feeling the rhythm of the landscape. It was not least all the old routes between settlements that astonished me and the variety of mobile practices they presented. It was a totally different place than I was used to as the old routes had been displaced by modern roads decades before I started making my own way around in V-Barð. My amazement made me curious to know more about the multi-layered aspect of places and how it can reveal different realities. Igniting my curiosity with theories about relational materialism and gaining an understanding of belonging in different ways I decided to go further with my inquiries and do Ph.D. research about place making in V-Barð, Iceland.

The aim of the research is to examine how the place V-Barð in Iceland is created as a place through different perspectives and mobilities, of human–nature relations, inhabitation, and tourism encounters. Grounded in the field of place making and mobilities, the overall research question is:

How is the place V-Barð, Iceland, differently created through human–nature relations, mobilities, inhabitation, and encounters?

The overall research question is pursued with four research questions, one for each subsequent chapter of the thesis. These are as follows:

Chapter 2. Human–nature relations in V-Barð: *How is V-Barð, Iceland, shaped through human–nature relations?*

Chapter 3. Examining place mobilities through walking and map analysis: *How does walking old routes, analysing maps, and studying place names reveal the changing mobilities of a place?*

Chapter 4. Road Encounters: *What does looking at the road from different perspectives, as a place and a connection between locations, tell about the place making of V-Barð?*

Chapter 5. A place of hospitality: *How is the notion of hospitality apparent in different encounters of hosts, guests, and place in V-Barð through the outdoor access rights of the general public?*

1.3 Positionality

"You are a true country woman" my mother said to me when we were attending her sheep on a calm winter's day in February 2023, while I was at my childhood home visiting her and writing my thesis. We were closing the big barn doors, and I demonstrated that I knew how to do that because she had taught me so, many years earlier. It was the greatest compliment one could get, I had learned through my upbringing, to be accepted as one of the people of the countryside. In my mother's words I find how my relations to the research field are complex, and how I am a part of many places and how places are mobile in many ways, also socially.

I was born and brought up on the farm of Seftjörn in Barðaströnd and Vatnsfjörður, V-Barð, Iceland. My upbringing followed the seasonal rhythms of the agricultural and fishing communities that still characterise the area. My parents emphasised the importance of their children getting a good education, and I therefore left home at the age of fifteen to attend high school far away and in a different place. It took me two days to get there from my farm by the sea and steep mountains. First by ferry, and then by two buses bringing me inland in the West of Iceland, surrounded by landscapes of rolling hills and glacier scenery far away from the sea. Leaving home for school was a big step for me, and it kind of ruptured the feeling of belonging and home. This was my first experience of rupture, it had a great effect on me, and it took a while to settle into a new rhythm of life. A sense of belonging is the same as places; always being remade and changing (Wright, 2015).

For years to come, this became my rhythm, going to school and coming back "home" for a longer or shorter period. I do not really feel at home again until many years later, when I have found myself on this rollercoaster of seasons, people, and places. Rapport and Dawson say "that some people feel "at home in movement" or "settle within mobility"" (Salazar & Smart, 2011, p. iii). It is possible to say that this mobility between places became my "home" and it became my rhythm and my way of life, although this wandering about always

disturbed me a bit. Within anthropology mobilities have always been "natural rhythm[s], cycles and patterns that societies tend to follow" (Adey, 2017, p. 32) as an everyday practice, although more among nomads than other people. I identify with this rhythm in my high school years and recognise that it was a big part of me.

Places are mobile in many ways. While I had been away, both the place and I had changed, and I could feel how tangible it was. I was in a sense a stranger, even though I could feel how I connected to it as the place in which I grew up. Nevertheless, there had been a rupture to the flow of belonging and today I am not sure that you can ever fully go back after you have left. This was also the conclusion of Jackson (1995) regarding leaving and coming back, although he considers that it is not the place that changes but the person who has left and comes back to it.

Seftjörn is situated on a small peninsula reaching out into the sea. It is possible to travel to and from the farm, on land driving the main road numbered 62, or by sea sailing with the ferry, Baldur, which operates from Brjánslækur on the next peninsula to Seftjörn (*Figure 2*) and arrives in Stykkishólmur town on the Snæfellsnes peninsula, across the wide fjord Breiðafjörður to the south of Seftjörn. The ferry transports people, cars, and goods to and from Brjánslækur and exports products from the region so they can reach their markets around the world. When I was growing up, a nearby canyon, Surtarbrandsgil, was a key attraction for tourists visiting the region. The Surtarbrandsgil canyon is rich in fossils produced by a twelve-million-year-old forest, with leaves and branches pressed into the sediments of a long-gone lake. Almost before I learned to speak some English, I could guide people to the canyon by pointing and nodding or shaking my head, as the other children who lived on the farms next to the canyon did. We were used to mingling with tourists. We would also hitch-hike to places we needed to go to and often got some biscuits or candy from the tourists that gave us a ride. We explored their camping sites after they had left, because they sometimes left some exotic empty tins and interesting items, mainly wrappings and other rubbish that we sometimes collected. We also helped tourists to find water, as they did not trust the water in the river near to their camping sites and came to the farm for assistance. Most often, they came to us when we were milking the cows, and we offered them water from the water hose in the dairy house. They were content with that, but we, the local children, thought it was rather strange that they did not go to the river, which we were used to drink from, to get their water, because on their way to meet with us they had to cross that same river. Sometimes, sitting by the road when the ferry came in, we wrote down the numbers of licence plates for our own entertainment and we felt lucky if we saw a licence plate from far away, from the regions in the country farthest from our own. Other times, we were more business-like in our thinking, and we sold sporting fishermen worms for bait.

We were also well acquainted with the hotel at the next crossroads, Hótel Flókalundur, six km away, and used to go there to buy ice cream or French fries. Later, I worked in the hotel during the summertime. After being used to working at the farm, shifting to the rhythm of work at the hotel was harsh. The farm work was also hard, just as at the hotel, but with slower rhythms, and the animals were less demanding than the tourists I served at the hotel. Maybe, I was just more used to the farm work. I experienced these as two different realities operating side by side, in the same space and time.

Figure 2 Seftjörn, the beach, the harbour and mt. Lónfell (right). Surtarbrandsgil is in the mountains near the farm (left) but a little bit out of the picture. Image: Elva Björg Einarsdóttir (EBE).

In my adult life I have lived away from my place of upbringing, in Patreksfjörður village in V-Barð, in Oslo, Norway, and in Reykjavík, Iceland. My childhood home has always had a strong meaning to me, and I go there often. During summer holidays in Iceland when living in Norway I felt the urge to visit Barðaströnd. Feeling uprooted in a new country, ruptured again and not belonging, the seashore of Barðaströnd seemed like a nice place to find my tempo again. Sensing the landscape through dwelling in it helped me become rooted again (Wylie, 2003), together with the rhythm of the walk along the sandy beach and greeting old and new spots along the way. I rooted myself again and felt at home. Ever since, I have been at home in the world in the sense of which Jackson (1995) speaks about it, where one belongs to the world. This means being a part of it and not in relation to one place, because the placing of home is always a balance between the place people call their home and the place that is unfamiliar. Home is not a fixed place but a negotiation of feeling at home and being a stranger (ibid.). It is the constant replacing of being at home and leaving, and the comings and goings of my schooldays that made this tangible.

Later, when living back in Iceland, I started hiking in V-Barð when visiting my parents. On my hikes I recognised how walking in Barðaströnd was no less appealing to me than walking famous hiking routes in Iceland and abroad, and I could imagine that would be the case for other hikers too. As a result, these hikes encouraged me to publish a guide book for hiking in Barðaströnd, *Barðastrandarhreppur – göngubók* (Einarsdóttir, 2016a). Furthermore, I also published a map (Olsen & Einarsdóttir, 2016), and a webpage where I can add new hiking routes and information, *bardastrandarhreppur.net* (Einarsdóttir, 2016b). This was a project I worked on in cooperation with people in Barðaströnd. My aim with the project was to empower Barðaströnd and the community there by promoting local tourism for the benefit of locals and travellers alike. I also wanted to put Barðaströnd on the map in the sense of bringing it forth as a place worth visiting.

Because of its geographical location on the north coast of Breiðafjörður fjord, Barðaströnd had always been a “drive through place”. A place where people, other than locals, would drive through to their destination elsewhere, for example, the villages farther north and west. Thus, it can be said that Barðaströnd has been one of the gateways to the Westfjords, which

has been so from early on when ships arrived from abroad (Kristjánsdóttir, 1999), for example, for trade, or the Icelandic vessels sailing over Breiðafjörður. Since 1924, the ferry, Baldur, has provided a link across Breiðafjörður, facilitating onward travel to the south. Baldur has grown from being a small passenger ship to a ferry carrying commodities, people, and products to and from V-Barð, as well as other places in the Westfjords (Einarsdóttir, 2016a). My intention when publishing the guidebook was to put Barðaströnd on the map and encourage people to stop there to experience it for themselves. I wanted Barðaströnd to gain a deeper meaning in travellers' minds. I also wanted people to appreciate the place I cared so deeply about. The people in Barðaströnd who worked with me on the book also had the ambition to present the place as a hiking area. However, at the same time we wanted to protect it, for example, by not introducing sensitive areas that would not bear the traffic of hikers.

While writing the hiking book, I started to perceive the landscape as if it was engraved with lines. Old and new routes and roads, as well as paths made by sheep and cows, were interwoven into the landscapes, which I later came to think of as lines of mobilities (Ingold, 2016). Furthermore, there were the geo-lines of the earth itself, both big and small, for example, canyons and basins. Moreover, there were weather-lines, and lines at sea, strong currents and waves formed by the winds and landscape. Ingold speaks of the lines of the earth as a meshwork which are "[w]oven into the land" (2017, p. 25). They are thus a part of the landscape, having been made by different actions, such as the erosion of a river and traces made by humans or animals. The lines got me thinking about V-Barð as a place of complex mobilities. Not least because many of the old routes brought me to communities farther away from Barðaströnd and into other districts and regions. These routes reflected the mobilities of a Barðaströnd that somewhat did not exist anymore, and blurred the lines of Barðaströnd as I knew it.

In the later stages of writing the book I came across place name archives of the Barðastrandarheppur district. I had already sensed the multiplicity of Barðaströnd, and how it existed in many layers, composed of, for example, geology, fauna, flora, and history. The place names added yet more layers or threads to the landscape (Ingold, 2023b). It felt like they shaped an aura that oozed narratives. The daily life of the past appeared from a rather uneventful landscape, rather like a jigsaw puzzle of the past. With the place names adding layers to the landscape, it was possible to get a better picture of the rhythm of everyday life in Barðaströnd as it was in the past (Einarsdóttir, 2023a). The place name archive enhanced the landscape and could, for example, show where the cows would have stayed overnight, where the sheep were milked, where it was safe to cross the shallow waters, and where the landings for the boats had been. Some of the information the place name registers held was not known to the people living in Barðaströnd today, and thus, it could also add to their experience of the place. Further discussion about place names is in chapter 1.5.2 on page 23.

During the process of writing the book I attended courses on *Theories in tourism* and *Travel book writing* in Tourism Studies at the University of Iceland in 2013. This gave me a new perspective on my writing and enabled me to write freely and with emotions as well as connecting to the theories of tourism. At the same time, I attended a seminar about Deleuze and Guattari's *rhizome* and Latour's *Actor-network theory (ANT)* along with my tourism studies. I connected with Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of *striate and smooth space* (Huijbens et al., 2014), since it helped me to think about my walking. I could see that my walking might be seen as striating smooth space, that is, the landscape I walked through. I could also see how I affected these spaces, for example, when I twisted a tree branch or

scared a bird from its nest and, conversely, how the place and its heterogenous actants made their impact on me, for example when needing to cross a river or defend myself against a bird attack. Huijbens et al. quoted Shields (2012) when relating how through topology subjects are not important purely for themselves, but because of "what is connected to them and what they connect" (2014, p. 213). Thus, through their connections, subjects are altered as their connections also change (ibid.), and this was the case with the landscape I walked in. Likewise, ANT helped me to think about how the human societies I walked between were not fixed, but rather they were differently related and constantly moving because of their connections. For example, to the world economy and mobilities through livestock, fish, and tourism. Perhaps this was one of the things I noticed first when walking the old routes, as the main roads of V-Barð today are quite different to the routes from the past that I walked, that is, they connected the place in ways that are different from the routes we are familiar with in the present. The main destinations had changed. ANT is based on relationalism and focuses on "how social arrangements are held together" (Jóhannesson et al., 2012, p. 4). Thus, material relationalism is the basis of my approach to the place making of V-Barð, and I will account for it later in this chapter and in Chapter 2.

Bursta et al. (2023) discuss how writing is a part of the learning and analysing process. I think it was through the combination of walking, writing, theories, and concepts that I gained an understanding of belonging to the landscapes of V-Barð in a new way. I felt as if I were a part of the landscape and that in a way there were no pre-defined limits, *human–nature*, with each being a part of the other and together rather than apart. Of course, there were limits but they were created through relations that change due to circumstances. Thus, the ordinary way of talking and thinking about humans and nature, the *nature-culture* dualistic terms I was used to, did not fit my thinking anymore. This was something totally different and new to me, and I will discuss it thoroughly in Chapter 2.

But it was not only the things I saw or the thoughts that my walking evoked, but the method itself of walking and writing. The rhythm of the walking, steady or ruptured, (Edensor, 2010) and the sensation of the body interacting with the environment from a different position, what Rantala et al. (2020) describe as being-with in proximate interaction. This was crucial to finding the unseen and unexpected, and to being open and creating a place which for me was worth further inquiry: I had walked myself into a research field and that is why you are reading these lines today. Furthermore, the emphasis I had put on walking in Barðaströnd led me to other places which were connected to Barðaströnd, but mostly in the same county. I discovered that the mobilities of Barðaströnd reached beyond its administrational limits, and to be able to follow its mobilities I had to broaden the research field to the county of V-Barð. That is why when I talk about V-Barð I am talking about all the communities within it, but when speaking of Barðaströnd I am only talking about the place that I come from.

When I had already started my research, in September 2020, I got involved in the research project *Mobilities on the margins – creative process of place making* (MoM), led by two of my supervisors, Katrín Anna Lund and Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson from the University of Iceland. The project was granted research funding by the Icelandic Research Fund in 2020. The MoM-project was in cooperation with the academics Björn Þorsteinsson, also from the University of Iceland, Guðbjörg R. Jóhannesdóttir from Iceland University of the Arts, Outi Rantala from Lapland University, Finland, Carina Ren from Aalborg University, Denmark, and Jo Vergunst from the University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland. The project was also carried out in cooperation with the Municipality of Vesturbyggð, the Westfjords Regional Development Office and Atthing, Northeast Iceland Development Agency,

including Rif Field Station. I was one of two doctoral students in the project, Þórný Barðadóttir was the other one. The project offered an "innovative humanities led approach to the controversies and debates surrounding resource use, innovation and place making […] emphasis [was] put on multiple relations through which places emerge, where people compose their lives as best they can with their nature/culture surroundings" (Lund & Jóhannesson, 2019, p. 3).

1.4 The research field

The research field is Vestur-Barðastrandarsýsla County, Iceland (V-Barð). Its name refers to the western part of the county of Barðaströnd, the place the county takes its name from, even though Barðaströnd is only a part of it. Together with the eastern part of the county, Austur-Barðastrandarsýsla (A-Barð), V-Barð forms the northern side of Breiðafjörður bay. The reason for the county being so named is not entirely clear, but some explanations are more likely than others. The story goes that in the past Barðaströnd referred to the whole of both counties, V-Barð and A-Barð, which states that the name of the county comes from the steep mountains that characterise it. The mountains are rather like a brim reaching up from the sea along the coastline, and this is the first land you see when sailing to these shores. "Brim" means "barð" in Icelandic. It is "brim-coast" – Barðaströnd and Barðastrandarsýsla, meaning "Brim Coast County". It is the borders or outskirts of the land and the county. "Barð" is relational, as it brings forth the relationship of V-Barð to elsewhere. This is why I chose to use the term "V-Barð" as the name of the field. Although it is an abbreviation of the formal name of the county, it further underlines the relations of V-Barð and its mobilities. In that way it serves as a constant reminder of the place making that the thesis explores and brings forth.

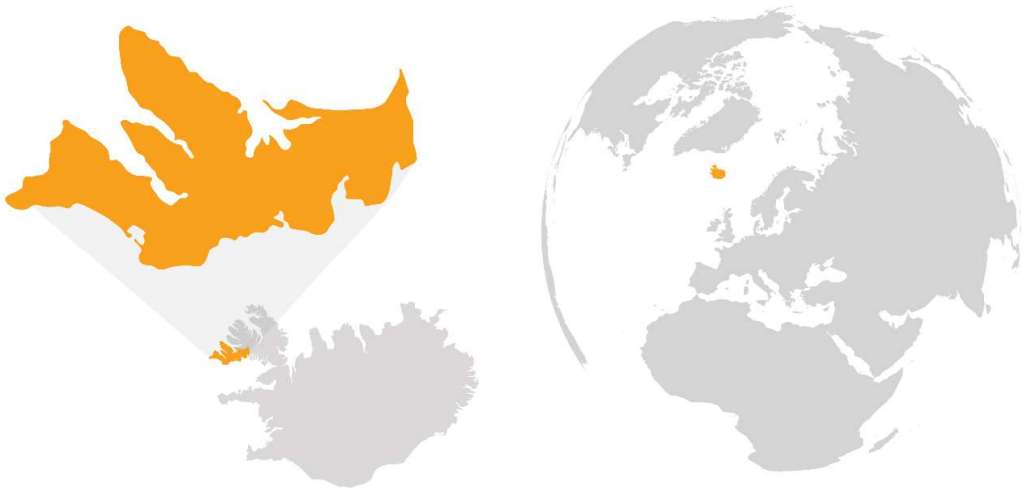


Figure 3 The map shows Iceland in relation to the world and V-Barð in relation to Iceland delineated in orange. Map: Þuríður Elvu Hannesdóttir (ÞEH).

V-Barð is a three headed peninsula in the south of the Westfjords, Northwest Iceland, at approximately 65.6 ° N, 23.0 ° W to 24.5 ° W, 65.5 ° N (Google, 2023), see *Figure 3*. The county is a part of the Westfjords of Iceland and the fjord of Breiðafjörður. It is geographically divided into several population catchment areas in between high mountains and fjords. Barðaströnd, Rauðisandur, Ketildalir, Arnarfjörður, Tálknafjörður and Patreksfjörður are dispersed settlements in the countryside. Additionally, in three other towns, Patreksfjörður, Tálknafjörður and Bíldudalur, there are populations of 270-750 people. On January 1 2024, the population in V-Barð as a whole was 1356 people (Statistics Iceland, 2023a, 2024). Until recently the county was divided into two municipalities, Tálknafjarðarhreppur district in Tálknafjörður fjord, and Vesturbyggð, which covers the rest of the county. In 2024 the municipalities merged into one.

Through the centuries V-Barð has depended on resources on land and built its livelihood on traditional work in fisheries and agriculture. The towns were built around fishing and related services in the second half of the nineteenth century. Until then, the settlements were dispersed, often with seasonal fishery periods in fishing-booths near rich fishing grounds. Over time some of the seasonal fishing areas evolved to year-round settlements in the villages Patreksfjörður, Tálknafjörður and Bíldudalur *(*see *Figure **4***). Daily life in the countryside has changed over time from the small-scale farming and fishing that was carried out in most farms, to more specialised occupations. Today, the farms are bigger, specialising in milk production and the processing of meat products. Moreover, the fishing is an independent activity carried out by locals and people who are drawn to live there seasonally due to the fishing opportunities.

Figure 4 V-Barð is a three-headed peninsula. Map: ÞEH.

The settlements in V-Barð have grown and declined in line with developments elsewhere in the world, with increased urbanisation and reduced population in rural areas, at least over the last decades. The population of the region peaked around the 1980s when the fishing industry was in its prime in the area, and many trawlers were operated from the villages, which created work on land and nearly every farm was inhabited. A shift occurred with the constitution of the individual transferrable fishing quota (ITQ) system in 1984[1] which seems to have encouraged consolidation in ownership of quota, and a decrease in fishing industry employment, together with a decrease in population in rural areas reliant on fishing for their livelihoods (Gunnlaugsson & Valtysson, 2022). The employment change is, however, not only due to the ITQ system, because it is also influenced by technical solutions (ibid.). On the other hand, the consolidation due to the ITQ system increased over the first decades to the point where the ten biggest companies owned over 50% of the quota (ibid.). Additionally, when generational change occurs, the new generation is often not willing to carry on with the family business, resulting in the business being sold to the big companies (ibid.). In V-Barð there are few big or medium sized fishing industries, and there are also individual fishing boats that are allowed to fish during a special period of the year, so-called coastal fishing boats. In 2023 costal fishing boats were allowed to fish for twelve days within May, June, July and August, on four days of the week, from Monday till Thursday (Fiskistofa, 2023). The fishing industry in V-Barð has, however, decreased considerably from its prime days in the 1980s. Since 2009, aquaculture has been a growing part of V-Barð's occupation and economic sectors and is now one of the main types of fish processing in the area. I will discuss the issue of aquaculture further in Chapter 2, Human–nature relations in V-Barð.

Figure 5 The road to Hænuvík farm, an inhabited place in the countryside of Patreksfjörður. Image: EBE.

[1] Steps were taken in the direction of the ITQ system in Iceland in 1979 with quota on herring. In 1984, quota was extended to cod. At first, the ITQ system was only for a year at a time. However, in 1990, laws were implemented ensuring it prevailed over an indefinite period (Alþingi, 1990; Gunnlaugsson & Valtysson, 2022).

In agriculture, similar things happened when regulation regimes placing quota on agricultural products were constituted in 1985-1993 (Búvörulög nr. 166/1993). The effect on agriculture is apparent in the decline in population in the countryside of V-Barð, where some parts of the older countryside are remotely or no longer populated, with abandoned farms and neglected fields making the generational change very tangible. The impact is also evidenced by bigger dairy and sheep farms, as larger farms are more efficient than small ones, given the high cost of production.

The geography of V-Barð and its scattered settlements create various challenges for communities to thrive. Transportation is often difficult as connecting roads pass through fjords, often alongside steep mountains, or they go over high mountains, see *Figure 5*. In addition, the centralisation of services and transport in the southwestern corner of the country, in the capital area near Reykjavík, has escalated the marginalisation of V-Barð and other places that are more than a certain distance from it. V-Barð is about 400 to 450 km from the capital area. It takes around four to five hours driving to get there from Reykjavík, using roads that are not consistently good. Recent and upcoming road construction has improved V-Barð's communication to the north with tunnels to Ísafjörður, the most populated town in the Westfjords. Also, to the south, with new road construction, as I will discuss in Chapter 4, *Road Encounters*.

Furthermore, V-Barð is connected to the south by the ferry, Baldur, crossing Breiðafjörður bay to Stykkishólmur town on the other side, as mentioned earlier. The passage takes about two to three hours with a stop at Flatey, an inhabited island, and a popular place for holiday stays for second homeowners and other travellers. It takes two and a half hours to drive from Stykkishólmur to the capital area. The fastest journey between V-Barð and the capital area is by air from Bíldudalur airport, which takes around 40 minutes. There are flights every day except Saturdays and often two flights a day (Norlandair, 2023), see *Figure 6*.

In the wake of the decreasing role of fisheries in the area, tourism and aquaculture have grown. Tourism has always been a part of the countryside, with hotels and guesthouses since the 1970s. It is only in the villages that tourism is a new economic sector. In 2013/14, there was a tourist boom in Iceland and last year (2023) 2.2 million travellers arrived in the country (The Icelandic Tourist Board, 2024). Although only 4% of the tourists visiting Iceland went to V-Barð during the summer months (May to October) in 2018 and 2019 (Thórhallsdóttir et al., 2024), both locals and the surrounding villages are well aware of the increase. Hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, and tourist services have become a part of the villages[2], and locals enjoy the life that comes with the addition of curious tourists strolling about in their small communities.

The population has increased again, and the upswing because of aquaculture and tourism is noticeable in the renovation of houses and appearances of the towns. In the countryside, abandoned farms are being restored by people who have moved back, have them as a second home, or who even live there 50% of the time. New houses are being built and it seems that people have started to believe in V-Barð as a desirable place to live in once again. Their backgrounds are diverse, and they do not agree on how places should develop, for example,

[2] Leading to a Fosshótel being built in Patreksfjörður in 2013, one of the main hotel chains in Iceland.

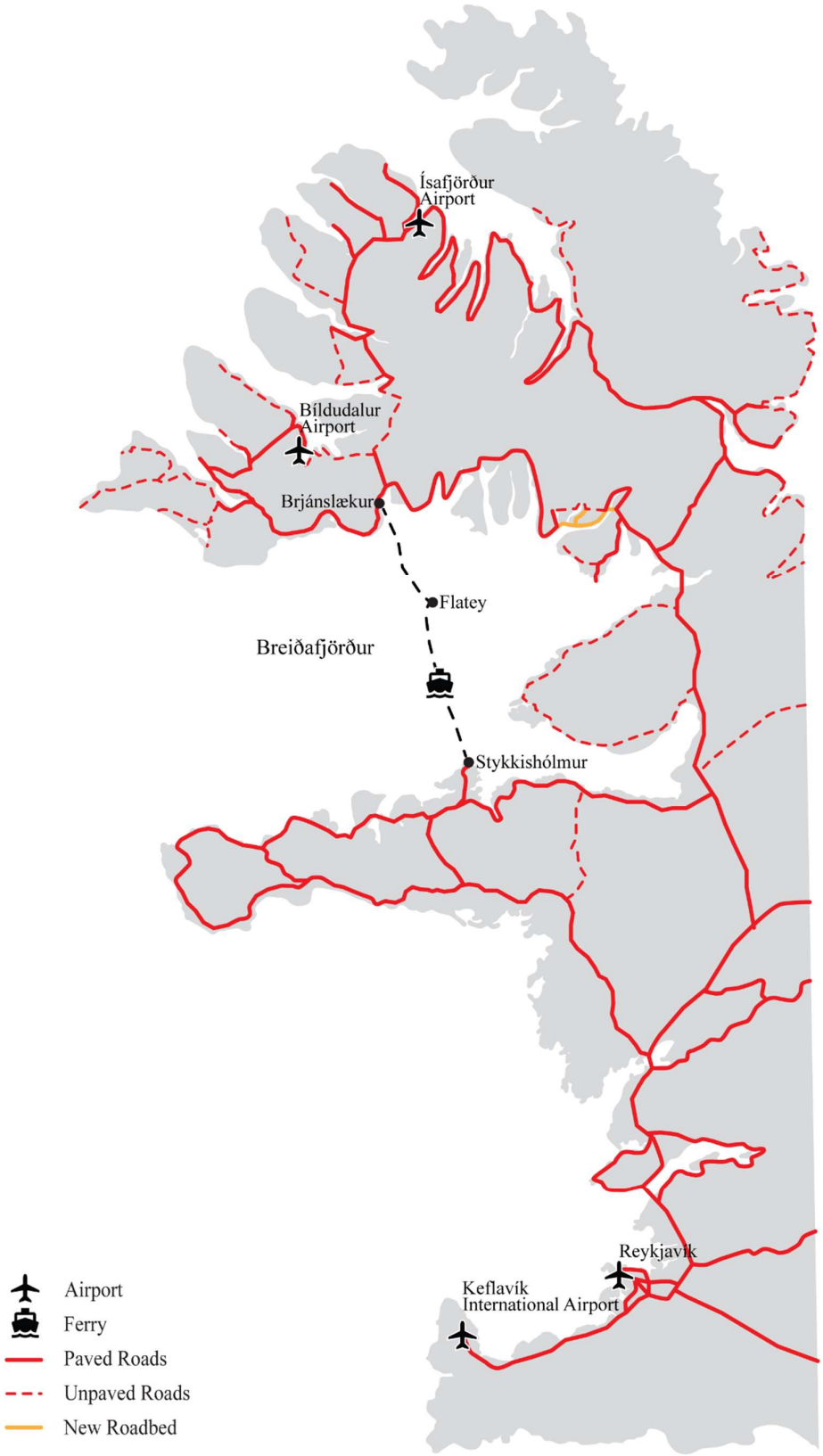


Figure 6 Connecting points of V-Barð. Map: ÞEH.

whether there should be one or a few strong and fast-growing enterprises, or many small enterprises in slow development.

People in V-Barð say that the economic contribution of tourism over the high season has even exceeded the economic contribution of the fish industry in the villages. Tourists are attracted to visit the region by its ruralness and scarcity of people, the possibility of stopping everywhere, the feeling that they can do what they want to do and being alone in nature. This connects with the idea expressed by Müller (2021) proposing that the appeal of rural areas is linked to relaxed lifestyles. In this, V-Barð is no exception to other rural or peripheral places in the world. Its main attractiveness is the rhythm and special blend that a sparsely populated place and nature can offer. A feeling of authenticity, rawness and even the past (without trying to romance it) whilst plugging in to originality and a connection with nature.

Vestfjarðaleiðin, the Westfjords Way, is a planned[3] road route along the roads of the Westfjords, which was launched simultaneously to the opening of the tunnels that connect the south and the north of the Westfjords, Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel, in October 2020. The route provides a 950 km circle around the Westfjords, extending to its outermost limits in rural places and through the centres of villages and towns. The Westfjords Way promotes slow tourism where tourists are encouraged to experience the Westfjords in a sustainable way and "sharing the way of life of people who have lived [there] for generations" (Vestfjarðaleiðin, 2023c). The Westfjords Way invites tourists to enjoy the Westfjords on a road trip which "brings together the best the area has to offer into a new experience for visitors who want to discover the real Iceland away from the crowds further south, to spend time exploring the landscape, nature and the way of life" (Vestfjarðaleiðin, 2023b). The Westfjords are promoted as authentic, that is, as "real Iceland" (ibid.), and away from the mass tourism of South Iceland. Furthermore, the Westfjords Way emphasises that tourists can spend time exploring landscapes and "nature and the way of life" (ibid.) in the Westfjords. Highlighting that, tourists are allowed to experience the rhythm of life in the Westfjords. Moreover, visitors are given "the freedom to choose where to stop and explore" (Vestfjarðaleiðin, 2023c, para. 3). Although not an avowed aim of the project it ticks all the boxes of the tourists who want to go there. According to the general report in V-Barð tourists like being allowed to go wherever and to do whatever they want, and furthermore, they love being invited to see behind the scenes, to see how the locals live their lives.

The purpose of The Westfjords Way is to promote and make tourism more sustainable in the Westfjords and West Iceland all year round. It is a challenge because of harsh weather and often poor conditions for commuting, and it is known that car rental companies tell their customers that the Westfjords are closed over the wintertime. The Westfjords Way solution is to propose two kinds of road maps, one for the summer and the other for the winter (see *Figure 7*), with different routes and destinations during each season. In this way, the Westfjords Way can make it possible to travel in the Westfjords all year around.

However, V-Barð was a tourism destination before the Westfjords Way was established, and the road trip around the Westfjords is more or less based on these earlier destinations. One

[3] The travel route is developed by regional development offices in the Westfjords, the West of Iceland (Westfjords Regional Development Office) and Visit West Iceland (Vesturlandsstofa).

of the top destinations in V-Barð is Látrabjarg bird cliff on the farthest west part of V-Barð, which also happens to be the westernmost part of Iceland. It is also the westernmost point of Europe, if the Azores islands off the shores of Portugal are not included. Látrabjarg is famous for its numbers and diversity of seabirds. Rauðisandur beach is another popular tourist attraction in V-Barð. It is a secluded yellowish red sand beach with scenery over to Látrabjarg bird cliff to the west. It is popular with visitors who come to the sandy beach to play in the waves, walk along the beach, and watch the seals that live there, with many camping at Melanes farm. From Melanes it is only a short walk to Sjöundá farm, a murder scene of the late eighteen hundreds. Icelandic travellers have enjoyed coming to Sjöundá, intrigued by the novella, Svartfugl, which Gunnar Gunnarsson wrote in 1938 about the incidents at the farm.

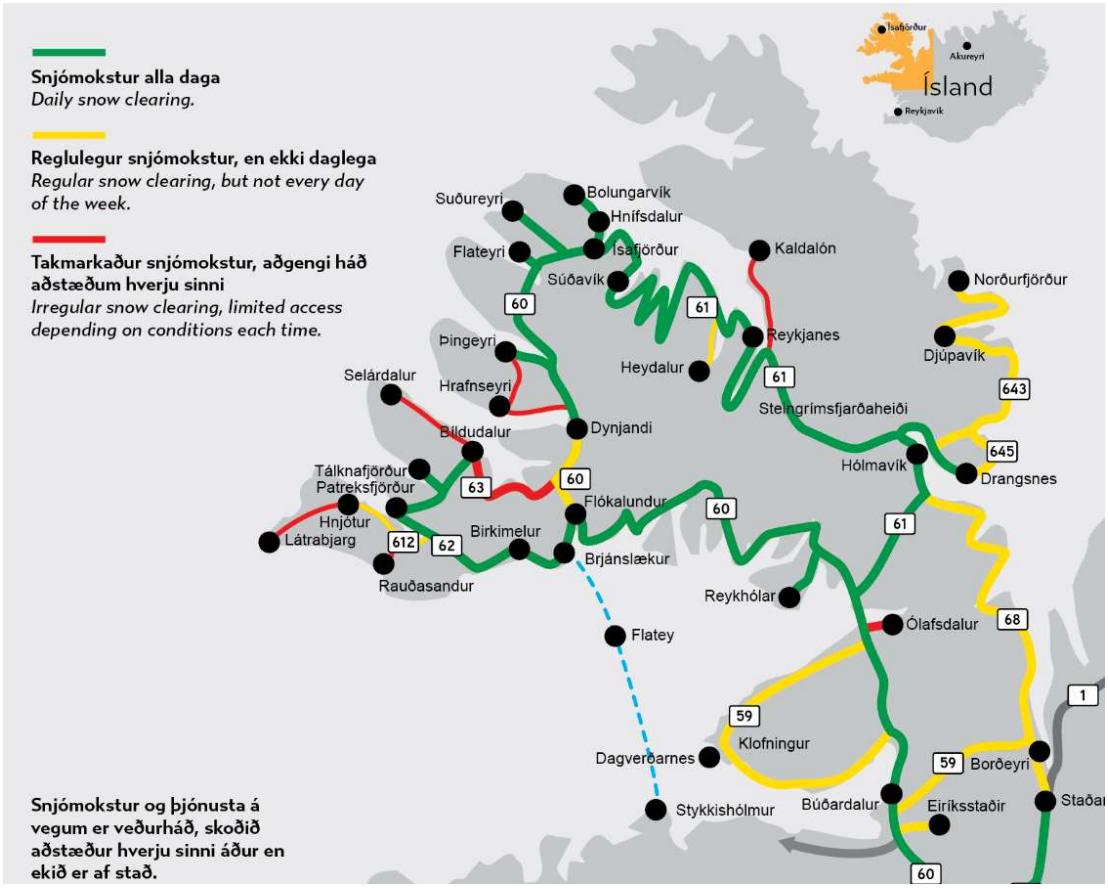


Figure 7 Vestfjarðaleiðin, the Westfjords Way, winter map. Map: Vestfjarðaleiðin (2024).

Dynjandi waterfall is the leading tourist destination in the Westfjords, with 109,481 visitors coming throughout the year in 2023 (Ólafsson & Þórhallsdóttir, 2024). Following the connection of the Westfjords through the Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel, the road to Dynjandi is open year round. Dynjandi is not officially part of V-Barð but is relatively close. Visitors staying in V-Barð often make a visit to Dynjandi while staying there. Indeed, the travel route of many visitors to the Westfjords consists of sailing over Breiðafjörður fjord using the ferry, Baldur, then staying over for one or two nights in V-Barð, with a drive to Dynjandi included,

then heading back south driving along the shores of Breiðafjörður.[4] This route also includes another famous destination mentioned earlier, Flatey island in Breiðafjörður. The old village in Flatey and the rhythm of life on the island attracts travellers from all over. Flatey, like Dynjandi, blurs the borders of V-Barð in this sense, as it is a part of coming and going to and from V-Barð. Travellers visiting both sites are very likely to be staying in and travelling around V-Barð.

Before going into more details about the field and outcome of the research, it is now timely to describe the methodology of the thesis.

1.5 Methodology

Built on the urge to write the thesis, its ontological foundations are in relational materialism (Jóhannesson et al., 2012) which focuses on relations and that we humans are a part of the world we inhabit. This ontological understanding is emphasised by talking about more-than-humans to bring forth that there is more to the world than humans and that other agencies should be recognised. Relational materialism explores relations and recognises more-than-human agency (Valtonen & Rantala, 2020). As mentioned earlier I gained this understanding through a mixture of walking and writing my hiking book and through thinking it through with, what for me were, new theories and concepts of relational materialism. I felt one with the landscape and understood my part in making the landscape and being made by it.

The methodology of collecting data is a part of the ontological standpoint and relies on producing data in a special way, the way the relational approach allows for, for instance walking with landscape feeling its rhythms, reading maps and connecting with earlier wayfarers as I talk about in Chapter 3. The title of the thesis, *Thinking with place making in V-Barð, Iceland*, underlines its ontological approach and methodology. In the thesis I open up to relationalities of place making (Rantala et al., 2020) and use methods of collecting data which support it.

It can be argued that this approach allows for storytelling to grasp place making in these times of ecological crisis (ibid.; Haraway, 2016). By telling stories about more-than-human relations it is possible to learn about these relations and to use them to analyse these relations and let them guide us to the future. Storytelling is an ongoing theme in the thesis, and I use it for example to talk about human–nature relations in V-Barð in Chapter 2 and hospitality in Chapter 5. Stories that I call vignettes are present in all the chapters and I will account for them later in this chapter.

My methodological approach of walking and researching with embodied knowledge of material relationality, shaped the research in the beginning. Ethnographic field research is an umbrella concept for academic research within the social sciences and uses different approaches to describe understanding and knowledge about human societies (Loseke, 2017). I was familiar with ethnographic field research from my master's studies in anthropology, and in the research that training provided techniques that enabled me to gather data through interviews and participatory observations. Analysis of pre-existing data, for example maps and media coverage, have also been used. In the following I will explain further the main

[4] That is, if they do not drive the whole circle of the Westfjords as promoted by the Westfjords Way.

methodological approaches I have used, beginning with a reflection on myself as the research tool.

1.5.1 Reflexivity

Returning to the title of the thesis, *Thinking with place making in V-Barð, Iceland*, which refers to the approach of the research, where "with" relates to me as the researcher being a part of the place making. It means that I follow the place making through and am included in the field and visible throughout the research. Jóhannesson et al. (2018) emphasise how in relational tourism studies, the researcher is entangled in the field, together with other actors that collectively create the field. This is the approach of critical proximity which "implies staying empirically close to the subject matter, opening up 'matters of fact' and acknowledging the creative potential of distributed research process" (Jóhannesson et al., 2018, p. 47). In that way, they are able to produce valuable knowledge via taking part in the making of the field and knowing it from the inside (Jóhannesson et al., 2018). This approach gives space for care where, by the researcher partaking in the field, (s)he is encouraged to live well and care for the field (ibid.).

Being a part of V-Barð all my life, puts me in a particular situation within the research field. I have always had a close connection with the field, even though, for me, it has only been a research field for a short while. Furthermore, as I see it now, I am considered a part of the community in some sense and there are people in V-Barð that call me "sveitungi" – "compatriot". This is not least because of my interactions with the field by writing the hiking book, guiding hikers in V-Barð and doing the research with all that it has required, for example, harvesting and taking part in collective gatherings of locals. Additionally, this occurs because it is the place that I come from and where I frequently visit. In that sense, I am a part of the place, and the place is a part of me. These strong relations to the field put me in the position of accounting for my positionality, which I have done previously in *1.3. Positionality,* on page 5.

As I have continued with my research, Brynhilds Granås words from a doctoral seminar in Alta, Norway, early on in my doctoral studies, have popped up in my mind: "Do you dare to disturb the universe?" she asked the attendees. There have been times in my research when I asked myself: "Do I dare?!" Not least because in following my data, I cannot but be honest and try to be true. The situation of the researcher as a part of the field can be complicated, for example, when bringing forth subjects that the community does not agree on. The researcher's position is thus to address subjects from different perspectives. But they are subjects that appear directly from the field without me picking them up. I would say that at first it was rather the other way around, that I tried to avoid these. This shows how difficult it can be to stay proximate, and I would think that it also shows how problematic it can be to retain distance, it also makes me wonder if that is necessary? Jóhannesson et al. (2018) argue that "if we appreciate that research, and fieldwork for that matter, is performative engagement, proximity rather than distance becomes critical for making knowledge valuable" (p. 47).

Researching with proximity means connecting and staying connected and knowing the place inside and out (Rantala et al., 2023; Rantala et al., 2020). That was the case when I was researching V-Barð. I know how the isolation and snow blizzards hit you in the wintertime in that place, and how spring and summer arrive, and everything is released. I have been

emotionally affected by the downfall of the place and understand how empowering it is when people start moving back there and believing in it again. I also know how the place becomes another place which touches on other issues than when you live there, when it is a place for walking, and when it is a place of research. By staying proximate and a part of V-Barð, I am capable of bringing forth knowledge that is valuable for academia and for V-Barð as a place.

I will now explain the main research format and methods I used, which are as follows: 1) ethnographic field research, 2) participant observations, 3) interviews, 4) walking methodology, 5) written records, and 6) map analysis.

1.5.2 Ethnographic field research

The research is an ethnographic field research study where, through staying in the field in V-Barð, I used diverse research methods to gather data to understand how locals and tourists see the place, what matters, and how it is to be there and take part in daily life. Furthermore, I analysed place name archives, maps, and media to gain a better insight into specific parts of the research. For example, in Chapter 3 about walking and analysing maps and place name archives and likewise in Chapter 2 about human–nature relations in V-Barð, where I use media to gather perspectives and news on these relations in Iceland. I will now explain the specific methods of the research in more detail.

Participant observation

According to Ingold (2013), participant observation "is a way of knowing *from the inside*" (p. 5), that is, observation takes place with the participation of the researcher in the field. While in the field, I noted down the informal interviews I undertook with locals and tourists. This information gave a new perspective on mobilities within the Westfjords and the perspectives of locals and tourists in situ. These informal interviews took place while I was carrying out field research or participant observation. I carried out between twenty and thirty field visits during the main data gathering in 2018, and during the following years until I had finished writing the thesis. I think it is safe to say that I visited the field once a month throughout the research period, but often in a double role as a researcher and a daughter visiting her mother. It is difficult to distinguish between these roles, but I seldom went there and practiced only one of those roles, rather I was there as a hybrid of the researcher and the local that I am. Along the way, a rhythm of researching and visiting emerged. Often I would go to stay with my mother or in my nearby cottage for up to a month at a time, working on the research, writing, and reading, as well as gathering data. I worked during the day and in the afternoon and evenings, my mother and I enjoyed being together.

In 2018, field research was conducted in popular tourist sites such as Látrabjarg bird cliff, Dynjandi waterfall, Flatey island, Rauðisandur beach and the Samúel Jónsson's Sculpture Garden in Ketildalir. Additionally, the villages and countryside areas, popular hiking trails, swimming pools and hot tubs were included, along with visits to hotels, guesthouses, tourist offices, museums, exhibitions, and a cultural house. I visited some of these sites several times as I sought to see them from different angles and in different seasons. To achieve that I, for example, visited Dynjandi on a "regular day" when the visitors were only people who had driven, cycled, or walked there themselves, and I also visited on a "cruise ship day", when the majority of visitors were cruise ship passengers (see *Figure 8*). I took pictures, made some drawings, wrote and recorded field notes, talked to people, and generally observed the places and their movements over time from different perspectives.

Figure 8 Travellers at Dynjandi waterfall on a "cruise ship day". Image: EBE.

As part of the MoM project, I went to the field in V-Barð with members from the research team on three occasions, in August 2021, May 2022 and June 2023. During the field trips we stayed at Hótel Flókalundur, at Hótel West in Patreksfjörður, and in Stekkaból Guesthouse in Patreksfjörður. We travelled around V-Barð in various weather conditions including heavy rain, snowstorms, during a yellow weather warning, and occasionally in calm weather. I was glad that the group was able to gain this insight into the field and how it was to stay there in various circumstances. The group also gained the embodied experience of the drive from Reykjavík to V-Barð, incorporating the empirical involvement of the group in travelling the gravel and steep mountain roads as drivers or passengers.

In 2018, I had carefully chosen to gather data during the high tourist season, which was also in line with my summer vacation from work.[5] However, I had forgotten to consider that this was also high season for the people I was going to interview, who serviced the tourists, farmed the land, or staffed the museums. Everyone was occupied in their daily lives and had little time for me. This gave me a reason to ponder about timing and the seasonal rhythm in V-Barð, and before I knew it, I was participating in activities with farmers, gathering hay and later sheep from their summer grazing. It was a rainy summer and when days were dry, it meant heavy work for farmers who were often also tourist service providers. This was helpful for understanding the field, its rhythms, and the revelation of preferences, whereby research and a researcher were only a problem if they could not help. This became clear to me as I bounced up and down a field, steering a tractor to turn the hay for drying. It was an

[5] At the time I had a full-time job at the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of Iceland.

important reminder that time and rhythm in V-Barð was more related to the elements than I had become used to while living elsewhere for a long time.

Participant observation made me exhausted physically and sympathetic towards my old car when driving the steep gravel roads of V-Barð. I could sense the steepness of the roads in the struggle of the car as I drove up the mountain roads between the settlements, as well as the bumpiness of the old gravel roads through the outback of the county to reach Samúel Jónsson's Sculpture Garden in Arnarfjörður. It took me well over half an hour to drive the eight km from Bíldudalur village. From the beginning of the research process and to the end of it, the feeling of driving to or in V-Barð had become easier. Improvements have been made to the road system, with bridges over fjords, and lowland roads or tunnels instead of mountain roads, which changed how I feel about driving there.

Interviews

To gain an understanding from the perspective of local people regarding tourism, matters of concern, and life in general in V-Barð, I interviewed selected people. The interviews helped in tuning into the place (Bursta et al., 2023) as well as gaining an understanding of perceptions and attitudes of the participants which provided "a backdrop for [my] own experiences" (Bursta et al., 2023, p. 7). At first, I selected the participants to get the broadest possible view at stake, applying the purported funnel method in gathering data at the beginning of the research. I used theoretical sampling (Bryman, 2016) when choosing participants. I set up interviews with people connected with tourism and the governance of V-Barð, for example hotel managers, people working in museums, tourist operators, rangers, specialists, and the Vesturbyggð Municipality Council to gather perspectives from stakeholders in tourism and also public officials. The method of gathering data developed as the research matured. When I interviewed people, I asked them if they had any suggestions regarding other participants, based on what we had been talking about. I got good suggestions on further participants and used these along with those I found for myself when it became clear something was lacking when analysing the data. At first I used snowball sampling, where one participant points to another. Later I used theoretical sampling where the choice of participants is based on what already is there and what is lacking (ibid.). I started with six participants which I had chosen beforehand and ended up with twenty-two when saturation was achieved. More information about the interviews and other data collection is in appendix 1.

The participants were informed about their rights and gave their informed approval for participation in the research. Interviews were most often undertaken at the interviewees' homes or their workplaces. I kept a research diary where I noted down my thoughts immediately after the interviews and sketched the place we were at, or some details of it. The interviews were semi-structured (Bryman, 2016); that is, I had a research frame where I had beforehand noted the outlines of what I wanted to ask about. I tried to let the interviews flow in a relaxed way and used the research frame as a reminder. Interviews were recorded, typed, and read frequently. The researchers' notes were written, and the data was analysed using open coding during the data collection process. Researchers' notes are important analytical tools, showing what the data contains and how the researcher understands the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I used the *Atlas.ti* analysing tool for further coding, the writing of researcher's memos, and further analysis. The data was thematically analysed to establish the main themes of the research, with axes coding being used (Bernard, 2017) to look at other themes through the main themes. Towards the end of the analysing, specific structuring

was used to determine the focus more precisely and the connections between the main findings.

In 2018, I had a focus group meeting with the Town Council of Vesturbyggð to introduce my research and ask the council questions about the research subject of V-Barð. We talked about the same subjects that I interviewed other participants about, and I used the same research framework. As Vesturbyggð Municipality supports the MoM-project, they were keen to express their opinions on the matter and to discuss them.

Ethical questions regarding the research are for instance comprised of the way participants are addressed, that is, whether they are addressed at all. This concerns protecting the interest of the interviewees and preventing them from being impacted by their participation in the research in any way (Kvale, 1996). When addressing the interviewees, I sometimes talk directly about them using their name and their connection to the field because those participants have given their approval to being referred to in that manner. At other times, I do not name the participants because it is unimportant to the research. I also wish to protect the anonymity of interviewees if it does not matter who said what, because V-Barð is a small community.

Walking methodology

Lund (2005) and Edensor (2010) argue that walking is a key to the landscape for the researcher, who not only explores it with experienced researcher's eyes and mind, but with the sensation of the bodily feeling of walking. Walking is a holistic experience for the walker. It connects the body with sensations, experience, memory, ideas, and connection to more-than-humans, and its interaction with the environment (Edensor, 2010). Vergunst (2013) stresses how the politics of landscapes can be revealed by walking, where the pedestrian body feels the rhythms and affordances of landscapes, and, Lund and Willson (2010) continue this, saying that the horizon and whole perspective of the surroundings moves with the walker. Furthermore, Lund and Willson (2008; 2010) stress how "the landscape and the walker's body are integrated in each other in a togetherness, not to be separated" (p. 106) in the rhythm of the walk. Here it is the "ongoing sensual dialogue" (Lund & Willson, 2010, p. 97) of the body with the environment that creates the rhythm which emphasises that the walker is with his surroundings.

Walking as a research method gives new perspectives and insights into a place. A sense of rhythm, navigation, time, development, layers, and lines. Walking is significant for that kind of knowledge and uncovers things that could not be revealed otherwise. According to researchers Springgay and Truman, walking is "a way of inhabiting a place through the lived experience of the moment […] a way of becoming responsive to a place; it activates modes of participation that are situated and relational" (2018, p. 4). It is walking-with which opens up to the more-than-human relations of walking and highlights the connections and interactions of walkers with their surroundings (Rantala et al., 2020).

In this case, the old routes of V-Barð refer to the past mobilities of humans and are thus about human societies. It is about how humans in V-Barð were connected, about their mobilities, and how they found their ways in the landscapes of V-Barð. Armstrong talks about spectral ethnography in abandoned places and cultural spaces. Furthermore, he points out how it "sees beyond the boundaries of actually spoken language and direct human contact to the interplay between space, place, objects, and temporality" (Armstrong, 2010,

pp. 249-250). Armstrong explains it thus: “When understanding and analysing the spaces of culture, it is important to see the layers of ghosts that accumulate in the paths made by human movement through time and space” (Armstrong, 2010, p. 250). Armstrong talks about “*ghost texts*” (ibid.) that lead us into their “haunted landscapes” (ibid.) and how it is important to follow and take them into consideration when “imagining the complex and varied spaces of spectrality and culture” (ibid.). In relation to this, Lund (2008) stresses how “[w]alking can be seen as a narrative process that weaves together time and space” (p. 97) for they connect the past and the future. Archaeologists Aldred and Lucas describe this well: “walking a beaten path […] reveals the shared “space” not only between past and present […] but also between different bodies” (2018, p. 25). In that way, old routes can reveal the rhythm of the human body moving along an old route where the affordance of the body differs with different terrain and landscapes (Edensor, 2010).

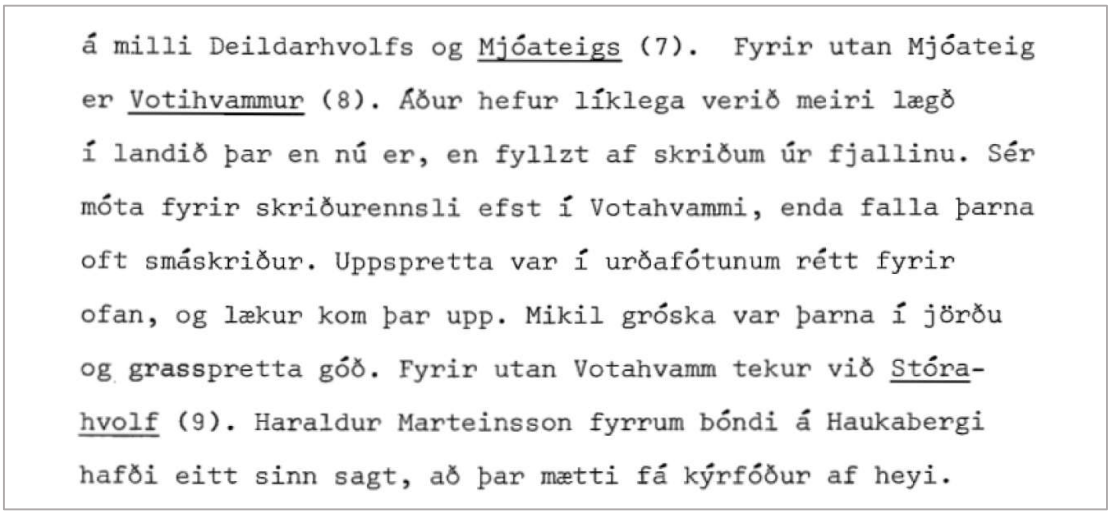
Walking the old routes of V-Barð connected me to the landscape in a way that I had not experienced before. It was the notion of walking into past mobilities of the old routes in V-Barð, its rhythms, and relations. During the research I walked two thirds of the old routes of V-Barð following oral and written resources, old maps, waymarker cairns, and visible traces in the landscape. Walking the old mobility routes of V-Barð revealed a different place than travelling in modern ways by car, boat, or airplane. It opened old realities and created new ones. The proximity to the landscape the method afforded, gave a special feeling of rhythm, connections, knowing-ones-way by learning to “read” the landscape, and additionally by being-with in a more-than-human way when walking-with (Rantala et al., 2020), and recognising being connected as a part of the surroundings.

As a part of my research, I stayed at the University of Melbourne for five months in 2019 as a fellow researcher at the School of Geography, Earth, and Atmospheric Sciences. While there, I took part in a pre-conference event of the *Walking Pedagogy Conference* in Melbourne, Australia in 2019: the Whau Conversations: Hikoi – a walking workshop with academics and artists from New Zealand. We were taken on a walk in the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne in late November 2019, which was structured to make participants notice their surroundings differently to the way they did when they were walking ordinarily. It was a transformative walking experience for me. A few years later I guided several walks of this kind along the old routes, seashores, and scrubs and lakes of V-Barð. On these walks, I changed the rhythm of the research to a focus group where the participants talked about their experience of the walks. The experience of these walking participants, changed how I saw the place in many ways because they noticed other things than I was used to seeing and putting forth (Bursta et al., 2023). Via that, the place gained a deeper and different meaning through seeing it through the eyes of strangers. It was noticeable how the embodied sensation of walking, and the group that walked together, made an impact on the participants in that they felt a sense of having been with both the landscape and the group (Einarsdóttir & Lund, 2023c). The rhythms varied among the groups. Walking with children, although it always lowered the tempo of the walk, made the walking more exploratory. This included the use of a totally different bodily expression. On one such walk, the children walking with me by the seashore decided to swim in the sea along the shore all the way to our destination, well over four km.

Reading place name archives

Place names are a key to the connection between humans and landscape. With place names humans try to capture the links, and they try to organise their surroundings to facilitate their

world. Basso (1996) argues that humans and their surroundings are integrated and it is impossible to talk about one without the other. The landscape has inflected humans, Basso (1996) further stressing that their history is in the landscape and influences their thinking. In that way, it is possible to read the history of places through place names and at times they are the only reminder left of humans in the landscape.



á milli Deildarhvolfs og Mjóateigs (7). Fyrir utan Mjóateig
er Votihvammur (8). Áður hefur líklega verið meiri lægð
í landið þar en nú er, en fyllzt af skriðum úr fjallinu. Sér
móta fyrir skriðurennsli efst í Votahvammi, enda falla þarna
oft smáskriður. Uppspretta var í urðafótunum rétt fyrir
ofan, og lækur kom þar upp. Mikil gróska var þarna í jörðu
og grasspretta góð. Fyrir utan Votahvamm tekur við Stóra-
hvolf (9). Haraldur Marteinsson fyrrum bóndi á Haukabergi
hafði eitt sinn sagt, að þar mætti fá kýrfóður af heyi.

Figure 9 A part of a place name archive, with the names of places underlined.[6] *(Hafsteinsdóttir, 1978). Image: EBE.*

Place name archives are primary data. Usually, they are old oral sources that have commuted between generations, but new generations have also contributed to and named places. Since the twentieth century, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum (Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies (AMI)) has systematically collected place names from local people in Iceland and made them accessible online at *nafnid.is*. This resource makes it possible to access place name archives from most farms in Iceland, with these being arranged by counties and districts (AMI, 2010). An example of a place name file can be seen in *Figure 9*, with a translation available in the footnotes.

In the research, I used place name archives from Barðaströnd (Barðastrandarhreppur district) and connecting places in V-Barð. There were about eighty files of place names from the area from 1931 to 2010, some were handwritten but most of them typed. There would be up to four files about the same farm and other files combined some farms, even though they did not have the same owner. Many of the files were just a list of place names with numbers that matched a list at the end of the document, a kind of index, with occasional further explanations, but very few. The younger place name archives were based on or compared to

[6] "between Deildarhvolf and Mjóateigs (7). Beyond Mjóiteigur is Votihvammur (8). Probably there was more subsidence in the land before, but must have been filled with landslides from the mountain. Traces of landslides are visible at the top of Votihvammur, small landslides often fall there. A water source was in the hill above, and a stream came up there. The earth was fertile and a lot of grass growing. Stórahvolf (9) is beyond Votihvammur. Haraldur Marteinsson, a former farmer in Haukaberg, once said that it would be possible to get grassing's for a cow over a whole winter (kýrfóður) there" (Hafsteinsdóttir, 1978).

the older ones, with better references about where the places were to be found in the landscape and sometimes an explanation about a place name.

I read the place name archives from Barðaströnd and compared them to maps of the area and to the landscape that I walked. In that way, I could often easily see how the old landscape was "shaped" through how human activities were associated with the landscape. In other places the landscape "lit up" with meaning when the place names were added. "Reading" the landscape with the place names deepened my approach to it and made it come alive, as place names, for example, tell of life, events, or incidents in the past. For example, place names in V-Barð convey where it was good to harvest, where the best fishing grounds were, where not to go and where it was safe, together with places where accidents happened and what people believed in. Place names are artefacts about everyday life in the agricultural and fishing society of V-Barð.

Map analysis

Aldred and Lucas (2018) write about the use of maps for research. They propose a method of maps being looked at as media, through which we can see "patterning and materiality of the landscape by noting continuity and change (for example, through map regression or a comparison of historic and modern maps)" (p. 29-30). They use an old archaeological metaphor of the landscape, palimpsest (Crawford, 1922 ; Hoskins, 1984), to feature the relationship between maps and landscape. In this way they show how landscape can be seen as "both *meaningful* text which can be read, but also as a *material* text which has been written and re-written multiple times" (Aldred & Lucas, 2018, pp. 20-21). This, they stress, brings forth the understanding of the landscape "as a contemporaneous assemblage; less a static record of a one-dynamic landscape, and more of a polychronic ensemble that nods to the past and to the future through the present" (ibid. p. 22). Aldred and Lucas emphasise that maps are more than a two-dimensional Cartesian artifact, which to their understanding has misled the discussion and phenomenology of maps, ignoring their manifolded making and use. Maps are tools in interrelation to their makers, readers, and landscape, and they are constantly transformed through their use (Aldred & Lucas, 2018). It is this interrelation of landscape and maps, and their diverse perspectives that make them meaningful as research tools.

Maps are mediators of the moving body and the landscape (ibid.). As such, and along with contemporary maps, I use them to elucidate the changing mobilities of V-Barð through the ages. This approach might also incorporate a fourth dimension where driving the modern roads comes into consideration. During the research, I drove all the modern roads in V-Barð, from the well-travelled asphalt roads which are the main roads in the region, to the little-travelled gravel roads into the rural areas of the county. But with the map analysis, I looked mainly at the maps themselves, although the experience of the walking and driving was invariably a part of how I sensed the field. Additionally, when looking for past routes on the maps I would know where to find them due to my previous walking.

In the research I looked at maps of Iceland and especially of the Westfjords and V-Barð (see for example, *Figure 10*) at diverse sources; maps.is; maps at the National Library in Iceland; Maps at The Royal Library in Denmark; and a map from the National Archives in Iceland (Gunnlaugsson, 1884). I obtained contemporary maps from Google Maps and the Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration (IRCA) (IRCA, 2023). In respect of the old maps, I especially searched for ones with routes on them and found that these appeared on maps

quite early. I studied 38 further maps, from the V-Barð area, from the years of 1743 to 1948. Maps from different times show different routes because they have different sources (Sigurðsson, 1982). Together, they show up to 36 routes between regions and farms in V-Barð, most of which are still known today or are still noticeable in the landscape. I searched for old routes, where they were, whether they were named, or the route was drawn on the map but without a name. I found that the main routes within V-Barð were usually in the "right place" on the maps, that is, how they still exist today with waymarking cairns, drains, and ramps through rough terrains. Many of the route names still remain, and they have been known routes between settlements in V-Barð since the earliest maps I examined were made.

Figure 10 Map from Björn Olsen and Oluf Nicolai, 1840, showing V-Barð and A-Barð with triangular measurements. Map: Olsen and Nicolai (1840).

This brought me further to analyse the maps with references to historical occurrences. How the old routes and modern roads came to be as they are today. Further, how they represent the mobilities of the place. This knowledge was hidden in the old routes and maps and revealed by walking the old routes, drawing the line of wayfaring (Ingold, 2016) on a map afterwards and analysing the maps in the research process.

1.5.3 Vignettes

The ontological approach of relational materialism allows for storytelling to bring forth more-than-human relations, tension and possible futures (Haraway, 2016; Nadegger, 2023). In the thesis I use long and short stories, vignettes, that have that purpose, but also to summon the reader to the text and to emphasise the field and the rhythm of the fieldwork. I kept a research diary while in the field, in which I wrote my thoughts and other things, as well as sketching the field or something related to it. The vignettes are mainly from my research diary, but other longer stories that are important to the thesis are also included. The stories are a part of the method I use and as such vital to the thesis and the story I am telling with it.

I designate the vignettes with italic fonts so that I do not need to clarify them each time. There is no order as to how or where the vignettes appear, and I have inserted them where I think they suit and give a deeper meaning to the text. The vignettes also set the scene for what is to come, that is, to help the reader to engage in the text and the story I am telling. It is my hope that the vignettes enrich the text whilst making it more creative. Furthermore, that they help the reader to "live through" the stories of the thesis.

1.6 Structure

The structure of the thesis is designed to answer the question of place making from different perspectives. In the first chapter, *A place: Introduction,* I have presented the motivation for the thesis, its aims and research questions. I have also positioned myself in the field, introduced the research field, and talked about its methodology. Now, I will describe the analysis of the thesis. The relational materialism approach of the thesis opens up to more-than-human relations as it sees humans as a part of the world but not apart from it. Thus, more-than-human brings forth the relations that matter, which humans are a part of among other actors. In Chapter *2,* Human–*nature relations in V-Barð,* I briefly introduce what it means to recognise the more-than-human relations and how this can be approached through storytelling. I then present three manifestations of these relations in V-Barð and how they make the place through different human–nature connections. Firstly, through how nature is a resource for human lives to thrive. In V-Barð, nature is handled in both domestic and capitalistic terms. In this, I take the example of the newest economic sector in V-Barð, aquaculture, where salmon is cultivated in open sea cages for markets around the world. Secondly, I consider situations where nature is an obstacle that can be dangerous and take lives and it has to be controlled to reduce risk to human life. I use the example of avalanche fences in Patreksfjörður village which fence off the village beneath the steep mountain above it, creating a shelter for the human settlement. Thirdly, I consider situations where nature is seen as fragile and in need of protection. I use the case of recent debate about revoking the status of Vatnsfjörður as a nature conservation in the area in order to build a hydropower plant. Conservation has another value or rhythm than the community, but it still puts nature in the situation of being domestic and something that humans are responsible for.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 are dedicated to the discussion of place making from different perspectives. Old routes and contemporary roads show one kind of relations and development of a place. In Chapter *3*, *Examining place mobilities through walking and map analysis* I explore two kinds of mobility lines in V-Barð, the old routes and pathways, and modern roads. I follow them by walking, driving, map analysing, and analysing place name archives. Finally, I look at them through historical occurrences to bring forth the mobilities of V-Barð. This approach helps in depicting the constant mobilities of the place through the ages.

In Chapter *4*, *Road Encounters* I look at the central matters of concern for the people living in V-Barð, which are its transport connections, that is, the road. Here I look at the road to and from V-Barð from two perspectives. On the one hand as a connection between two places and, on the other hand, as a place where different encounters of more-than-human take place. This brings forth the power relations that affect the place, its position on the margins, and the opportunities and challenges people perceive about its development.

Additionally, the development and mobilities of V-Barð and how it is constantly changing is included.

Interviewees expressed that travellers like to visit V-Barð to be alone in nature and free to stop everywhere and do whatever they like. Chapter *5, A place of hospitality* is about how this "intention" of tourists interacts with the hospitality V-Barð affords. Here I examine the encounters of hosts, guests, and places in V-Barð with a particular focus on the tradition of the outdoor access rights of the public or the Everyone's Right, according to which visitors have free access to traverse private lands. Moreover, I bring forth the complexity of host-guest encounters and mutual obligations of recognition through philosophical discussion of hospitality.

I conclude the thesis in Chapter *6, Conclusion* where I answer the main research question. Furthermore, I bring forth the main findings of the thesis and its contribution to the field. Finally, I discuss the limitations of the research, and further research ideas.

2 Human–nature relations in V-Barð

The landscape of V-Barð is characterised by mountain ridges, steep mountainsides and scant lowlands. Settlement is widespread over the county with the population residing in three villages and in the countryside, where the location depends upon being close to rich fishing grounds, good harbour conditions, and land areas for farming. The possible danger lurking from steep mountains above the settlement does not seem to have been an issue when the villages were established, although there was also not much choice. The settlement in V-Barð has grown and been formed by the primary processing economy in the context of economic systems that have changed with the situation of the community and mechanisation. With modernisation, a capitalist market economy has left its mark on the region's infrastructure, as well as on the construction of economic sectors related to the fishing industry, agriculture, tourism and, over the last decade, aquaculture. They are the indicators and cornerstones of human life in V-Barð today and, as such, their prosperity is often a question of life and death for the community. These livelihoods are also examples of manifestations of human–nature relations in the region, which is the subject of this chapter.

My interest in human–nature relations in V-Barð was one of the motivations for this research. It gained momentum when I was introduced to the thinking of relational materialism through actor-network theory (ANT) which, for me, opened up a new way of thinking about human–nature relations. One of the premises of the ANT approach is that everything is connected and reliant on relations, although it does not mean that everything is connected to everything else, as Latour (1996, p. 10) stresses. Relational materialism recognises more-than-human agency, or as Latour (1996) frames it, ANT "does not limit itself to human individual actors but extends the word actor – or actant – to non-human, non-individual entities" (p. 2). ANT underlines how the social and natural aspects are acting together, for it takes nature to be an individual actor and recognises humans as a part of nature. This is important considering the aims of the research about placemaking, where mobilities are strongly involved, for mobilities of places are enacted through human–nature connections, and in such a context locals and others do not always agree concerning where the community is heading or should be heading. In this chapter I examine mobilities in this context, asking: *How is V-Barð, Iceland, shaped through human–nature relations?* My approach will be to convey this by telling stories about human–nature relations in V-Barð that reflect mobilities and possible pathways for the place to move forwards into the future.

I begin the discussion on relational terms in Chapter *2.1., Human–nature relations in the Anthropocene*, which lays the foundation for the argument regarding the conceptual and methodological approach of the thesis, together with how it is related to the method of telling stories. In Chapters 2.2.–2.4, I follow three stories of human–nature relations that shape(d) V-Barð as a place. Firstly, in Chapter *2.2., To utilise – aquaculture*, the relations are centred on domestic perspectives and nature as a resource for humans to thrive. Secondly, in Chapter *2.3., To avoid and contain – avalanche fences*, where these relations take on more dangerous terms for humans, wherein nature is dangerous and must be contained by humans. Thirdly, in Chapter *2.4., To protect – conservation*, yet another appearance of human–nature relations is looked at, which rests on conservational terms whereby humans protect parts of nature against other usage on behalf of themselves. This can be related to a newer kind of utilisation

or anthropocentrism where nature is conserved for the benefit of tourism. These connections contribute to V-Barð as a place and have been textured in the landscapes and mobilities of V-Barð. The approach brings forth the place via a different spectrum of diverse relations and gives insight into the understanding of locals in V-Barð regarding human–nature relations which will then be summarised in Chapter *2.4., Multivocality*.

2.1 Human–nature relations in the Anthropocene

Humans and nature are impenetrably connected as they are of the same material and pertain to Earth. Pálsson (2017) talks about the proximity of the Earth with human life and uses the concept of *geosociality* for this "unbroken connection between the earth and humans, the planet and human life" (2017, p. 24). Doing so, he stresses the connection of geos and bios. Humans are, in this sense geosocial beings. Yusoff (2013) argues that the social connections, and the geological connections are thus created simultaneously. Therefore, according to Clark and Yusoff, "thinking [of] the becomings of earth and society together might" (2017, p. 6) be the key to understanding the relation of earth and society. This underlines that their becomings go together. This has not always been so in Western thinking, where humans and nature have been considered apart and not together (Pratt, 2007) which has coloured the western "ways of knowing and being" (Lien & Law, 2011, p. 69). In the late twentieth century, the understanding of humans as a part of nature gained momentum, and scholars in science, technology and feminist studies began to recognise and write about how the world makes humans, and humans remake the world (Wright, 2015). Recently, this understanding is becoming more widespread in tourism studies. Over the last decade, scholars across disciplinary boundaries started to explore the links between tourism and earthly relations, using relational studies and the concept of proximity (Gren & Huijbens, 2015; Gren & Huijbens, 2012; Huijbens, 2014, 2021; Rantala et al., 2023). Their starting point is recognising the unbalance of Earth and trying to find ways to present the complex situation of human–nature relations and move forward with the prosperity of life on Earth in mind.

The entanglements of humans and nature have been actualised in the era of the Anthropocene, the epoch where humankind has become a geological force because of its influences on Earth (Crutzen, 2002). These entanglements are, for example, characterised by global warming, with consequences on ecosystems and extreme weathers. Büscher and Fletcher argue that "[t]he Anthropocene idea is meant to indicate that [humankind is] living through socio-ecological transformations so fundamental that they – quite literally – change the very geological structure of our planet" (2019, p. 283). This is, however, not entirely related to humans as a species, because humans existed on Earth long before the Anthropocene (Tsing, 2015), and it was not until they had the technology to really make the difference that humans started over-mastering the Earth. Having said that, there has always been overexploitation and even extinctions throughout the history of human–nature relations. To be accurate, five extinctions occurred without the interference of humans or other species. Perhaps the most important thing here is that humans did not know about their effect on the Earth until now. The socio-ecological crisis of the Anthropocene is associated with the ways of life of humans, and the political ideology of capitalism where the quality of human life and prosperity materialises in economic growth (Tsing, 2015; Weber, 2019). This is why Haraway (2016) has invented her own term for this epoch, calling it the

Capitolocene, whereby she addresses the premise of the crisis, that is, capitalism. Haraway recommends laying the epochs of the Anthropocene and Capitolocene behind us and focusing upon a new epoch, which she calls the *Chthulucene*, an era where focus is placed on human–nature relations in capitalistic ruins (ibid.), which I will emphasise later in this chapter. The Anthropocene empirically confirms the understanding that humanity is a part of nature. The Anthropocene is thus double-faceted: firstly, the changes in the world that are attributable to humans and, secondly, the knowledge we have regarding the influences humans have on the planet. The knowledge puts humans in a certain position of complex responsibility, and they know what they need to stop doing for the good of the planet, but then there is the question of whether they will respond in favour of the planet?

In their book, *Arts of living on a damaged planet*, Tsing et al. (2017) write about the consequences of neglecting balance in human–nature relations, and they call these relations the monsters and ghosts of the Anthropocene. These "creatures", they stress, appear through their entanglements with humans (ibid.). Furthermore, they say that monsters and ghosts help us humans to think about our entanglements, and about the ruins we are left with, the ruins of the Anthropocene, and how we can build a viable future (ibid.). For example, Tsing et al. (2017) detect ghosts in a dead city and habits of doing things, where "[t]here is a lot of pressure to grow" (p. G2). This is due to "the vestige and signs of past ways of life [being] still charged in the present" (p. G1). They also state that "[e]very landscape is haunted by past ways of life" (p. G2). Humans remake the landscape and can turn it into monstrous or spooky environments. Humans "are willing to turn things into rubble, destroy atmospheres, sell out companion species in exchange for dreamworlds of progress" (Tsing et al., 2017, p. G2), and that creates "Anthropogenic landscapes […] haunted by imagined futures" (ibid.). Such monsters can be both good and bad. They can be wicked and kind, dependent upon our relations to them. The monsters and ghosts we will face in this chapter have many sides, as they are recognised as destructive and dangerous by some, but others see them as friendly lifegiving monsters and ghosts that belong to V-Barð and bring hope. Perspectives always vary in relation to connections.

Recent research shows how all life on Earth depends on symbiotics (e.g., Haraway, 2016; Tsing et al., 2017). Who would, for example, have believed that there are more bacteria cells in the human body than there are human cells? Life is symbiosis (Tsing et al., 2017). Life on Earth as we know it is reliant upon humans recognising these relations and opening up "to the possibility of a different kind of liveability" (Tsing et al., 2017, p. G9). In light of this, many researchers have argued for the significance of focusing on human–nature relations in and for the future (e.g., Haraway, 2016; Huijbens, 2020; Lorimer, 2015; Tsing et al., 2017; Weber, 2019). Pálsson (2020) stresses this knowledge, emphasising human–nature connections, and along with Swanson (2016), he proposes a more down to earth approach to dealing with the current situation on Earth. An approach that includes the entanglement of everyday being, thinking of one's belonging as an effect of geosocial relations. The concepts of monsters and ghosts are useful to recognise the symptoms and relations of being, for they can be the contamination of these relations (Tsing et al., 2017). Humans must notice their connections to "the co-making of living things" (Tsing et al., 2017, p. M8) and to the world around them, which they have ignored. Ingold (2023a) emphasises the importance of humans taking their place in the midst of other creatures and not apart from them. It is humans that have the knowledge about the effects they have had on Earth, which makes them responsible for life on Earth in the future and during the ongoing epoch of the Anthropocene.

Along these lines, Haraway emphasises the act of living and dying well together with other "critters" on Earth. By that she means that we are responsible for encouraging life and everything to thrive (Haraway, 2016; Weber, 2019), but she stresses we are responsible in different ways (Haraway, 2016). These responsibilities are deeply associated with belonging (Wright, 2015), and become noticeable when following the stories of human–nature relations. For the purpose of living in the Anthropocene Haraway offers a method, a way of thinking and being, to find a way forward for human–nature relations. She calls this *staying with the trouble*, which resembles the search for connectiveness, looking for relations to guide the steps of life, and learning from the telling of stories. Tsing et al. (2017) argue that recognising the connections of life on Earth, the symbiosis, is the beginning of staying with the trouble. Telling stories is also a way of staying with the trouble, and it is a fundamental thing for understanding the way of life in the Anthropocene and how to move forward (e.g., Haraway, 2016; Huijbens, 2023; Höckert, 2020; Ingold, 2023a; Tsing, 2015). Jackson (2002) stresses how storytelling is a way of "transforming private into public meanings" (p. 15), and how stories are not necessarily about what happened but an assumption of how one experiences it, and who is telling them, for stories are not fixed, rather they are interactive in the way of changing the way the world is experienced. Jackson (2002) thus prefers to talk about storytelling instead of stories with fixed endings for "[s]torytelling is a coping strategy that involves making words stand for the world, and then by manipulating them, changing one's *experience* of the world" (p. 18). Jackson's understanding of storytelling chimes with Haraway's (2016) emphasis on the importance of telling open-ended stories. For it is through storytelling that it is possible to reveal threads and find patterns which can bring forth relations and a story which creates a possible past, present, or future (Haraway, 2016). Huijbens (2023) is of the same accord and he stresses that it is humans that are telling the stories, for it cannot be the other way around, but that this does not and should not stop humans from telling stories to gain their earthly attachments. Furthermore, it does not make the stories and storytelling any less important, for they are stories of human–nature relations. Regarding this, Ingold (2023a) declares that humans are the only creatures that can bring stories of other creatures forth and "weave the stories of other lives into the living of their own" (p. 2). Although "[o]ther creatures can live their life stories, or even tell them in the living" (ibid.). Human responsibility towards earthly flourishing is thus fundamental according to Ingold (2023a). Höckert (2020) approaches storytelling with the concept of scientific fabulation (see also Haraway (2016)). Höckert "calls for openness, wonder and care towards radical otherness that creates new openings where hope, inspiration and new nuances can pour in" (2020, p. 66). In this way, Höckert stresses it is possible to stay with the trouble to find new ways with other living beings on Earth towards the future. This is why "it matters what ideas we use to think other ideas (with)" (2020, p. 10), because we can see the point that our capitalistic thoughts have brought us to. Haraway takes this further:

> It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.
>
> (Haraway, 2016, p. 12)

Staying with the trouble is an approach of finding ways, thinking, and bringing forth responsibilities and relations in times of crisis. It is a way of recognising that there is more to it than humans alone and admitting that we need new ways of thinking and researching to

be able to see the connectiveness that matters most now and for the future, because the old ways have led us astray.

I will now turn to telling some of the stories about human–nature relations that shape V-Barð as a place. These are stories that were most apparent when I was in the field: 1) Stories about aquaculture, where humans use nature as a resource. 2) Stories about avalanche fences and nature as a threat to humans which makes them vulnerable. 3) Finally, stories about conservation where parts of landscapes are protected against utilisation by humans other than for the purpose of being able to enjoy nature.

2.2 To utilise – aquaculture

2.2.1 A part of the story

The aquaculture industry is a relatively new sector in V-Barð, although some attempts at fish farming were made in the last decades of the twentieth century. In 2009, the aquaculture companies Arnarlax and Fjarðarlax, were established in Tálknafjörður and Bíldudalur, with permissible fish farming in these two fjords and Patreksfjörður (see *Figure 11*). The two companies were incorporated under the name of Arnarlax in 2016. Arnarlax is the largest aquaculture company in Iceland, but other aquacultural companies are also working in V-Barð, such as the Artic Sea Farm, whose headquarters are in Ísafjörður in the north of the Westfjords. The companies are mainly under foreign ownership, not least big Norwegian enterprises, such as SalMar ASA and MOWI ASA, which hold over 50% of the ownership (Arctic Fish, 2023; Arnarlax, 2023a). This correlates with the ArcticHub project about developing "sustainable, solution-oriented tools for reconciling models of livelihood and land-use in Artic hubs and their surroundings" (ArcticHubs, 2024, para. 1). Their report about industries in the Arctic states that "[t]he Arctic industries experience increased foreign investment and ownership" (Suopajärvi & al., 2024, p. 5), aquaculture is among these industries. Further, the development from small locally owned fish farming to big companies maintaining the majority of the industry has happened rapidly and concern has been raised about the sustainability of the industry when big companies think more about the economic sustainability than the "social or cultural sustainability" (Suopajärvi & al., 2024, p. 28). The economic growth of the aquaculture will benefit the local community less when owned by foreign companies Suopajärvi and al. (2024) continue. Currently, salmon farming is a growing industry in Iceland, with 46,000 tons being produced in the year 2021, giving Iceland the status of being the fourth biggest salmon producer in Europe, after Norway, Scotland and the Faroe Islands (Statistics Iceland, 2023b). "[T]he cultivating of salmon in open sea cages has grown from almost nothing in 2010 to 43,000 tons in 2022" (Guðmundsson et al., 2023, p. 1), and the current (2023) limit for "safe" salmon farming without causing a negative impact to the Icelandic wild salmon stock is estimated at 106,500 tons, according to the Marine Research Institute (Guðmundsson et al., 2023).

Aquaculture in V-Barð has been developed on fertile ground, as the fishing industry had literally built up the three villages in the region and the livelihoods of locals depended on it from the beginning. In many ways, aquaculture is not that different from traditional fisheries, since the product is more or less the same, fish, as are the activities, workspace, and language. Fish and fisheries are something locals are familiar with and "know-how-to-do". Locals have confidence in activities like this and the aquaculture relations are proximate and

a part of them. Fishing is kind of a norm in V-Barð, and in that way related sectors such as aquaculture have a leading position compared to other, new economic sectors. It was thus probable that aquaculture would flourish in the region.

Figure 11 Arnarlax has permission to farm salmon in three fjords in V-Barð, Patreksfjörður, Tálknafjörður and Arnarfjörður. Map: ÞEH.

Arnarlax plays on these associations and seeks to strengthen them by cultivating familiarity, and creating proximity, care, and belonging. Den Besten (2010) demonstrates how a "sense of local belonging and emotional attitudes to one's neighbourhood are inherently interconnected" (p. 180). Arnarlax describes itself as belonging to V-Barð, highlighting its founders and many employee connections to the Westfjords, even though the owners are only partially from the area (Arnarlax, 2023a). They use terms like "roots and many connections", "raised in the Westfjords" and "moved back home" (Arnarlax, 2021).[7] The founders and employees belong to V-Barð because they were brought up there or are connected to the place in some other way. Arnarlax emphasises corporate social

[7] The webpage of Arnarlax has been updated since 2021 and this text is no longer to be found. Today a discourse analysis on the Arnarlax webpage refers to "sustainability", "ethical eating", and "heritage" where "Icelanders have learned how to work with nature, not against it, to not only survive but thrive in a challenging environment. We bring that resilience and dedication to excellence to every aspect of what we do" (Arnarlax, 2024). The webpage reflects the signs of the times, which is now about sustainability and ethical eating, but with concordance to the old "theme" about heritage and resilience of locals.

responsibility, its leaders argue that they care about the community, and they want "to contribute to reversing the decline that had taken place for years" (ibid.) with devolution of the community, which can be related to general development in rural areas on a global scale.

Some of the local people I interviewed speak in this way and see the aquaculture industry as *the Saviour* that came and saved the community from further disgrace and turned decline into progress. They talk about how the "town died" and, having been there at that time, they welcome the people who moved "back home to take part in" the upswing of the community – "in the development of Arnarlax" (ibid.). They also tell me, in being seen as the Saviour, Arnarlax is in a leading position regarding goodwill from the community. This can even be for better or for worse, as was the case when the Vesturbyggð Municipality levied harbour dues to Arnarlax, and lost the case because there were no legal reasons for cultivated salmon to be dealt with as fish catch (Arnarlax, 2023b; Vesturbyggð, 2023b). The narrative by Arnarlax is that "[T]hese people [the founders and many employees of Arnarlax] had faith in the community of the Westfjords and saw an opportunity to use the sheltered fjords and clean sea to raise first class salmon" (Arnarlax, 2021). Arnarlax stresses it is not only the people of V-Barð that welcomed Arnarlax, but the sheltered fjords and clean seas, and together [in harmony?] they will "raise first class salmon" (ibid.). This statement suggests that it is because of its belonging, and clean, sheltered fjords that Arnarlax wants to contribute to its place in the Westfjords of Iceland. My interviewees tell me that Arnarlax takes care of its people, which is recognised by the locals who make them feel at home and welcome. One of ArcticHub's main findings in their reports is how "[l]ocal acceptance is crucial for economic development" (Suopajärvi & al., 2024, p. 5). Arnarlax also recognises its foundations, the environment, fjords, and sea, and emphasises the company's respect for the environment and the clean, sustainable, and healthy salmon they produce (ibid.). They do not use antibiotics or genetically modified raw materials; the production is well monitored with certifications and a quality-control system (ibid.). In addition to that, the "production is generationally divided to ensure that the fields or farming areas get a complete rest after the sea cages have been emptied. […] In this way, healthy salmon can be raised in harmony with the environment" (Arnarlax, 2021).

Figure 12 Aquaculture in the sheltered fjord of Tálknafjörður, July 2021. The sea cages can be seen from the shore, and more clusters of sea cages are farther out in the fjord to the left. Image: EBE.

Aquaculture is a part of human–nature relations history in V-Barð, along with the fishing industry, agriculture, and tourism. Moreover, as with the fields, farms, harbours, fish factories, hotels and other constructions of these economic sectors, the sea cages – "fields" or "blue fields" as Arnarlax likes to call them – along with other constructions of aquaculture are a part of the land and seascape (see *Figure 12*). They are "just a *part* of the structures of the community," Jón Þórðarson told me. Jón is an entrepreneur and has created an environment for the community in Bíldudalur village with innovation and businesses of different kinds through the years. Jón is an entrepreneur who notices unused potential, such as nature's products like berries and seaweed, for the development of the region, as well as promoting tourism in the area with guided tours to historical sites. "We cannot say: There should be no ships in the fjord", Jón stresses. "The rings [sea cages] are just another type of ship. They are stationary. When close up to them they are big, but in a bigger context, the context of this *huge* area of Arnarfjörður fjord, the sea cages are small," Jón continued.

There is space for the sea cages in the fjord, as it is a big enough fjord to accommodate aquaculture, but there is not enough space for everything in the fjord. When authorities in the Westfjords were planning an oil refinery station in Arnarfjörður fjord in 2008, Jón argued its pros and cons, demonstrating the impossibility of many aspects for the concerned authorities. His arguments were one part of the evidence that helped to make the decision about the proposed oil refinery station. The story of the oil refinery in Arnarfjörður is thus a short one that is without many relations. On the other hand, the aquaculture story is a part of a bigger story, a story about life in and around the fjord. It is a story about relations regarding "nature and human lives," Jón tells me, explaining, "It is possible to tell the story of salmon farming. It is possible to get people to discuss about nature based on *that* […] salmon farming is just an addition to the story!" In claiming this, Jón underlines the mobilities of the place through human–nature relations and the stories that can be told, whether short or long, and belonging or not. These are the types of stories Haraway (2016) stresses in relation to staying with the trouble, open-ended stories of diverse kinds that tell the stories of going with the change, the mobilities through which communities emerge.

Julie Cruikshank argues that "[e]nvironmental historians advise us to examine nature as a continuing force in history, not in a determining role but as one actor in relation to others" (2005, p. 5). In the present context, aquaculture is an addition to the story of human–nature relations that have shaped V-Barð. It is a part of the fjords in the context of the community, a part of its structure, and a part of the story of how it belongs to these land- and seascapes. When something belongs, it not only changes itself, its surroundings change simultaneously, becoming the world (Wright, 2015), and when cultivating salmon V-Barð becomes the world of aquaculture. Salmon farming becomes entangled through storytelling, it is entwined or spun into the fabric of V-Barð and gives it another (new) layer or texture. It is a texture built on the former layers, spun into them, and it also recognises the responsibility for continuing their rhythms and patterns, continuing the community's liveability. But are they able to do so in ways that are responsible (Haraway, 2016) for the environment, or is it only wishful thinking and to promote the industry (Friðriksson, 2023), and thus, a story with no fixed ending?

2.2.2 Possible futures

Open-ended stories offer diverse possible futures, and so it is with the aquaculture in V-Barð. Its future is not fixed, and human–nature relations play major roles in its story, looking

towards the mobilities of the place and its future. Wright (2015) stresses that belonging is never prearranged or fixed, rather it emerges through the action of doing, caring and being in responsible ways. Aquaculture can be looked at through these perspectives of belonging, where encounters of the industry with different actors or actants (Latour, 1996) bring forth its story and possible futures in V-Barð. Does aquaculture behave in responsible and caring ways, and do its actions support V-Barð in its human–nature relations to the future? Storytelling helps in staying with the trouble because the stories bring forth relations for guidance for the future (Haraway, 2016). Here, Tsing et al. (2017) argue that it can be helpful to use the assumption of monsters and ghosts of the Anthropocene when discerning human–nature relations in the present time, as they highlight these relations. In this way, my approach will be to bring further understanding to human–nature relations in V-Barð and to shed light on how it is possible to think about them for the future.

Figure 13 A sign in Arnarfjörður fjord with Icelandic and English description: "Varúð skrímsli! Beware of Sea Monsters!" The entrance to the fjord is in the background. Image: EBE.

It is a well-known fact in V-Barð that sea monsters live in Arnarfjörður fjord, and they have been a part of the fjord's history for as long as people can remember. *The Icelandic Sea Monster Museum* in Bíldudalur village was established to cherish this heritage. The geographical formation of Arnarfjörður is special because rock bars, or shoals, sit at the

entrance of the fjord underneath the sea, acting as a kind of a threshold, helping diverse biota and ecosystems to thrive in a clean sea and sheltered fjords. In the past, whales used to nurture their calves in the fjord because of the rich biota, including prawns, which fishermen in Bíldudalur have also exploited. Furthermore, for some time now, calcareous algae mining has been practiced in Arnarfjörður, along with the main character in this story, which has been addressed earlier, aquaculture.

Figure 14 A monster in Arnarfjörður, or plastic waste from the aquaculture, further out in the fjord. Image: Hannes Björnsson.

On a field trip to Arnarfjörður, thoughts of its history popped to mind, connecting to the themes of the Anthropocene, monsters, and ghosts that I had been reading about. Having just passed a sign warning travellers about sea monsters living in the fjord (*Figure 13*), I noticed some plastic waste from aquaculture near the seashore (*Figure 14*): "Was this a monster?" I thought to myself. I could see the white neck of it and brown mane. My readings during the research and the human–nature perspective inspired this apparition and encouraged me to consider the image further: What if the aquaculture was indeed a monster and I had detected it? Had I seen one of the sea monsters of Arnarfjörður? I must say that it was a thrilling idea in more ways than one! I showed my photo (*Figure 14*) to a co-curator at the Sea Monster Museum in Bíldudalur and he recognised it immediately. We agreed that it was the monster depicted on the monster warning signs (see *Figure 13*), identifiable by the distinctive mane on its neck.

Tsing et al. (2017) have identified aquaculture as one of the monsters the Anthropocene has engendered, made by humans to fulfil human needs. They stress that its entanglements with humans and out of place existence categorise it as a monster. Furthermore, "[i]n all our headless entanglements with more-than-human life, we humans too are monsters" (2017, pp. M1-M2). Tsing et al., (2017) continue to explain that it is through the entanglement of the salmon with humans that it is monstrous. Farmed salmon is out of place, in numbers and the means of keeping it alive, and the profitable industry threatens the human–nature relations in the cultivated areas and raises an alarm regarding the ecosystems the aquaculture is situated in (ibid.). Worldwide aquaculture at sea is being criticised because of animal welfare concerns and the pollution it is reputed to cause, impacting on biota in cultivated areas and wild salmon stocks. Firstly, there is the question regarding animal welfare, concerning the welfare of such high numbers of salmon being held in such a small area. Additionally, the effects of winds and cold weather on the salmon in cultivated areas in Iceland needs to be considered, which seems to have, for example, caused the injuries and deaths of a considerable quantity of salmon in a neighbouring fjord, Dýrafjörður, in February 2022 (Vilhjálmsson, 2020). In April 2021, a video showing injured "monster-like" salmon in a sea cage in Dýrafjörður captured people's attention (Skúladóttir, 2021). The sea cages were said to be from Arctic Fish Holdings, stationed in Ísafjörður, but with occupational areas around the Westfjords. For example, in Tálknafjörður where, in November 2023, the Artic Sea Farm, a subsidiary of Artic Fish Holdings, had to slaughter its entire production due to a salmon louse infestation, which had caused the salmon to suffer greatly, becoming an animal welfare disaster (Vilhjálmsson, 2023a). Secondly, there are local effects on marine nutrients and benthic fauna under the sea cages (Artic Sea Farm hf, 2020), and the sea currents are unable to clean these if the number of salmon is too large. This seems to have been the case in Dýrafjörður in the year 2022, where bacterial layers were detected under the sea cages, causing an imbalance in the ecosystem in the cultivated areas (Vilhjálmsson, 2022).[8] The salmon companies apply countermeasures against these environmental effects. For example, Arnarlax rests the farming areas after each use, as mentioned above (Arnarlax, 2021).

Finally, the threat of cultivated salmon to wild salmon should be considered, for example, in the form of hybridisation, disease and salmon louse (Guðmundsson et al., 2023). The wild Icelandic salmon stock accounts for around fifty thousand salmon (Vilhjálmsson, 2023b). According to a report from the Marine and Freshwater Research in Iceland (MFRI) "[h]ybridization of farmed salmon with wild populations can alter local genetic composition, lead to changes in life-history traits and possibly even population declines" (Guðmundsson et al., 2023, p. 19). The hybridisation of farmed salmon with Icelandic salmon is already considerable, as it is in other countries with similar circumstances (Guðmundsson et al., 2023). The report does not mention the biggest accidental release of salmon from Arnarlax in 2021, when over 81 thousand salmon escaped from a damaged sea cage in Arnarfjörður (e.g., Logadóttir, 2022). Arnarlax claims that all procedures, laws, and regulations were

[8] According to the Artic Sea Farm Assessment report on the environmental impact of increased salmon farming in Dýrafjörður fjord north of V-Barð, the effects of sea farming in the fjord are local, temporary, and reversible "on marine nutrients and on benthic fauna" (2020: iii) and the impact of waste under the sea cages on the seabed ecosystem (ibid.). In 2022 videos of what seems to be bacterial layers under sea cages in Dýrafjörður fjord, where the Artic Sea Farm keeps some of their sea cages, were released to the media. Specialist Tom Pedersen says that the video probably shows that there is too much salmon farming in Dýrafjörður and that the sea currents in the fjord are not able to clean the area on the seabed of these bacteria" (Vilhjálmsson, 2022b) causing imbalance in the ecosystem of the fjord where the cultivated areas are.

followed (Arnarlax, 2022). In the above-named report, it is claimed that the salmon industry has not implemented ways to hinder the accidental release of cultivated salmon, nor ways of lowering the risk when salmon have escaped (Guðmundsson et al., 2023). The MFRI has applied for support to finance 'cleaning' after such escapes but has not been successful but continues to stress the necessity of such cleanings in its report (ibid.). Recently, a considerable number of fertile salmon[9] escaped from one of Arctic Sea Farm's sea cages in Patreksfjörður (Grettisson, 2023; Gunnarsson, 2023b; Kjerúlf Birgisdóttir, 2023a). Three weeks later, those salmon entered rivers which should have been out of reach from that source (Kjerúlf Birgisdóttir, 2023b), for example, eight well known wild salmon rivers. The Federation of Icelandic River Owners referred to the escape as an ecological disaster, stating that, with the cultivated fertile salmon entering their rivers, genetic hybridisation was actualising (ibid). On the other hand, spokespersons for salmon farmers stress that there are high safety regulations in the industry, and that this was one of the reasons for salmon being cultivated in open sea cages in the Westfjords. One of these safety regulations concerns the farming being situated far from known salmon rivers but, for example, the capacity of salmon in farming areas is also regulated (Sverrisson, 2023). Furthermore, there is disagreement concerning the genetic hybridisation being a risk or even as to whether or not it has occurred, according to a local journalist in Ísafjörður, who cited scientists in the salmon farming industry, together with the same source as mentioned above from the Marine and Freshwater Research in Iceland (Gunnarsson, 2023a).

In a research study among Icelanders from 2022, which is published in a report by the Ministry of Food regarding the *Status and future of aquaculture in Iceland* (Boston Consulting Group, 2023), many of the pros and cons which I have mentioned above are addressed. However, this report talks about the positive impact aquaculture has on creating opportunities for a skilled workforce and the development of a new knowledge industry (Boston Consulting Group, 2023). Furthermore, there are concerns about fair "charging for the use of shared resources" (Boston Consulting Group, 2023, p. 64), that is, the sheltered and clean fjords, and about ownership and taxes, as the industry has not yet paid a considerable volume of tax and, indeed, there is uncertainty as to whether it will do so (ibid.). Additionally, people have raised their concerns regarding the image of Iceland as untouched nature and feeling that aquaculture will damage this. Moreover, it was expressed that "foreign owners [of the aquaculture companies] might not have the same incentive to protect local nature and contribute to social infrastructures or other long-term development in communities where salmon farming is practiced" (Boston Consulting Group, 2023, p. 65).

The base for all life is the existence of circumstances to thrive, for example, resources, mobilities, and shelter. Some of my interviewees were concerned about the impact aquaculture has on the ecosystem in the fjords and its surroundings. They want to do the right thing for the environment, to be careful and responsible. This is not least because aquaculture is a new economic factor which they do not know so much about, and they have to trust the surveillance authorities and aquaculture companies to take good care of it and do their best to meet industry regulations. This correlates with the ArcticHub report where all "informants agreed that increased production must be in harmony with the environment and communities, as social acceptance is needed for the industry to thrive" (Suopajärvi & al., 2024, p. 29). The local authorities in V-Barð have repeatedly called for effective monitoring, and for more research to be conducted around aquaculture. Gerður Björk Sveinsdóttir, the

[9] Over three thousand salmon (Kjerúlf Birgisdóttir, 2023).

mayor of Vesturbyggð municipality at the time, told me (in 2018) that the local government requested the location of the supervisory agency in V-Barð in every licence and statement regarding the salmon farming, and that research should also be conducted there. Vesturbyggð municipality has a voice in the planning authority at sea, but not full authority (Lög um skipulag haf- og strandsvæða nr. 88/2018). Administrative leaders in the Westfjords emphasise that research and monitoring jobs in aquaculture should be located in the Westfjords, as it is this region that is cultivating salmon. However, up to the present time (January, 2024), there are no such jobs in the south of the Westfjords (Unnarsson, 2023a, 2023b). Since the establishment of the aquaculture industry in the Westfjords, it remains the case that it can take days before the surveillance authorities, stationed in Selfoss in the south of Iceland, arrive at a site in V-Barð to look into reported aquaculture incidents. People in V-Barð are ready to stay with the trouble (Haraway, 2016), to find ways to change so that the community can thrive, but according to my interviewee, changes need to be considered with the interests of the whole ecosystem in mind. Laws and regulations in Iceland are set to avoid, for example, genetic hybridisation of cultivated salmon with the wild salmon stock. Whether they succeed is a contentious issue, and perhaps also difficult to manage because of the mobility of salmon, as when they escape from sea cages there are no limits, and they swim near and far, as has already happened (Kjerúlf Birgisdóttir, 2023b).

Awareness of human impacts on the Earth and concern about what the future will bring highlights the emphasis of Weber (2019) about the unity of all and that we have to nurture ourselves and others in life. Weber calls this "enlivenment", explained as "a way of thinking where the need of others is brought forth and the wellbeing of the perspective of the ecosystemic totality but not the individual" (p. 3). In this way, Weber stresses the outcome of this epoch, the Anthropocene, will be good and prosperous for all life on Earth. Likewise, Haraway (2016) emphasises responsibility, which all humans share, "for multispecies flourishing" (p. 29) in the world that we inhabit. How are these responsibilities and enlivenment tackled by the aquaculture industry in V-Barð? The thriving and development of the (human) community in V-Barð is one of the Arnarlax cornerstones[10] and, as many interviewees tell me, the aquaculture is good for the economic growth of the region. Furthermore, one interviewee, when addressing some environmental challenges related to the prosperity of V-Barð, for example, aquaculture, expressed that "it is hard to talk against the prosperity of the community, and ideas like that are not popular around here". Moreover, another interviewee told me that he "or other locals would never talk against aquaculture on environmental terms, rather they would try to solve problems caused by the aquaculture" because the industry has such a good influence on the community. He also stresses that it is not the aquaculture alone that has made this positive shift in V-Barð, because "without tourism there would be little left here, despite the salmon." Yet another interviewee emphasised how important it was to have many different economic sectors for locals to be able to select their occupation, but also so that the "rise and fall" of the communities would not consider only one occupation. Furthermore, some interviewees told me that in relation

[10] Today aquaculture is one of the largest economic sectors, a key to life in big parts of V-Barð; there is action; about 15% of the working population in V-Barð works in aquaculture and most businesses "are more or less dependent on [its] activity" (Icelandic Salmon as, 2020, p. 5); the population has gone up; houses are being renovated – the human community lives and thrives.

to tourism the community of V-Barð was too homogeneous and it needed more people with interest in developing tourism in the region.

The villages which went through a downturn for some time because of the fishing quota being sold away, are now lively with people moving to the area and houses being renovated and the value of real estate has been increasing. Þórdís Sif Sigurðardóttir, former Municipal Commissioner of Vesturbyggð, talked about the good influences of the aquaculture industry in V-Barð, and how it has changed the livelihoods of locals in positive ways (Ólafsson, 2023b). She and others pointed to the fact that locals might not have an opinion on aquaculture per se, and they may actually have little to say on the organisation of the fjords, but aquaculture certainly has had great influences on their daily lives in the ways mentioned earlier (Ólafsson, 2023b; Sveinsdóttir, 2023). Aquaculture brings life and shared flourishing to the community and the companies cultivating salmon, such as Arnarlax and Arctic Sea Farm. However, the challenges in handling the Saviour are too great for the municipalities (Vesturbyggð, 2023b) and, as some have questioned, could the risk for the environment be too high (Kjerúlf Birgisdóttir, 2023b)? Even if some of the consequences are reclaimable, not all are. Is it responsible to act in such a way that we accept the extinction of wild salmon for the profitability of the industry? This is a question that Elvar Örn Friðriksson (2023), Manager of the Conservation Fund for Wild Salmon Stocks, asks. Should we not do everything to prohibit that risk, as the municipality in Vesturbyggð advocates when seeking supervisory positions regarding aquaculture in V-Barð? Extinction is one of the possible futures Haraway's (2016) "multispecies flourishing" and Weber's (2019) "enlivenment" are intended to avoid. According to Pernet and Browman, "[a]quaculture must move towards a new paradigm where the carbon footprint and the analysis of the life cycle of products are at least as important as economic profitability" (2021, p. 315). It is now up to the Icelandic authorities to take steps towards a sustainable and safer aquaculture industry, and this seems to be on its way, with stricter laws and regulations being discussed at the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries (Boston Consulting Group, 2023). Until now, the regulations and licencing authorisation have been rather open and straightforward (Lög um fiskeldi nr. 71/2008).

There are many kinds of monsters. Some of them are visible, and others are not, although there might be a faint awareness of them. Some monsters might seem dangerous or frightening, whilst others are nice and even nurturing and bring hope. Then, there are those that surprise us, doing the opposite to what we expect them to do, regardless of their appearances or human expectations about them. All those types of monsters exist in relation to aquaculture. The industry is kind and generous towards the communities of V-Barð, bringing hope and prosperity, but it is also frightening in relation to our non-human relations of the sea, for example, the biota and genetic hybridisation of the Icelandic wild salmon stock. It can also be unpredictable, as was experienced in Vesturbyggð municipality recently due to harbour dues (Vesturbyggð, 2023b). Human–nature relations can be seen in action as the aquaculture industry in V-Barð shapes the mobilities of the place for the future. There are different stakeholders, such as the aquaculture companies and locals who want to be able to live well in a prosperous community, together with the Icelandic Federation of Icelandic River Owners who want to keep their rivers free of farmed salmon, and to prevent the Icelandic salmon stock from genetic mixing with farmed salmon. Furthermore, there are different non-human actants, like the farmed and wild salmon and the ecosystem within the occupied fjords. Tsing et al. (2017) propose we use folklore to guide our way in surviving on our damaged planet, as we are faced with doing in the Anthropocene. As with salmon

metaphorically being a monster, the damaged planet can be referred to as the situation V-Barð finds itself in regarding aquaculture, whereby the industry is accused of polluting fjords and encouraging the extinction of the Icelandic salmon stock. In relation to humans, other species can become monstrous, when they exist in too great a number in places where they did not originally belong, which can thus be described as an out of place existence (Tsing et al., 2017). Regarding Arnarfjörður, the well-known and probably only sea monster fjord in Iceland, it is remarkable to encourage looking to folklore to guide the way towards the future regarding our damaged planet. We have all the tales and experiences of monster–human relations in the fjord, and even a museum that promotes these relations. How would these sea-monster tales best guide the mobilities of V-Barð in the context of aquaculture towards the future?

The tales tell us that it is best to have as little to do with sea monsters as possible, but they also tell that the monsters are a part of the fjord, just as when Jón Þórðarson mentioned the aquaculture industry being a part of the story of the fjord. Furthermore, the tales voice how the monsters occupy certain areas of the fjord and that they need to be respected and left in peace. Humans are not capable of fighting them because they are too big and furious, too unpredictable, and rather unidentifiable. While a monster has its known expressions, there is more to it which nobody can get their head around. Moreover, there is also a glimpse of an idea about things being as they are and should be, almost as if to say that there is a place for everyone in the fjord, or perhaps nearly everyone, when thinking about the oil refinery which was just an idea, or a short story that came to an end. There is, namely, always a question about tolerance for both old and new monsters. In the case of aquaculture, it has a priority beyond that of other economic sectors that are less related than it to the rhythm of the daily life of V-Barð. Locals are willing to find a way to stay with the trouble, and deal with the problems that come up regarding the economic sector that some say has turned around the development of the community of V-Barð for the better. However, an important question does arise: are the aquaculture companies capable of doing so? Thinking aquaculture through by using the concepts of enlivenment (Weber, 2019) and multispecies flourishing (Haraway, 2016), it is difficult to find direct correlations to aquaculture, which seems to feature frequently in the national news due to incidents of varying severity, as discussed earlier. As such, it is not encouraging prosperity for all species and the Earth. On the other hand, one is reminded about responsibility and that there are different responsibilities in relation to different actors. Furthermore, the responsibility is deeply related to belonging, which appears through action in caring and responsible ways (Wright, 2015). The story of aquaculture in V-Barð has many sides and appearances, one of which emerges through a prosperous human community and another which shows how nature is uneasily controlled.

I will now tell a story about how nature can be a threat to humans and how they try to control its forces to thrive in V-Barð.

2.3 To avoid and contain – avalanche fences

2.3.1 Patreksfjörður

I have made it to the top of the avalanche fences which cover big parts of the mountainside above the village Patreksfjörður where I once lived. It did not take much effort to walk up

here because of the stairs and walking paths that lead to the top of the fences. Not nearly as much effort as on my only hike to this mountain with my family when I lived here. Back then the mountain was a part of my home and everyday life as the house that I lived in had a big staircase window facing the mountain, and I would greet the mountain in the morning when going downstairs to the main floor of the house. Once, I even dreamed about the mountain offering me to step into it through big and "powerful" doors and make it my home. Looking at the mountain from the window it would cover the view to the sky, this rocky grey mountainside with lichens and moss, grass, and some flowers and bushes, but mostly just grey rocks of different sizes and gravel. When taking that hike to the mountain with my family we did not reach higher than to the middle of it, then almost climbing because of the steepness of the mountainside and big rocks. But the walk left us with a respect for the mountain and deeper relations to it. We saw it as a friend where my daughters used to play and as a shelter for the strong northern wind and weather in the wintertime.

This changed overnight when avalanches fell in the village Súðavík in January 1995 and later that year in the village Flateyri in the north of the Westfjords. The avalanches took the lives of thirty-three people, fourteen in Súðavík and nineteen in Flateyri. The similarities of the circumstances of these villages to our village were too many. We felt as if the mountain had failed us. Its shelter from turbulent northern storms had turned into its anticline with the possibility of snow piling up in the mountain above us, although it usually did not do that but here there was no way to see because the storm blocked our sight out of the windows. All we could see was the lights from the light projectors of the Coast Guard Ship out in the fjord trying to lighten up the mountain to see the snowpack, to be able to estimate the danger we were in and with the possibility of evacuation in mind. Among ourselves we talked about its similarity to war and air-raids, waiting for something to happen. The days after the avalanches in Súðavík and Flateyri, it was common in the village where I lived that parents dressed their children in extra clothes before they put them to bed, so that they would have a better chance of surviving if an avalanche would fall on their house and destroy it.

I didn't take the offer from the mountain to move in, I left a few years after the dramatic events in Súðavík and Flateyri. Today avalanche fences are enormous structures in the mountain above my old house, almost covering the hillside and exceeding the village. The landscapes have changed since I lived there because big parts of the mountain have been moved forward with a large gap between it and the old mountain, to receive what could possibly fall down this steep hillside. Already, big rocks have positioned themselves onto a gravelled road that is in the gap, reminding us of the ever-changing agency of the mountain, which will 'throw' stones and rockfalls at 'us', with or without fences (*Figure **15***). Its behaviour depends on its relations with temperature, weather, water, and rock. With the avalanche fences, the mountainside above the village has been relocated, with a gap in between the old mountain and the 'new mountainside', that is, the avalanche fences. There is a lot of movement both in the mountain and in the human made fences, although with good intentions, the avalanche fences somewhat fall into their own background which is, of course, the mountain. Therefore, they are not that visible from down below, so the mountain can still be seen as the stable rock that humans would like it to be, but which it is not.

The poet, Jón úr Vör, writes about growing up in Patreksfjörður in the beginning of the twentieth century. Therein he describes the position of humans in the village as being on a thin ledge between the steep mountain and the unpredictable and often threatening sea and

Figure 15 On the avalanche fences, which are a wall made from the mountain itself, a relocated mountain is in front of the mountain to shelter the human community beneath. Image: EBE.

asks, “where can you go?” (Jón úr Vör, 1999).[11] Patreksfjörður village is based on a thin strip of lowlands on two spits reaching out into the sea, Vatneyri and Geyrseyri, with the hillside of the mountain Brellur, above. The village location is due to good conditions for a harbour near rich fishing grounds in the nineteenth century. The development of the village necessitated the building of a seawall to prevent rough seas reaching the settlement, but also to broaden the lowlands with landfill for its further development. With the avalanche fences it is possible to say that the village is fenced off from the unpredictable forces of nature to make human life safer. The coping skills of human settlement in relation to harsh environments are manifested in the avalanche fences, which are one of the manifestations of human–nature relations of the village. To the extent of making humans safe, the fences belong to Patreksfjörður because they make it possible to live underneath the steep mountain. In that way it is possible to say that they are a shelter for the village and a basis for its survival.

Avalanches have always been a known risk factor in some areas in Patreksfjörður, and there were places within the village where it was prohibited to build houses. There was no direct evidence of destructive avalanches or slush floods in inhabited areas before 1983, when two great slush floods took the lives of four people in Patreksfjörður and destroyed or damaged many houses. Leaving a gap in the middle of the town, which remains, accentuating the memorial of the people that lost their lives and is the only construction in the area. The history of the avalanche hazard is thus a part of Patreksfjörður’s history, and the avalanche fences are a part of that story. When I lived in Patreksfjörður there was only minimal protection in the most hazardous areas, fences and embankments that were supposed to steer the floods in channels where there were no houses. Avalanche risk assessments relied on the history of floods, and areas categorised as safe or hazardous have changed in the years following the 1983 incident. People who had built their houses in a safe area in the early 1990s were suddenly placed in an avalanche hazard zone in the beginning of the twenty-first century by a new risk assessment. Some people were told they had to find new homes because they could not live in an avalanche hazard zone.

2.3.2 Shelter

After the avalanche and slush flood incidents in Patreksfjörður, Súðavík and Flateyri, locals demanded safety actions, wanting protection and monitoring in avalanche-prone areas. Following the avalanches in Súðavík and Flateyri in 1995, laws regarding the prevention of avalanches and landslides were established (Lög um varnir gegn snjóflóðum og skriðuföllum nr. 49/1997). A year earlier, a committee was composed to focus on the avalanche threat, with making a generic plan for avalanches and landslide prevention in the country being among its many roles, which included checking old constructions and reviewing the generic need for them. The committee worked closely with the Icelandic Met Office and local governments, with the output of the cooperation being a report on the need for avalanche and landslide control in Iceland. Based on this report, the Icelandic government approved a

[11] “The mountain towers heavily over us, bare and grey,
the giant arms of the sea challenge a wrestling,
where can you go?”
A fragment from the poem *The sea and the mountain* by Jón úr Vör (1999, p. 7. Translated by author).

long-term construction plan on avalanches and landslide defences which was intended to be completed in 2010-2012 (Ásgeirsdóttir Kná, 2020). The development of the affected areas was, for example, to build avalanche fences to direct avalanches and floods from villages, towns, and other inhabited areas, and moreover to build structures that would influence how the snow built up. Additionally, moving the settlement to a safe place was another conclusion, which applied in the case of Súðavík. Finally, people who bought houses that were in danger zones would only be allowed to reside in them during the summertime (ibid.). These were indeed serious interventions in people's lives, but so were the avalanches.

Nevertheless, the construction of avalanche defences has only partially been completed and appropriate agents, such as the Icelandic Met Office and the Westfjords Regional Development Office (WRDO), have requested that the Icelandic government finish the planned implementations before 2030 (Kristjánsdóttir & Óskarsson, 2020). The incidents in Súðavík and Flateyri are cited, with it being said that the time it has taken to build avalanche fences in the most avalanche-prone areas of the country is unacceptable. Furthermore, the lack of suitable preclusions keeps the danger of serious incidents in urban areas open (Guðmundsson, 2019).

Figure 16 Avalanche fences in Patreksfjörður (amber markings on map). The red dotted quadrangle is where one of the two slush floods came down in 1983, with fences being planned. The other flood flowed where the yellow dots are to the right. My house is in the middle of the village beneath the two yellow dots, and my aunt Laufey's house is up in the left corner with a red circle around it. Image: From Report of avalanches in Patreksfjörður, a drafted picture from Loftmyndir ehf. VSÓ ráðgjöf (2018, p. 48).

The building of avalanche fences in Patreksfjörður is well on its way and the fences now cover most of the hillside above the village. However, it is a strange thing that almost the only fence that is lacking is the one which would protect against slush floods like the one in 1983 (*Figure 16* red quadrangle). I remember the discussions about the idea of the avalanche

fences in the beginning and how many thought they were impossible because they seemed enormous and would cause much land degradation, which is the case (VSÓ ráðgjöf, 2018). In fact, I think people could not imagine how it would be possible to build them, not to mention the visual impact they would have. The locals thought they would be monstrous when they first heard of the idea of the avalanche fences. "I shuddered because of the idea," Gerður Björk Sveinsdóttir, the mayor of Patreksfjörður in 2018, reported concerning her feelings when she first heard about the idea. This was when I lived in Patreksfjörður, and I remember how I too could not imagine how this was possible, and many people shared that point of view. But my thoughts on it, which are strengthened by the words of Gerður Björk, is that this was a mixed feeling of loving the sight of the bare, grey hillside above our village and having experienced the insecurity of living beneath it and sensing it as a threat for the first time. There was never any doubt about the implementation of the fences, as it was necessary for peoples' safety. It was a case of staying with the trouble (Haraway, 2016) by adjusting and finding ways to continue living there, or having to leave. This was a case of finding life in the ruins of the catastrophe that the avalanches were, and controlling the elements, or as Tsing et. al., said "[t]he landscapes grown from such endings are our disaster as well as hope" (2017, p. G7). The tragedy of the slush floods and avalanches in the villages both changed their landscapes and provided a shelter for the settlements.

When the villages were established, there were no regulations about safety beneath the steep mountains. With the connections of humans to the mountain, and the experience of living near it, locals stopped building houses in places that were most often affected by avalanches. However, there are always the extreme events that happen on rare occasions, such as the slush floods in 1983. Can it then be said that if the village was to be established today it would not be located where it is due to the risk of avalanches and slush floods? Furthermore, can the village beneath the steep mountain be seen as the ruins of former ideas about growth and capitalism where the location near rich fishing grounds and a good harbour would dominate the safety of humans? Or was it rather a way of staying with the trouble at that time, and finding the most suitable way of coping with the surroundings, thus, allowing the location close to rich fishing grounds to steer the location of human settlements? The contemporary landscapes of Patreksfjörður can thus be seen as an answer to the disasters the village has gone through, and perhaps also a disaster because of all the land degradation which can, indeed, be seen as monstrous. Furthermore, the avalanche fences are also a hope for the village because the human community is sheltered beneath them, making it possible for humans to thrive there.

The avalanche fences are huge and very noticeable in the environment, even monstrous, as they can be seen from far away across the fjord, but "they do not trouble anyone," Gerður Björk says. They have taken a lot of effort, and the land has arguably been degraded, and the landscape is not the same as it was before. In a way it is a new and converted Patreksfjörður, but this does not trouble locals. The avalanche fences have a manifold purpose, and locals have adjusted to them. It is more the case that people who do not live in Patreksfjörður and the ones that have moved away who see the avalanche fences as monstrous in a negative way when they visit. One interviewee told me that they think they are enormous and are even a disfigurement of the landscape. However, these people also thought that about the sports facility in the middle of the village. Additionally, the interviewee told me that in Patreksfjörður they have two Facebook sites for the village: one 'public' for everyone that is interested in the village, and one for people who live there, the locals. The latter is a closed group, and I was declined access because I do not currently live in Patreksfjörður. The

interviewee told me that these Facebook groups were quite different, with the former being nostalgic, with it seeming that everyone wanted to keep everything the same as it was when they lived in Patreksfjörður, and perceiving threat in the smallest change, for example, altering the colours of the houses. The latter group was more down to earth and practical regarding the daily life of residents in the village. In that Facebook group, discussions arise about the changes caused by the avalanche fences beyond providing shelter, such as alterations to mountain streams or the emergence of new streams. It turns out that the mountain corresponds to the changes in unforeseen ways, delivered through, as Huijbens (2020) stresses, nature coming through no matter what, which means that people have to respond to it, for example, by fixing flooding when water from the mountainside changes course and houses are suddenly in the pathway of a brook.

Figure 17 The other side of the avalanche fences. From up here the views over the fjord and the village are good. Image: EBE.

For locals, the manifold purpose of the avalanche fences makes them belong to Patreksfjörður, even though they have some consequences. Their belonging is seen in their care for the community and the hope they bring. They create shelter for the community and provide possibilities for outdoor activities: “there is a nice path along the earthworks, it is all in good consonance. The views from the earthworks are nice,” Gerður Björk says, continuing: “The earthworks will be an ensemble with an outdoor area above.” In this way, the avalanche fences create new possibilities for the village. There are possible futures for Patreksfjörður in the avalanche fences, with the possibility for safe settlement underneath steep mountainsides. Moreover, there are other possibilities present there as well, such as the outdoor areas that are already present and in use by the villagers, cozy with a table, a fire pit, and small trees around. When it is all finished it will be even nicer and people will be

able to enjoy being in a lovely little forest between the biggest constructions, which will become a fenced outdoor area beneath the most avalanche-prone hazard zone, which from the beginning has divided the settlement. Visiting Patreksfjörður and following locals on Facebook, I can see that the future is already here. They love to take a walk along the path up on the avalanche fences and enjoy the views from there, see *Figure 17*. They go there often and take pictures and put them online, admiring the views over the village and fjord. It is also a nice new stroll along the length of the village that had been welcomed among residents, who had the same stroll along two of the main streets, Aðalstræti (E. Main Street) and Strandgata (E. Coast Street), all their lives. It is also an entryway to the mountain, a different one than the mountain had once offered me, but with nice scenery and an easy walk. Tourists staying at the hotels in Patreksfjörður are encouraged to take a walk up to and along the fences because the views from up there are magnificent. There are also nice spots to sit down and just enjoy, together with trees, playground equipment, tables, a fire pit, and benches. The shelter of the fences has already brought multiple benefits to the village and its people. Indeed, there is hope in the ruins and the landscapes they create (Tsing et al., 2017).

The avalanche fences are human made landscapes to protect the community underneath them from avalanches and slush floods. In the beginning, the idea of these seemed appalling – just what was to become of the raw beauty of the stony hill above the village? Now, the fences are there, and with all the accompanying features – such as easy access to the scenery with the walking paths, outdoors areas and vegetation including trees and bushes – the feeling is good and even nice. The avalanche fences are not only a token of caring, sheltering the village from danger, but also a sign of hope and a future where the least expected outcome of a disaster brings joy and play. They are the imagined futures that are based on the village's ghosts, the tragic happenings that underline human–nature relations (Tsing et al., 2017). The earthworks are now a part of the landscape, they protect, and they give possibilities that were not there before. They enrich the everyday life of the people in Patreksfjörður and make them feel safe. Perhaps the fences will resemble those found in state agricultural landscapes. In these landscapes, that is, to be one of society's constructions, and as such a natural part of the landscape, reflecting the paradox discussed by Huijbens (2020). By this notion, society's constructions are a part of the vastness of human experience, when the human-made constructions are such a familiar part of the surroundings that they are seen as a part of the natural environment.

My aunt Laufey is one of the people having to leave her house because of avalanche hazards through the years. At one point it was a question of if she could even live there. I visited my aunt Laufey when the avalanche fences were well on their way and the landscape had changed considerably. There are high avalanche fences above her street, a triangle, another fence is in her line of sight into the fjord and wind shaping structures in the form of trees or figures have been built high up at the edge of the mountain above: "I call them angels!" she says when we stand outside her house viewing the structure on the edge of the mountain. Her words are a good example of the feeling people in Patreksfjörður have for all these constructions: they watch over the community and protect it. It is staying with the trouble at its outermost, caring and finding a way for everything to flourish and cooperate, for life to proceed.

It is possible to tell many stories of avalanche fences in V-Barð, but the ones that have been told of here are both ghostly and monstrous. They are ghostly in the way of building for the future on the settlement's disasters, and the past capitalistic locating of a village under steep

mountainsides near rich fishing grounds. Moreover, they are monstrous in the deformed mountain which can be seen as monstrous in itself with its steep slopes, but also in the avalanche fences. We can say that they are staying with the trouble for the future of Patreksfjörður village because they make it possible for people to thrive in dangerous places.

Let us now look into the last example of human–nature relations in V-Barð, the example of conservation where humans have preserved parts of the county to prevent it from being used in ways other than for humans to enjoy, and which are special in some way or another, for example, because of educational and cultural validity.

2.4 To protect – conservation

2.4.1 Vatnsfjörður nature reserve

Nature conservation came into my life in 1975, in the form of a woman that the locals called "Nature-Lára". It was the years after the celebration of the 1100-year settlement in Iceland (which I talked about in the introduction chapter) where people had concluded that Vatnsfjörður was the most beautiful place in the country. In 1975, Vatnsfjörður was made a conservation area, to protect the place and its wildlife and to ensure people's access to it. Nature-Lára was the first ranger in Vatnsfjörður. I remember her as a "new kind of a person" that represented a new reality and new relations to nature and care for nature in a way that I had not experienced before: She was concerned about where people camped and where they threw away their trash. She drove around, putting up signs and trash bins and monitored traffic. I could feel that her power was tangible and locals trying to get their head around these new human–nature relations, nature conservation. With time and experience we absorbed the meaning of nature conservation and that it would not threaten our liveability as farmers. The livestock could still go to its summer grazing pastures, but nature conservation measures would prevent any imposition on these areas. My family formed new relations to nature when we took over Nature-Lára's positions as rangers, taking care of the camping sites in Vatnsfjörður's conservation area, gathering rubbish, counting tents and monitoring traffic. Nature-Lára on the other hand became a member of parliament and in my mind, it was exactly a place for a woman like her.

The story of Vatnsfjörður changed when Vatnsfjörður reserve was established in 1975 (see *Figure 18*). A new thread now emerged to weave the fabric of future stories of the landscape, the thread of nature conservation. This new way of thinking adapted to the land use that was there before, agriculture and tourism. Nature conservation arrived on fertile ground in Vatnsfjörður, like the aquaculture in the villages, as the registered stories of Vatnsfjörður's beautiful landscapes and views go back centuries (e.g., Jónsson, 1976; Ólafsson & Pálsson, 1974; Skaptason, 1959; Þjóðhátíðarnefnd, 1974), and locals used to go there on their day off, enjoying the wilderness (Jónsson, 1976).

The foundation for the establishment of national parks and protected areas is rooted in the growing urbanisation in the middle of the nineteenth century, whereby nature gained a new perspective as the opposite of the crowded and polluted city (Lund, 2013). Nature was something out there that was pure and untouched by humans, and therefore desirable to visit to renew the core of oneself which had a stronger relationship to something purer and more

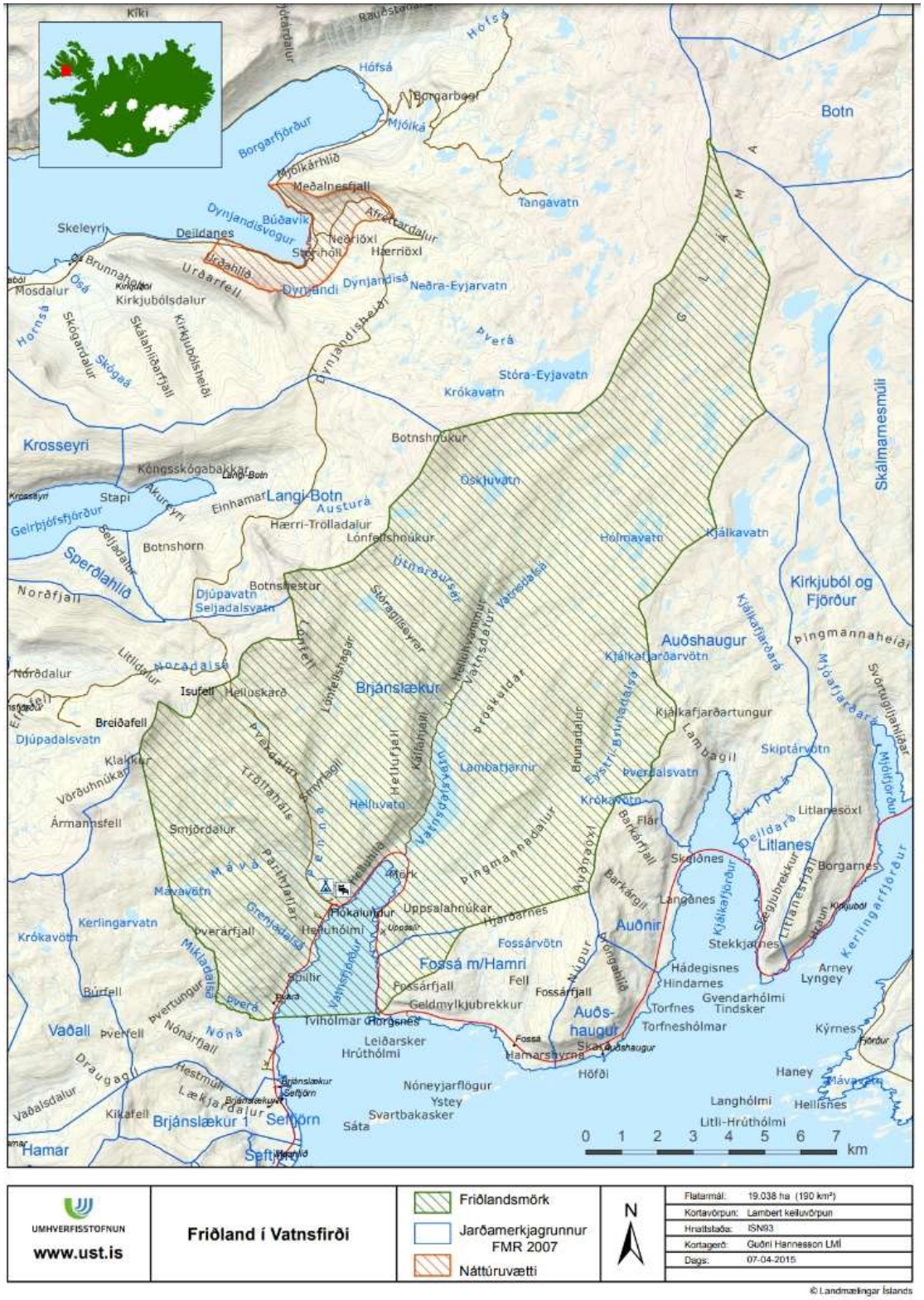


Figure 18 Vatnsfjörður (green) reserved area. The area around Dynjandi is in red (EAI, 2024c). Map: Landmælingar Íslands.

primitive than the busy city (Cronon, 1996). Wilderness and nature are strongly connected to culture and thus these change in accordance with the ideas humans have about them (Cronon, 1996). How it is pictured has varied from landscapes that people wished to avoid because they correlated to being left out of society, to places that would be attractive in themselves because of how different they were from people's everyday life places (ibid.). These ideas about nature and wilderness are related to the ideology of romanticism and the post-frontier ideology of the nineteenth century, Cronon (1996) argues. Romantic ideas about the wilderness were connected to sublime landscapes, which evoke emotions such as a feeling of being closer to divine powers. Furthermore, the frontier ideology "was a return to simpler, more primitive living" (Cronon, 1996, p. 15), just like the settlers on the American plains Cronon explains further. Wilderness was thus a place out of time and history that offered "the illusion that we can escape the cares and troubles of the world" (Cronon, 1996, p. 16).

Vatnsfjörður reserve is grounded in emotions like this; people being away from their everyday lives and experiencing and enjoying the sublime, as mentioned earlier. Moreover, it is related to the post-frontier ideology as the place of the first settler, Hrafna-Flóki and his people, who settled in Vatnsfjörður and named the country Iceland, as mentioned in the introduction chapter. Furthermore, it is a place of symbolic unification because the National Celebration happened there in 1974, in Vatnsdalur valley in the middle of the reserved area. It can thus be said that the Vatnsfjörður reserve is a place of manifold meanings, which have played an important part in its conservation. The reserved area itself is 20,000 hectares of stony highlands with small lakes and little vegetation and scant lowlands which are covered with scrubs and other vegetation. Vatnsdalsvatn lake is in the heart of the reserve in Vatnsdalur valley, a 2.4 square km lake where it is possible to go fishing in the lake and rivers and walk around in the valley, as it is a known outdoor area. It was thus no coincidence that the celebration of the settlement was in Vatnsfjörður. Furthermore, the establishment of Vatnsfjörður reserve a year later came as no surprise, because there had been pressure for increased accessibility to Vatnsfjörður on behalf of the guests and locals who attended the celebration. Vatnsfjörður reserve was protected on the grounds of geological formations, flora, and fauna (Hjálmarsson, 1975), and for the accessibility of people who wished to enjoy the outdoors (EAI, 2023). The timing was right, as the first Nature Preservation Laws in Iceland from 1956 had been remodelled in 1973, expanded and with better guidelines for nature conservation in the country (Jónsson, 2006).

With the Conservation Act, the story of Vatnsfjörður was changed by a new way of thinking which placed emphasis on protection, opening things up for new types of mobilities and more-than-human relations in V-Barð. It created new activities, new jobs, and new possibilities for the imagined future in concordance with nature conservation, combined with new thinking adapted to the traditional land uses in Vatnsfjörður. Leisure activities that had already been practiced were now given a formal basis. Labour unions obtained permission to build summerhouses in Vatnsfjörður for their members to dwell in, enabling them to experience the countryside for a period of time, and walking paths were created for better access and, simultaneously, to protect the environment. Signs were put up for monitoring, and rangers hired. Today there is a specialist from the EAI working year-round in the area, with several rangers also employed during the high season from May to October, or even longer.

Figure 19 The canyons of Vatnsdalur are some of the highlighted destinations in Vatnsfjörður reserve. Image: EBE.

There are plans to widen the conservation area of Vatnsfjörður to include other reserved areas in the neighbourhood within Dynjandisþjóðgarður National Park in the south of the Westfjords, confirming how well established Vatnsfjörður reserve is in the minds of people, whilst also reminding us how our relation to and ideas of wilderness change (Cronon, 1996). These ideas have been in progress since 2020, after the Icelandic state received the farm, Dynjandi, as a gift from the Icelandic State Electricity provider, RARIK, in 2019. Dynjandi waterfall, from which this farm got its name, is a nature reserve and the most popular tourist destination in the Westfjords. The argument for the national park was "to protect and preserve [the] unique area for posterity" (EAI, 2021b), and by so doing to "create an integral area of invaluable natural sites and cultural and historical heritage" (ibid.). The plans for the national park provide a good indicator of how the ideology of conservation has rooted and changed in V-Barð since 1975, and how V-Barð has changed with it (Cronon, 1996). There has been a shift from small, protected areas to bigger connected sustainable units where people can live, but still only in particular areas. If this change reflects Icelandic culture, it indicates how nature and wilderness are more a part of human life than it was fifty years ago, as it is now acceptable to conserve bigger areas, with human habitats being allowed within reserved areas. This change could also display a practical site where bigger units are seen as more sustainable. Additionally, it is also indicated that there are other values in nature than the traditional ones, for example economic values as tourism, where Icelandic nature exerts a great attraction. That would be a continuum of the story of tourism in V-Barð, for V-Barð has always been a place of travel, and as early as 1976, Icelanders as well as foreigners were

guests in the locality at Hótel Flókalundur, with Vatnsfjörður being seen as one of the destinations of travellers as well as locals (Jónsson, 1976). *Figure 19* shows the heart of Vatnsfjörður reserve, the canyon innermost in Vatnsdalur which is one of the highlighted destinations in Vatnsfjörður reserve.

In June 2021, when the establishment of the National Park was well on its way, concerns were raised about land use within the conserved area. Suggestions about using parts of the Vatnsfjörður reserve for a hydropower plant were made, and the signing of the agreement regarding the National Park was postponed (Guðlaugs Drífudóttir, 2021). The imagined futures of conservation and a national park for the south part of the Westfjords were haunted by old ideas about utilisation and progress (Tsing et al., 2017). The ideas about utilisation and progress tell different stories than the ones of conservation and multispecies flourishing, but perhaps the former are more traditional than the latter in the Westfjords, and yet here it depends on which bedtime stories one is used to listening to (Höckert, 2020).

2.4.2"It matters …"[12]

In the Anthropocene we meet with our ghosts as well as with our monsters. They come to us in our way of thinking "[w]hereas progress trained us to keep moving forward, to look up to an apex at the end of the horizon, ghosts show us multiple unruly temporalities" (Tsing et al., 2017, p. G8) which we have made with our headless affairs unaware of the impact (Tsing et al., 2017). "[G]lobal pollution, the movements of capital, climate change and many more, – look different when assessed from the perspective of planetary damage. They show us ghosts, the multiple stories of landscape effects" (ibid.). However, we are now aware. It has become clear in the Anthropocene that the human impact on nature can be harmful for life on Earth. With the Anthropocene we have recognised that humans are a part of a bigger whole, and we are related and overlapping and living on the same planet. Lorimer stresses that in the Anthropocene, we have gone past nature as a single, timeless, and pure domain, living in a hybrid world – which is "neither natural nor social […] the Anthropocene is multinatural" (2015, p. 2). Instead of *nature* Lorimer uses the term *wildlife* to develop his ontology – *the ontology of wildlife* where wildlife is everywhere – inside us and in our surroundings. Nature is thus neither out there nor single, it is a part of us, and we are a part of it.

As a part of nature, it is inevitable that humans make their mark on the Earth, as Cronon (1996) stresses. It is only a question of what marks we want to leave and if we want to be responsible towards other living beings on Earth concerning the marks we leave (ibid.). With the knowledge humans have about their influence on the Earth, it is important that they recognise their place in nature among other critters (Haraway, 2016), from which humans can learn to behave responsibly, with multispecies flourishing in mind (Cronon, 1996; Haraway, 2016; Weber, 2019). For the Anthropocene has brought forth a certain human way of thinking about progress, the "ladder thinking", from the simple to the more complex, which has led them astray and excluded other ways of movement, evolution and imagined futures (Hejnol, 2017). That is why it matters which ideas are put forth and held in mind when it comes to thinking about human–nature relations. Furthermore, the ideas proposed and the thoughts considered are part of V-Barð's responsibilities towards the present state

[12] (Haraway, 2016, p. 12).

of the Earth. We are all responsible for the situation and for what happens now, as well as in the future, but each and every one of us is responsible in different ways (Haraway, 2016), along with the people living in V-Barð.

Figure 20 A brick from the old whale and herring factory in Stekkeyri. Image: EBE.

Regarding the protection of nature, Cronon (1996) warns against putting humans aside from nature because this encourages alienation and irresponsibility towards life on Earth. The way forward is through negotiations, where all life on Earth is meaningful and humans are a part of nature. He encourages us to look at the world as our home, for home "is the place where finally we make our living. It is the place for which we take responsibility, the place we try to sustain so we can pass on what is best in it (and in ourselves) to our children" (Cronon, 1996, p. 24). This aligns with the previously mentioned concept of enlivenment that Weber (2019) talks about, where the wellbeing of others is put first instead of that of the individual. While the majority of people in the Westfjords are supportive of the establishment of the National Park, also seeing opportunities for strengthening infrastructure regarding tourism, which would then also strengthen local infrastructure, their preferences are for safety and different kinds of prosperity, for the human community in the region comes first (Guðlaugs Drífudóttir, 2022; MEEC, 2023). The safety of the human settlement of V-Barð can be seen in different spectrums, for example, in energy, employment, shelters, and connections. Here, traditional stories of how to do things often seem to count more than new stories that people are not familiar with or have scant knowledge about. The old stories have made their mark through time, both for better and worse, as human settlement and industrial ruins in the Westfjords today testify. They are like scars in the landscape, telling its story in the way that

Stewart (1996) talks about, where the past haunts places and bodies, “where life has left its impact – the scars, the locations of pain, the disfigurements, the amputations, the muscles and joints and bones that remember” (p. 148). These ruins have often assimilated with their surroundings as the brick in the old whale and herring factory at Stekkeyri spit in the north of the Westfjords, (see *Figure 20*). Today, it seems to live in harmony with the life around it, with the harsh weather bringing the sea to it, with barnacles making it their home, even though in the past, it encouraged the killing of whales and herring for the benefit of human lives and prosperity. The old industrial ruins are a theme, and they are often a Norwegian theme, as is so with aquaculture, because factory ruins like these are common in Iceland, and in V-Barð. The ruins of a Norwegian whale factory are located in Suðureyri spit in Tálknafjörður.

Nevertheless, old stories are the bedtime stories of many, but not of all, locals. They are the stories that the local communities have more or less emerged through, for example, stories about fisheries and agriculture. Locals are familiar with the old stories and know their rhythms and plots. They are a part of the stories and relate to them. In that way the old stories can be said to belong to the place because it is the story that has been acted upon and has in a way made the place. Tourism, on the other hand, having not been a part of the villages’ stories until recently, downplays its importance for V-Barð, as do stories and imagined futures of conservation which are also more related to the countryside than the villages in V-Barð. In the preliminary planning work of the National Park, people in the Westfjords raised their concerns about the detrimental influences it could have on the community of V-Barð. They also raised their concerns about not being able to handle their own affairs because of interferences from elsewhere, for example, the government, which some asserted were the promoters of the National Park.

Ideas about a hydropower plant in Vatnsfjörður reserve creates imagined futures haunted by ghosts of the industrial past (Tsing et al., 2017). They are stories believed to help in dealing with the crisis of the Anthropocene, for they are felt to support the green transition (Logadóttir, 2024), the prosperity of human communities in the Westfjords with a growing population, and new opportunities in power-intensive industrial futures (Hreinsson, 2015; MEEC, 2023). These are ghostly ideas about the future, where the future is haunted by conceptions of the past and protected nature is downgraded due to the needs of humans. The plot of the story would be saving the planet by building a hydropower plant in a protected area, as advocates for the power plant underline its construction being for the green transition, among other things (MEEC, 2022). At this time in the story, it is necessary to remember that the number of wilderness or protected areas is decreasing worldwide, although these areas are seen as important for the future, for example, for multispecies flourishing (Ágústsdóttir & Hrólfsdóttir, 2023; Ófeig náttúruvernd, 2023). However, the storyline is focused on the terms of isolation and nationalism, with the Westfjords needing to have sustainable electricity (MEEC, 2022). This means that the Westfjords are isolated from other parts of the country and that they need to take care of themselves. This is a common theme on social media when it comes to the prosperity of the Westfjords. It is also something that came up in the interviews, the feeling of being left behind and not important enough to have good connections to the rest of the country, which I will address in Chapter 4 about *Road encounters*. This occurs together with the feeling that people in the Westfjords are not able to take care of their own business because of interference from above, or to put it better, from the south, where the administrative powers are located. Locals feel they need

to take business into their own hands and that includes imagined futures of needing to be sustainable with electricity.

However, not all locals are used to progressive stories of industrial futures. Some do recognise other storylines as ones of conservation, seeing value in Vatnsfjörður reserve. Icelandic authorities are a part of that story but in a different way. In that story, they are requested to take responsibility for possessing 43% of European wilderness (Carver, n.d.) by caring for their reserved areas, such as Vatnsfjörður reserve, and protect their multispecies flourishing (Ágústsdóttir & Hrólfsdóttir, 2023; Landvernd, 2023; Ófeig náttúruvernd, 2023). Furthermore, in the narrative of the green transition, the Westfjords are not the only characters of the story, and a hydropower plant in the Vatnsfjörður reserved area is not the protagonist. This is because in this story the region is a part of a bigger whole, Iceland, and as such, Iceland as a country, handles such matters on comprehensive terms (Landvernd, 2023). The electrical distribution system plays the main role (ibid.) in this, alongside the revelation of preferences in energy utilisation, and with Iceland having already legalised European regulations regarding this, which need to be fulfilled (Logadóttir, 2023, 2024; Þriðji orkupakki ESB nr. 93/2017). The story also includes other alternatives or characters, such as drilling for warm water (MEEC, 2022, 2023), instead of compromising a half a century old reserve in Vatnsfjörður. The pillars of the story rest on the grounds of collective responsibility towards the human societies in the Westfjords, with prioritising of electricity distribution for the whole country (Logadóttir, 2023, 2024) and of protected areas, by strengthening their value in the realm of unruly temporalities (Tsing et al., 2017). Imagined futures built on conservation and multispecies flourishing have gained momentum throughout the process or story of the National Park, which has yet to be told. Local authorities see value in the reserved area of Vatnsfjörður and "want to give nature the benefit of the doubt" (Vesturbyggð, 2023a), thus rejecting the building of a hydropower plant in the reserve (ibid.).

The story of Dynjandisþjóðgarður National Park is to be continued but which storyline it follows and what "forms" it will take on, is uncertain. In the eyes of many, a hydropower plant in Vatnsfjörður reserve is a monster that would destroy the National Park's prosperous future by turning a big part of it into an industrial area with dams, roads, and other industrial infrastructure, totally changing the reserve's appearance. It is important to also mention the impact it would have on the multispecies flourishing of the reserve, stapling and controlling the water that runs from the lakes in the mountains, through the rivers and Vatnsdalsvatn lake down to the sea. The EAI has said that a hydropower plant in Vatnsfjörður reserve would repeal the status of the reserved area (Ágústsdóttir & Hrólfsdóttir, 2023). The building of a hydropower plant would threaten the purpose of the National Park, that is, "to protect and preserve a unique place for coming generations" (EAI, 2021a), for "with the protection [of the National Park], a complete area will be created that contains priceless natural and cultural monuments and history" (ibid.). Nevertheless, as I have frequently mentioned in this chapter, there are different attitudes towards different matters of human–nature relations in V-Barð, and for some a hydropower plant in the Vatnsfjörður reserved area is exactly what the Westfjords need for securing the future. For them a hydropower plant is thus a good monster that brings hope and a bright future to the human communities, with the population growing and prosperity of the past. This is just as the avalanche fences in Patreksfjörður and "the Savior", as the aquaculture industry is described by some, are now pictured in the minds of many locals. In this, the value of the Vatnsfjörður reserve is extended because of the value of the energy that might be captured there for human consumption. Furthermore, in their

opinion, Dynjandisþjóðgarður National Park and a hydropower plant can coexist, and one does not exclude the other, rather they would both contribute to the communities of the Westfjords.

With this I am reminded about a story I was told about an old woman visiting the place in the Westfjords where she was born, which by then had been turned into a hydropower plant. When she saw the bare canyons that used to be filled with torrential waterfalls (from the river named Mjólká, E. Milk River) she said, "Just think about that, my river is the light source of an entire nation!" I have always interpretated the story to mean that the old lady was proud about her river accomplishing such a great task, having herself been brought up without electricity. I asked myself whether she did not see the bare canyons of the river, and if she noticed the pipe coming down the hill instead of the waterfalls (see *Figure 21*). This was in the 1970s, and electricity had only recently been connected to every or almost every house in Iceland. Sadly for the old lady, Mjólká Power Plant does not provide electricity for the entire nation, although with further extensions its capacity reaches to over 70 GWh (Orkubú Vestfjarða, 2023). However, the difference from visiting the turbulent waterfall of Dynjandi (see *Figure 8* in the introduction chapter, p. 20) just a fjord away from Mjólká, is striking. Through the years there have been plans to harness Dynjandi's powers, either the waterfall itself or its drainage area (e.g., Jóhannsson, 1946; Karlsson, 2015a, 2015b). Dynjandi was conserved in 1981, and the intended national park bares its name, Dynjandisþjóðgarður National Park.

Figure 21 The canyons of the Mjólká river in 2022. Image: EBE.

The two storylines of Vatnsfjörður reserve that I have followed are different, each referring to different mobilities of V-Barð. Though they are in agreement concerning continuing the story of Dynjandisþjóðgarður National Park, for the positive impact that it would have on nature and local communities in the Westfjords (MEEC, 2023; Vesturbyggð, 2023a). The Dynjandisþjóðgarður National Park's story can thus be seen as a different story of the domestication of nature to the one that people are used to. There, nature is indeed seen as a resource, but as a different one and in terms of tourism and access to wildlife and nature that gains more in "value" every day because it is becoming scarcer. In that way, Dynjandi waterfall has already been harnessed, for it is the top destination of tourists in the Westfjords with good infrastructure for tourism (EAI, 2024a; Thorhallsdottir, 2024).

The potential establishment of Dynjandisþjóðgarður National Park is a sign of how the human perspective on nature has changed over the last half a century. The change has grown from ideas about nature as pure and out there, and in the need of protection, where diverse areas were conserved in the south of the Westfjords in the late twentieth century. Changing ideas about nature mean it is viewed as a part of humans (Cronon, 1996; Lorimer, 2015), with ideas about conservation turning to bigger conserved areas where people can also reside. Lorimer stresses that "[k]nowing wildlife is a passionate and embodied practice, and these passions for wildlife generate value in conservation" (2015, p. 181). Cronon (1996) stresses "wilderness can teach profound feelings of humility and respect as we confront our fellow beings and the earth itself" (p. 23). There are new human–nature relations at play in V-Barð, even though the old and ghostly ones also appear when old ideas are seen as useful for the future (Tsing et al., 2017). My interviewees told me that locals pursue these relations by walking in the wilderness, sea bathing and talking about the value of living so close to nature. The authorities recognise their part in nature by voting against plans for a hydropower plant in the Vatnsfjörður reserved area (Vesturbyggð, 2023a). There are effective human–nature relations, caring and acting on belongingness, in the way Wright (2015) talks about belonging as action that is responsibly enacted.

It appears that the care, action, and belonging illustrate a greater awareness of the value of human–nature relations in V-Barð. That might include approaches to conservation more in line with those that Lorimer (2015) and Cronon (1996) talk about regarding the bases of a hybrid nature, nature within and all around us but not out there. Perhaps the dilemma of Vatnsfjörður reserve has brought up these meanings and some locals voted on staying with nature on her own terms and value. Staying with the trouble fighting against a new kind of land use in Vatnsfjörður reserve that a hydropower plant would be in these landscapes of nature reserve and multispecies flourishing. That completes the circle of symbiosis and the awareness that the Anthropocene has brought us, along with leaving us with the understanding of being a part of nature and responsible in different ways according to our relations. That is why it matters what thoughts we think when we consider the future (Haraway, 2016).

2.5 Multivocality

In the chapter I have told stories and followed human–nature relations in V-Barð to see how the place is shaped through them, focusing on humans as a part of nature and confirming ontological relationality which is expressive and diverse. It turns out that human–nature relations in V-Barð are often a question of opportunity cost, and about the pros and cons of

these relations. The human–nature relations I have followed are the ones that were most apparent in the research and can be said to be shaped through utilisation, defence, and protection.

The utilising patterns of V-Barð address occupational activities and the thriving of humans. Aquaculture is a part of V-Barð's history just like other previous economic sectors, such as agriculture and fisheries. Aquaculture has indeed a certain advantage on other, new sectors because big parts of the community were built up around fisheries, which are in many ways strongly related to aquaculture. The fjords of V-Barð are sheltered and clean and they are big enough to embrace all kinds of activity, or as it appears, most kinds of activity, the ones that shape conditions for human communities to flourish. However, there is also evidence of aquaculture not belonging in V-Barð because of its local pollution in the fjords, consisting of salmon louse and waste, and there is also the issue of the behaviour of salmon that escape from the sea cages, as their instinct is to swim up rivers, bringing the risk of genetic pollution of the Icelandic wild salmon stock. Looking at aquaculture through the eyes of Tsing et al. (2017) and folklore stories of sea monsters in Arnarfjörður, salmon can be seen as monstrous in their numbers and out of place existence (ibid.). However, the story about aquaculture in V-Barð is not solely a bad monster's story, but also a positive one, as it nurtures the human settlement in the villages, bringing hope and belief to the communities once again.

The defensive stories I have followed have brought me to the gigantic avalanche fences of Patreksfjörður village. Standing up on them contemplating their existence, the story they tell is one of the overwhelming mountain, which can be monstrous when accompanied by water and temperature, and the fragility of the village beneath, which from the vantage point of the avalanche fences seems tiny. The avalanche fences are fences between the "monster" and human settlement. That is, even though people that do not live in Patreksfjörður and have not experienced the relations of steep mountains, temperature, and water, regard the avalanche fences as a monster because of their size and location, and this is not the case. For locals, the fences do indeed belong to the place and are a part of it, with the care and shelter they offer from disastrous encounters with the monstrous mountain above. In this case, the avalanche fences and related items are good monsters, and even angels that protect the settlement underneath them.

Protectional stories in V-Barð are no less messy than other stories of the region. I have told the story of Vatnsfjörður nature reserve in the chapter. Unsurprisingly, there are preferences that favour humans in human–nature relations in V-Barð, where the story that protected the place for half a century has undergone a shift to include the benefits of a possible human future involving a hydropower plant being built there (Haraway, 2016). It is a question of conservation belonging in V-Barð and in which way the community will move in the future. There are stories of conservation belonging and being accepted in V-Barð, together with other stories of how the perspectives on conservation have changed from being apart from humans to humans belonging within nature and thus to conservation. It is a perspective whereby humans are a part of nature because their relations have been made clear in the Anthropocene, where the impact of humans on nature is apparent. This explains why industrial ideas about the future are haunted by the ghostly progress of the past (Tsing et al., 2017), and their manifestations are seen as monsters in conserved places.

Thinking about human–nature relations in V-Barð has underlined how places are complex and multivocal (Bender, 2002; Bursta et al., 2023). One person's monster is someone else's angel, and we understand how, if we are curious and willing to listen in a different way, it is

possible to hear other stories than the ones we are used to listening to, but we need to acknowledge this. Locals in V-Barð want to be able to live and build their homes there and thrive. They may even not have an opinion on aquaculture, avalanche fences, conservation, or a hydropower plant, but for the last decade, since aquaculture came to the fjords, avalanche fences were built and tourism started to increase, and their houses have grown in value. Moreover, they have jobs, and they need to be sheltered and able to develop their communities. Locals in V-Barð are willing to find ways forward and are concerned about their relations, for example, how monitoring of the aquaculture can best be implemented. The influences of these new relations are so broad that locals cannot and do not want to say no to them, and they must find a way to coexist with the changes, a way to stay with the trouble for the prosperity of the community (Haraway, 2016).

On the other hand, the human position towards nature has changed, since humans are now aware of being a part of nature, and conscious about the influences they have on their surroundings. In light of this information, should locals not also take on responsibilities in concordance to that and listen to the multivocal place that V-Barð now is? In this, V-Barð is faced with its ghosts and monsters. To stay with the trouble of the Anthropocene means to take other stories into account and act in a way that supports multispecies flourishing. This is an ongoing debate in V-Barð, as well as globally, and it is important that humans learn to live and think according to the knowledge that the Anthropocene has given us. It is not an easy task, but a task that needs to be dealt with. Places are multiple and constantly evolving but never static (Jóhannesson & Lund, 2021), but life of all kinds flows through them, and it is most important that this is as diverse as possible and not limited to one species, or to one story. It is vital to recognise that humans are a part of a larger whole, that their story is not the only one that matters. I have talked about human–nature relations in V-Barð as monstrous and ghostly, but also as friendly ghosts and monsters. Further, through our human–nature relations we humans can also turn into monsters and ghosts. In this case it matters how and with what thoughts we think about these relations, how we talk about them and listen to them.

3 Examining place mobilities through walking and map analysis

It has become a habit of mine, a kind of ritual after accomplishing a walk, to gather my thoughts about the walk in my notebook and draw a line on a map tracing the walk, sitting on the terrace of my parents' house, Seftjörn, with a cup of tea. When I have finished, I polish my nails or repair the nail polish I have on if it has been damaged in the rigours of the walk. It is a relaxing moment, and I enjoy it, reposing in the sun afterwards. Today the sun is demanding, bright and warm, and I have complications seeing the map when trying to draw my line of today's walk on it. I have to be thorough to get it right and segregating it from the lines I have already drawn there.

I am fascinated by lines in landscapes: the visible ones, and the lines I can feel on my skin, such as those that I call weather lines, or the lines that appear to me through narratives and place names regarding history and folklore in multiple spaces and time (Armstrong, 2010; Bender, 2002). This fascination is something I developed while walking and studying the landscapes of V-Barð. Often, I would walk old routes between districts in V-Barð, and as I "gathered" these routes on my map by drawing the lines of the paths I walked, I noticed that they told different stories about V-Barð than I was used to when living there and driving the modern roads. The discussion within this chapter contributes to the thesis as a whole by demonstrating how old routes and modern roads can be seen as indicators concerning how V-Barð has evolved as a place, and I ask the following question: *How does walking old routes, analysing maps, and studying place names reveal the changing mobilities of a place?*

To walk old routes, analyse maps and study place names is an example of a multivocal method. Together, these different ways to move around (in space and time) enabled me to capture voices or narratives that brought forth a different story of mobilities in V-Barð than I had been used to. In practice, this involved going back and forth, beginning with analysing maps, then walking, drawing my line of wayfaring on a map, reading place name files, walking again, analysing maps, and then looking at them through the lense of historical occurrences. Blending the embodied knowledge of walking with the empirical knowledge of place names and maps (Aldred & Lucas, 2018) lit up the environment, connecting landscapes and places in a totally different way. It created special atmospheres and revealed layers of past mobilities (Armstrong, 2010). Without trying to romanticise past mobilities I sought to capture the mobilities of V-Barð through its routes and roads. The method and the data is comprised of and derived from a mixture of different sources concerning knowing one's way around in the world, and how space becomes familiar and how the human body reacts to landscape (Aldred & Lucas, 2018). Further discussion of the methodology can be seen in Chapter 1.5.2., page 20.

This chapter is divided into two parts in addition to the conclusion: I begin with Chapter *3.1., Changing mobilities*, discussing how the mobilities of V-Barð emerge through routes and roads from different times, developing from being like irregular threads stretching over or following the landscape to progressively straighter lines sliding through it: We can call them lines of mobilities through which V-Barð has come into being as a place. I then go deeper

into the old routes themselves in Chapter *3.2., Navigating landscapes*, where I discuss how navigating them becomes a skill, taking past mobilities of the place into consideration in the light of history in the form of place names and waymarker cairns. I conclude my findings in Chapter *3.3., Multivocal knowledge*.

3.1 Changing mobilities

The terrace of my old home, Seftjörn, faces the main road, Barðastrandarvegur, road 62. The road I know and have travelled so many times although it is not the road I grew up with. Seftjörn is located on a small ness reaching out to the sea with cliffs on two sides of it and the seashore and fields on the other two sides. The main house is situated a little above its surroundings, and the road I knew best from my childhood was just below it. Well-defined traces of a yet older road reach up from the sea to the ness, and it seems like the main house was almost built on it.

Until recently, this road was of no significance to me because I didn't know what it was. In my adult life I have found out its purpose: It was a road from the main house in Brjánslækur (Seftjörn is a new farm from the main farm Brjánslækur) to the seashore where the landing was, where boats used to harbour, to bring goods and get people across the fjord. It was a travelled place, for Brjánslækur was one of the main landings in the area. For me, the old road is an artifact of these old times.

Traces of the past are all around, some we recognise, others we know nothing about: The old routes of V-Barð are like irregular threads in the landscape, and I notice them when I know their purpose or story but otherwise, they "sink" into the landscape unnoticed because they are of no importance to me.

Old routes can appear as irregular lines or threads stretching over the landscape. Sometimes they collide or cross each other, and sometimes they intertwine, in a meaningful or less meaningful relationship to me, for instance the many tracks of a "head route" to its multiple destinations at the end or beginning of it. Ingold (2016) calls trails like this a "meshwork of entangled lines" (p. 82) (see *Figure 22*), and refers to them as "archi-textural" rather than "architectural" as it is in the entanglement of lines, not in the connection of points, that the mesh is constituted" (ibid., p. 81). When walking the old routes, I was surprised how many there were. Having lived in V-Barð as a child and during a part of my grown-up life, I was used to travelling by car on the road which superseded the old roads from the middle of the twentieth century, stretching out as a stable grey line through the community. It thus came as a surprise to me that the old routes were everywhere: in between, under, beneath, above, and to the side of the modern road, situated in places that were farther away and out of sight of the main road. In *Figure 22*, old and new routes and roads have been drawn on a map of V-Barð, with the old routes being blue, and the modern roads being red, in two thickness ratios to define asphalt and gravel roads. The map shows how the old routes lie between settlements, often reaching in several directions from each place, depending upon where they headed to. For me, when both walking them and looking at them on a map, they formed something like a meshwork which keeps pace with the landscape, organically (Ingold, 2016). The map, displayed in *Figure 22*, also shows how the mobilities of V-Barð have changed from this meshwork formation of entangled lines to a progressing line sliding through the community, which is more in relation to enacting two- or three-dimensional and measurable

Euclidean space (Poorthuis & Zook, 2021). It is a progressing line in the sense of being straighter and more standardised than the meshwork that characterises the past routes, although both need to take the mountainous landscape into account. The modern roads are more like a hierarchical tree-like crown, with smaller branches stretching out from the thick trunk of the main tree, and seemingly, less related to the entanglement of human mobilities and the landscape which appears to characterise the old routes. This is because the modern road is constructed for vehicles with heavy machinery rather than for the walking or riding of the workforce of horses and humans with basic tools, as the old routes were.

Armstrong (2010) encourages us to consider the ghosts that human travels have left in old routes and how they bring forth different times, spaces and culture. Here, Armstrong talks about haunted landscapes and spectral dimensions of space. Space is always multi-layered, and humans inhabit many spaces at the same time. Henceforth, old routes, waymarkers on the trail and place names give modern wayfarers a glimpse of the past and enable them to recognise the spectral dimensions that they are inevitably a part of. Looking at landscapes with reference to past wayfarers as well as Euclidean space helps us to understand the world, and that the Euclidean measurable way of seeing space is but one of many possible conceptualisations of the world (Poorthuis & Zook, 2021). Lorimer and Lund (2003) point out how it can be helpful "[u]sing qualitative methods to explore the embodied animation of quantitative abstractions [as it] means being sensitive to contrasting forms of knowledge production, but not definitive as to their relationship" (p. 142). The method I use in looking at mobilities in V-Barð through human past and present mobility lines is in concordance with this; walking the old routes, exploring them on maps and driving contemporary roads, which brings new knowledge and understanding regarding the mobilities of V-Barð.

Harvey (2010) discussed how the cement road in Peru became a promise for connection and change. Lund and Jóhannesson (2012) talk about how the dirt road in Strandir, a peripheral region in Iceland, although being promising regarding connections in 1966, can today be seen as unfinished and left behind. It is not so that one type of line is better than the other, rather it is the case that old routes and modern roads enact V-Barð in different ways, altering the distance between places, connecting some more strongly, shortening distances, while moving other places further away. Undoubtedly, some routes were travelled more or less in the past also, but the modern road system encourages a hierarchy of roads where "shortcuts" between "lesser significant places" are not an option, as they were before the age of the automobile. Here, the change in road construction and alteration in mobilities of humans by car, rather than on foot or by riding, have made the difference, as well as ruling out past destinations which are no longer inhabited, for example farms that were once on the beaten track. This change underlines how landscape is both measurable as a stable unit, but also fluent and mobile in space and time, for space is created through the performance of many actors or actants, and thus it is constantly being made and remade, with actors involved in many spaces simultaneously as further observed (Armstrong, 2010; Lefebvre, 2014; Poorthuis & Zook, 2021). Space is therefore always in the process of becoming (Poorthuis & Zook, 2021), and that is how following the routes and roads of V-Barð helps in bringing forth the mobilities of V-Barð as a place through space and time.

The map (*Figure 22*) brings forth the landscape which characterises V-Barð, a mountainous area with a high plateau, steep mountainsides, and limited lowlands. The settlement in some places can be described as *mini cosmoses* which were sustainable unities of small, inhabited

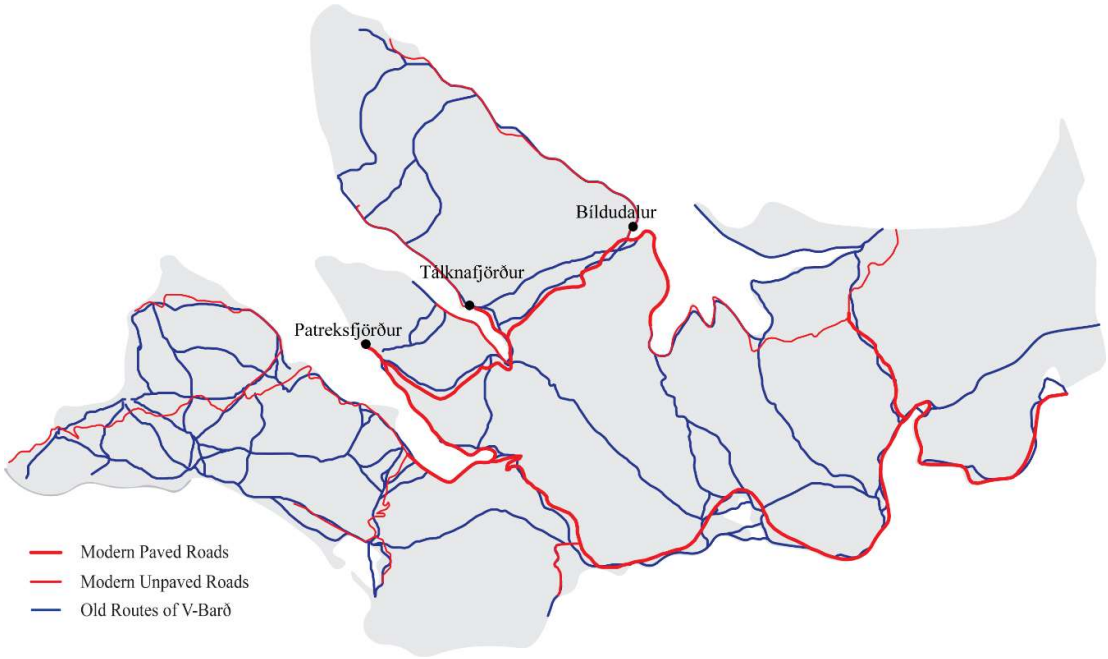


Figure 22 The old routes of V-Barð (blue) form a meshwork over the landscape whilst modern roads (red in two thickness ratios) are like a progressing line sliding through it. The drawing is based on maps from Landmælingar Íslands (2023). Map: ÞEH.

areas, relying on agriculture and fisheries for their maintenance in earlier times, although they were connected to other communities. In some places, a church completed these cosmoses, making them self-sufficient. Routes and roads connect the landscapes, as the ways of travel between and within distributed settlements. They follow the landscape, and the modern road is like a progressive line, but the old routes are more widely distributed. Often the landscape only offers one route, but where fjords and shallow waters cut into the seashore, or mountains and cliffs divide the landscape into districts and communities, old shortcuts over mountains and fjords are common because this was often the easiest way to travel. They are perhaps not marked on maps, although sometimes common routes over shallow waters are, but they make up wayfaring alternatives, which the rhythms of the changing tides and weather are in charge of. Crossing fjords by boats was the preferred way of transportation (Jakobsson, 2015) until the mid-twentieth century.

Discovering the old routes changed the way I saw and understood mobilities in V-Barð. This was a fundamental change that opened up the place for me in a new way. Being used to driving the asphalt and gravel roads, the different rhythm of walking the old routes made all the difference, helping me see how V-Barð has always been changing as a place and how this continues, as well as how it is emerging. Today the population has gathered in small villages that work like nodes in the meshwork (Ingold, 2016), served by the main well-established and serviced road, whilst the countryside suffers from a reduced population, and lesser served roads (Bjarnason & Karlsson, 2019). The old routes indicate a more distributed settlement with different destinations and temporalities. Each presents the times when they were travelled routes and their surroundings were changed with road construction and waymarker buildings, just as the modern roads do today, characterised by highspeed and sloping lowland roads. A more detailed discussion of roads will be presented in Chapter 4, *Road encounters*, p. 79.

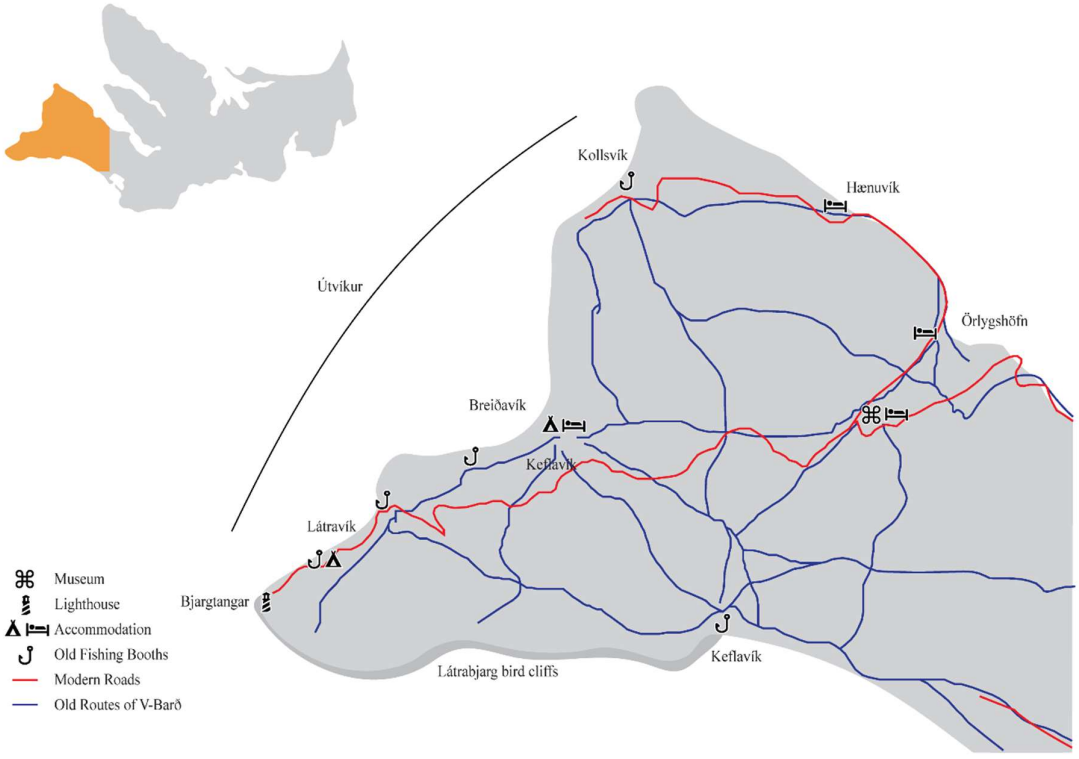


Figure 23 The old routes of the westernmost point of V-Barð, based on maps from Landmælingar Íslands (2023). Notice the two blue lines reaching from Breiðavík and Látravík to the cliff, Látrabjarg. These are routes for bird hunting and egg collecting. Map: ÞEH.

However, why did people move and what motivated them? Why this change in rhythms and destinations? In relation to this I want to draw attention to the westernmost point of V-Barð and indeed to Iceland itself, the Útvíkur bays, meaning the Outer Most Bays of the country. Some say this is the westernmost point of Europe, which is indeed the case if you do not count the Azores Islands in the ocean west of Portugal. Jóhannesson and Lund wrote that "destinations are not fixed or with valid meaning, rather they are products of various connections. They are mobile and fluid and in constant shaping" (2021, p. 50). The case of the Útvíkur bays demonstrates the change of destinations over the last eighty years (*Figure 23*). Here the old routes (blue lines) point to four meaningful destinations when they were beaten tracks. The first example I want to draw attention to are the old fishing booths that are noticeable in four bays, the three Útvíkur bays, Látravík, Breiðavík and Kollsvík, and then in Keflavík bay. There would be a few boats using the smallest fishing booths and up to twenty-five boats fishing from the largest ones until the turn of the twentieth century (Jónsson, 1942). These bays are near rich fishing grounds and the fishing booths were established in several places in earlier times, offering good conditions for landing boats (Jónsson, 1942; Skaptason, 1959). Dried or salted fish were one of the main sources of food and traded goods (Jakobsson, 2015; Jónsson, 1942), along with payments in respect of leased lands (Vésteinsson & Gunnarsdóttir, 1997). Seasonal fishing in spring, summer and autumn attracted people, both locals and people from farther away, from other districts and counties (Gestsson, 1971; Jónsson, 1942; Skaptason, 1959), and for many it was mandatory that they

went fishing for their employer. Old routes to the fishing booths and between inhabited places, for example bays, in the Útvíkur area can be seen on the map, together with well-travelled routes. Although most of the seasonal catch was transported by boat to neighbouring settlements, people from other counties in the east, for example Eastern-Barðastrandarsýsla, transported their seasonal catch over land using these old routes (Skaptason, 1959), as their traces in the landscape bear witness to (see *Figure 24*).

Figure 24 The old route is marked in the landscape. Image: EBE.

It is interesting to perceive these connections of old routes and relate them to history, although some routes do not make sense if one is not familiar with the landscape, and perhaps one has to walk them to understand them fully. The second instance of destinations, which the old routes highlight, are examples of this. Two old routes go from the farms of Látrar and Breiðavík to the bird cliff, Látrabjarg (E. Cliffs of Látrar). In fact, parts of the bird cliff are named after the farms that used to harness them, although in common speech today, the whole of the cliffs bear the name of Látrar farm, Látrabjarg. Thus, the part of the cliffs that the route from Breiðavík farm goes to is named Breiðavíkurbjarg, the Cliffs of Breiðavík. There are also other names for various parts of the cliffs, each referencing their owner, that is, Bæjarbjarg, the Cliffs of Bær, and Keflavíkurbjarg, the Cliffs of Keflavík. The routes reaching from Látrar and Breiðavík to the cliffs are well-established, and with waymarker cairns. They were used by those who went bird catching and egg collecting from those farms. Taking the eggs and birds from the cliffs was essential for human wellbeing. Together with the fishing conducted by people living in the Útvíkur bays, the communities were well-off when it came to food, and they could even help people in other districts when they ran out

of food (Guðmundsson, 1999). This is why the tracks there serve as a reminder of past times, of past mobilities that are still essential, even though things have changed. At first sight, these routes seem to have lost their purpose, but walking them you can see that a part of one of them is still in use, because people still collect eggs from these cliffs. Today egg collectors arrive in cars along the new road (red line), but they have made a track between the new road and old route, enabling them to follow the old route to the edge of the cliffs, because it is the best place for collecting eggs. In doing so they have changed the old route and made it wider, but it is still a pathway leading to a destination that is important.

It is notable how the modern road, the red line, proceeds through the landscape (*Figure 23*), still reaching the main places, the farms, hotels, museums, campsites, and all the way to the lighthouse at Látrabjarg cliff (Bjargtangar, Cliff's Point), which was established in 1948. Today it is a well-travelled road, with up to four hundred cars on busy days during summertime. Travellers want to go to the westernmost point of Iceland and look at the bird cliff where they hunt puffins and other birds with their cameras as Haraway (1984) talks about in her article about Teddy bear patriarchy, where she discusses the concept of bringing nature to the city in the form of hunted animals or pictures of wild animals in the jungle. In the same way tourists at Látrabjarg are bringing puffins into their homes, or the pure Nordic nature that the puffins stand for (Lund et al., 2018). The emphasis on tourism has changed the value of places in the region, as has the depopulation, because there are few people in all-year-around residence in the area and no one in the Útvíkur bays, which used to be full of life, especially during the fishing seasons. There are new destinations as well as some that have lesser weight nowadays, or which have even been forgotten, whilst others have gained new value.

Thus, even if the destinations still exist, the route to them might have changed. The landscape and effort of the human body determine the wayfaring. With that in mind, it becomes clear when walking these landscapes that the route one takes between places is usually the shortest and easiest way possible.

The third example concerning old routes and new roads is a "shortcut" named Lækjarskarð, 430 m above sea level, which was the preferred route to take between the east and west in Barðaströnd, that is, if you had no errands to attend to along the seashore (see *Figure 25)*. It was easier than walking or riding the lowlands following the seashore, which was a somewhat longer route and required more effort, both in terms of distance and elevation gain. The name of the pass also tells us about the destination, as it was the pass to go through on the way to the farm of Brjánslækur, Lækur in short. Historian Sverrir Jakobsson (2015) points out how the settlement on the north coast of Breiðafjörður is intertwined with the main farms in the area from the early ages of settlement, with Brjánslækur being one of them. He also stresses that the location of the main farms was established in connection with good access to the sea, that is nearby good harbouring conditions. Therefore, Brjánslækur was not only a destination for people travelling over land, but also for seafarers, for boats transferring people across Breiðafjörður, or to places within the fjord harboured in Brjánslækur, which still happens today. There are two Lækjarskarð Passes in V-Barð region, both referring to Brjánslækur, because it was the intended destination (see *Figure 25*). This supports Jakobsson's (2015) argument about settlements being connected to the main farms. Brjánslækur was also a vicarage, and thus an important destination for locals during

meaningful life events, as well as for social life and when attending church. Lækjarskarð Pass is an indicator of changing times in human transportation in V-Barð, whereby car journeys took over from walking and horse riding between places. A lowland road there was preferred to a mountain road, and it still is today, as I will discuss further in Chapter 4. Walking Lækjarskarð Pass, thus, brings forth another kind of thinking about travelling, of human effort and landscape. However, it is also a different kind of travelling with different kinds of connections between the human body and its surroundings, depending on whether we go by car, on foot or riding on horseback. How we experience our mobilities is bound to our practice.

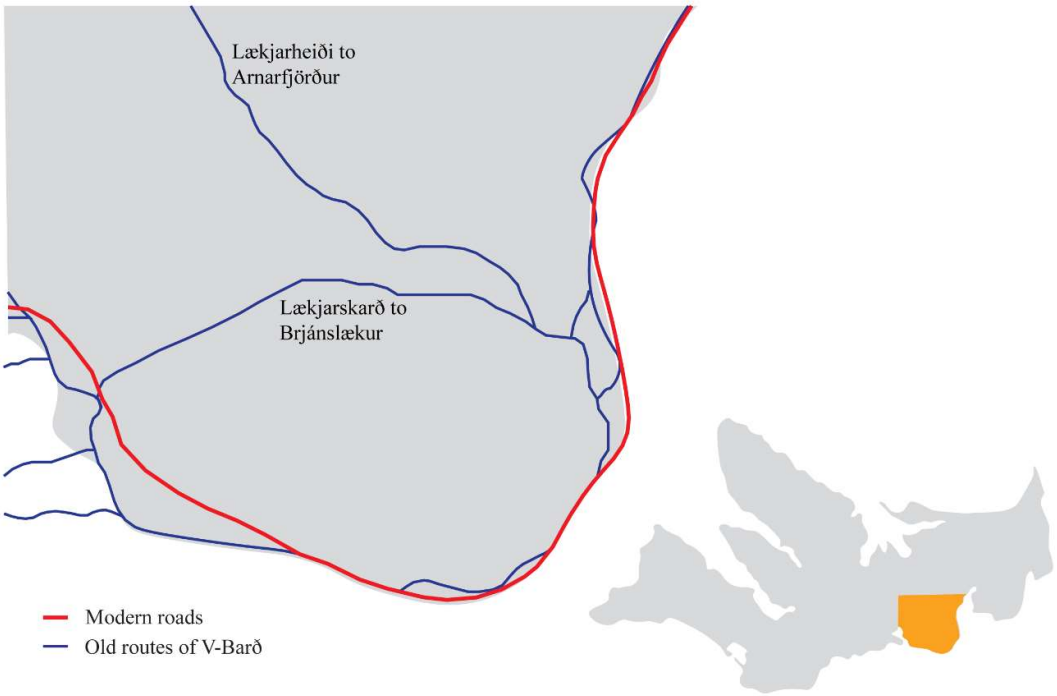


Figure 25 The Lækjarskarð mountain pass route and the route by the seashore, based on maps from Landmælingar Íslands (2024). Map: ÞEH.

The evolution of the mobility lines reflects the changing mobilities of V-Barð itself through social changes and time, one of the greatest transitions being the modification from a subsistence to an industrialised economy in the late century. When subsistence farming and fisheries characterised the area, settlement was dispersed with the main centres around churches or official governmental places, as churches often served as such centres. The development accelerated with Iceland's belated industrial revolution in the beginning of the twentieth century, with increased production and trade (Hálfdanarson, 2012). A modern market society arose and with it came the need for greater mobilities of people and goods.

In V-Barð, drastic changes took shape when three villages developed in Bíldudalur, Patreksfjörður and Tálknafjörður on the grounds of urbanisation and trade in the nineteenth

century, up until the midst of the twentieth century,[13] and most of the fisheries moved to the villages. It was an obvious change because of the development of fisheries where bigger boats needed harbour facilities. The countryside was still populated, but mechanisation in farming decreased the need for workers in the mid-twentieth century and this development accelerated through the remainder of the century. Flatey island in Breiðafjörður fjord, south of V-Barð, had been an important trading post for Barðaströnd and the area around it (as well as other places around the fjord) because seafaring was the way of travel wherever it was possible, as it was usually easier (Jakobsson, 2015). With changed transportation and increasing prominence of cars and road construction in the 1960s, trade in Barðaströnd moved from Flatey island to the villages in the north and west, which straightened out the mobility lines of V-Barð. Instead of a meshwork of old routes stretching over the landscape, the modern road was a simple line progressing through the landscape, with driveways radiating from it to farms and other destinations.

However, the development of V-Barð does not stop here. It is an ongoing transition, because places are mobile and always becoming but never fixed or still (Jóhannesson & Lund, 2021). Let us now go further into walking the old routes of V-Barð, navigating the paths of past travellers which gives a spectral dimension to the journeys, that might hook us to a place of past events (Armstrong, 2010; Legat, 2016). As Basso (1996) stresses, landscape is intertwined with us humans and one cannot be spoken of without the other.

3.2 Navigating landscapes

Today I had come from the north. I had been travelling the old route, Lækjarheiði, an 18 km long and 550 m high, mountain route between districts in V-Barð. I have walked this route several times before and found out that you have to know what you are looking for to be able to navigate. Beside the landscape, old maps, the old and often worn-out route, and directions from locals, there is not much to guide your steps on the way. You would think that it is a lot, but landscape is quite different when you are there than when you see it from far away, on maps or in your head trying to figure it out. When the contour lines have actualised, and the landscape is no longer a unity which you can absorb but disjointed into its smallest pieces. Being there you need to know where you are heading to, what you are looking for, where to look for it, and what it means.

The old routes of V-Barð are rather well-established with waymarker cairns, drains, and clearings through rocky areas. In the early times, road construction was mandatory work for men in neighbouring areas from the age of twenty to sixty, which in the Barðastrandar-hreppur district alone amounted to sixty men in the year 1874 (Þjóðskjalasafn, 2015a). Within the districts themselves only local men worked on the routes, and it was often a hard task keeping them at work because most often the road work was carried out during the summertime when they also needed to attend to their farms and other essentials, such as fishing (Einarsdóttir, 2016a). Nevertheless, it was important to maintain the routes, clearing away the stones that had fallen on them, building new bridges and wayfaring cairns or reconstructing the old ones (ibid.). Usually the work would be project-based, that is, some men would go and clear a certain part of the route of stones for a period of time, and others

[13] The development of the villages had already happened when they became official villages.

would rebuild cairns at a different time. In the year 1890, eighteen half-days of work clearing stones off the Fossheiði mountain route, between Barðaströnd and Arnarfjörður fjord (see

*Figure **26***), on the part of it which pertained to the Barðaströnd district were scheduled (Þjóðskjalasafn, 2015b). Twenty full days of work clearing stones from Fossheiði were scheduled four years earlier, and it was probably similar on the other side of the mountain in Arnarfjörður (Einarsdóttir, 2016a). Despite not having been attended to for over sixty years, the routes are presently in quite good shape: the trail is often clear, and the cairns help in navigating the rougher parts. It is mostly in the gravelled and vegetated areas that the routes have vanished or are difficult to find, and in early summer old snow patches from the winter can also lead travellers astray.

Figure 26 Fossheiði mountain route is an old well-established route between settlements in V-Barð. Its name and 'line' appear on the oldest maps of V-Barð. Here, a group of people walk the well-marked route in the stony landscape with the waymarker cairns to guide them if the route becomes indistinct. Image: EBE.

In traditional archaeological understanding, wayfaring cairns and old routes are the materialisation of human mobilities that have gone still (Aldred, 2021). I find this understanding of mobilities appealing. Walking the old routes of V-Barð, the landscape becomes embodied and mobile as in the understanding of Tilley's (1994) walking body. The effect of the landscape on my body is centred, and I can feel the old routes in my body through descending and ascending, diverse terrain, views, and orientation (Tilley, 1994). I sense how the route is exposed or demonstrably concomitant with the movement of my body: the wayfaring cairns are navigation tools for humans on the move, walking or riding. Their position is in relation to the movement of the body and its position or point of view. They are something you learn to 'read' when walking the old routes of V-Barð, as you discover that they were put there in your favour, for guiding the way for travellers. Furthermore, although constructed a long time ago, the "key" to their guidance can be found through wayfaring, the act that they were meant for all along. An example of the meanings of

wayfaring cairns is where the route continues relative to the position of the cairns. You should not look for the route up on the hill where the cairns are but down below because it is important that the cairns are noticeable from far away and that they will not be snowed over during the wintertime. Moreover, it is important that the route itself follows the best passable landscapes, and that is preferably on smooth terrain and not up in the stony hills. Additionally, many cairns at the same place mean that you are midways on your travel or stand at a significant point regarding changing routes. Furthermore, the position of a protrusive stone signifies where the next cairn is to be found.

When following the routes and the cairns, one develops a skill for reading the landscape, getting the hang of it, knowing where the next step is, or where the route proceeds, because one emerges with the landscape. To describe it in another way, one starts to sense how the human body enacts the landscape and therefore, one senses where the route would have been built, and what would ease the trip for wayfarers on foot or riding. Navigation becomes a part of the walker's vision when looking for the next logical step on an old route. It is about following the footsteps of the old wayfarers or road constructors, both literally and figuratively speaking. It is about looking ahead and thinking where you would go next if you were creating this route. Getting the hang of this will ensure that the next step taken will almost invariably be right.

The walking body gets used to following a certain rhythm on the way to a specific place. How the body reacts to the environment and the impacts that the environment has on the body varies but these can, as Edensor (2010) stresses, become rhythmic and foreseeable. The body, however, is not forced to "dance" the same dance at the same place, or to perform the same choreography (Seamon, 1980) as the place might offer or "suggest" something, but the rhythms will have an effect on the walker (Edensor, 2010), as will many other things, for instance, the weather and the walker's mindset. What matters is not what caused the rhythm but that the place and the walker "dance" together and connect. Walking the old routes of V-Barð gives a sense of rhythm and a sense of how the place was in the past, when these routes were beaten tracks. In my mind, the rhythm of the old routes puts me into what I like to call enduring mobilities of the past. I feel as if I was walking into rhythms that had already been there and were exposed, in a way, by me acting on them, although I was doing it for a different purpose, in a different time, and through different connections than the people who walked there before me. In his book, *The Archaeology of Movement* (2021), Aldred engages with old and new mobilities, and demonstrates that walking an old route following wayfaring cairns reveals different temporalities of movements. It is a matter of a flow or a rhythm that "aligns different temporalities together" (Aldred, 2021, p. 177), a kind of flow that never ends and which it is possible to revisit (Aldred, 2021). Aldred claims that "[j]ust as walking along a trackway touches underfoot along the gathering path, and in passing the waymarker cairns; these are shared contacts with the people and other bodies that also moved along the same route in the past" (Aldred, 2021, p. 178). The cairns are, he continues, a "shared connection, a repetition, and rhythm" (ibid.). Even when walking a reconstructed old route which you have travelled hundreds of times before by car, tracing the old route under the new one provides a new rhythm, a rhythm of landscape, of human effort and intention, of everyday life: a new place and yet another layer or thread woven into the landscape.

The materialisation of the old mobilities, the routes and waymarker cairns make it possible to follow in the footsteps of previous wayfarers. But as you do so you enact something upon these old mobilities, the route and past wayfaring; you make your own line of mobilities,

your own space. Another dimension of space and time than of those who went there before, but then they were probably also diverse among themselves.

I have now discussed the changing mobilities of V-Barð through old routes and roads from different times, as well as reviewing their navigation. It is now time to talk about what place names add to the story. Walking without knowing much about a place gives a sense of freedom to discover a new place. You give the landscape a meaning with no "interferences" other than those that you yourself bring with you to the place. This was my approach to the landscapes of V-Barð before I discovered the archives of place names, which at first came from reading maps, not only the altitude lines in the landscape and geography, but also the place names on them. Further information was to be found at the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies (AMI), where I was able to access place name archives for V-Barð.

"The roots of archaeological research and place name research in Iceland [can be traced] back to the attempts of antiquarians to [connect] the Icelandic Sagas, place names, landscapes and archaeological findings" (Lárusdóttir, 2023, p. 10). The connection between place names and landscapes is tangled and complicated and often only a source of zeitgeist (Lárusdóttir, 2023). My walking in V-Barð brought me a sense of layers of the place being unveiled by my walking in rhythm with the landscape (Edensor, 2010), deepened by my knowledge of place names. Reading the place names after I had walked, revealed a certain atmosphere or an aura of the landscape I had walked through. Some of the place names had stories attached to them and reading them was like getting news from the landscape and going deeper into it, connecting more closely. When visiting these landscapes again, the aura from the place names gave another perspective to them. Bærenholdt and Haldrup (2004) talk about how fantasy and reality are interwoven. This, they stress, happens especially when the imagination comes from bodily interactions "with real objects that are no more "real" than the products of fantasy" (p. 86). Things and events may be distanced in time even though you are near to them, but the aura of them gives traces of authenticity which brings it closer to you (ibid.). Armstrong (2010) takes this further when he encourages us to consider what the past might have left on the trail and how haunted landscapes speak to travellers as they enter the spectral dimension of past wayfarers.

By reading the archives of place names I added a new layer of knowledge as well as a sense for the mobilities of the landscape. Moreover, I saw places which for me had previously only been "undefined landscape", having little meaning to me except as somewhere to cross on my way to my destination. But now I would add a story, some knowledge of the landscape which came from the archives, and it had the effect of stopping the flow of endless, mobile landscape and bringing a new meaning to it. The flow, rhythm, and lines of the landscape changed from being grounded by my movement through it, an affordance of the body and rhythm, and perhaps a scant meaning about pasture or ownership by someone, into places that became worth stopping for, finding out about and sensing the events or incidents that had happened there.

Casey (1996) writes about places taking on their occupant's reflections and how as they do so they "happen", they become events which make the landscape pop with meaning like a pop-up book when it changes the written text and brings forth the scene of the story and the main characters. These events will provoke feelings and thoughts within people that visit the place in the future if they know about the story that the name of the place refers to. In this context, Legat (2016) talks about place names as *hooks* that stories are attached to. But even without the story the name of the place itself awakens some thoughts about it, or even

mindsets, linking to agriculture or wayfaring in a way that people can refer to and understand. Traces of past actions and travelling are left in the place names as well as in the old routes that I have walked. They bring forth multi-layered space. Noticing the spectral dimension or layers of landscapes gives depth to the surroundings and the recognition of haunted landscapes (Armstrong, 2010). That is, of the humans that have been there before you.

Figure 27 The waymarker cairns take over from the place names when you progress on an old route (Einarsdóttir, 2023b). Only a few place names remain to guide the wayfarer or tell of something that happened in a particular location. Lækjarskarð, Lækur's Pass (middle of photo) on the route to Brjánslækur (Lækur in short) is shown. Image: EBE.

Some places in the landscape have no particular story attached to them but are overflowing with a strong aura because of the narratives their names entail. *Útburðarlækur*, (E. Brook of unwanted children), is one such a place. It is connected to the horrible old custom of killing newly born unwanted babies by putting them outside to die. The place name also refers to a well-known Icelandic folklore story about an unwanted child and its mother, which can thus be more appealing to people than the old custom. The place name sticks, it is understood, and it is felt because it tells a story. The aura of place names like this is powerful, making time collapse in such a way that the centuries between the past and the present stand side by side, or no longer matter (Aldred, 2010). You are there and relive or connect to the event or story, but this only happens if you know the place name. I have walked the same landscapes without this knowledge and enjoyed drinking from this brook. Stories help us understand the world (Armstrong, 2010; Jackson, 2002; Poorthuis & Zook, 2021) and, furthermore, stories about how the old agricultural society used to be allow us to understand everyday terms.

Place names in V-Barð, for example, tell us where and when it is safe to travel; where to get what kind of fish; where there are good grazing and resting places for the domestic animals; who did what and where; what was necessary, for example, where to find good drinking water; what people were proud of; and what people believed in (Einarsdóttir, 2023b). Thus, when taking place names into account, the place can become totally new. The landscape gains depth, and the place lights up with the meaning of the lines and choreography of the everyday lives that were lived and events and stories from the past (Armstrong, 2010). Place names add stories and layers, new threads that are woven into the landscape, of the kind which function like a pop-up-book which wraps around a place like an aura (Bærenholdt & Haldrup, 2004). "Place names are like human-made lines in the landscape, often 'straight' and out of rhythm with the chaotic lines of the landscape and time" (Einarsdóttir, 2023b, p. 117). Place names can freeze places so that the place loses its character of being mobile and never still (Lund & Willson, 2010), although the place will always be "affected" by the one that observes it. Place names are windows to the past, through which deeper meaning is reflected and made available than can be the case without them.

Place names are, however, not to be found everywhere for they are connected to people and their everyday lives and wayfaring. It is thus normal that they are more common near human settlements than in mountain areas. That is the case in V-Barð where you walk beyond place names when you walk most of the old mountain routes, place names only reach so far (see *Figure 27*). Simultaneously the wayfaring cairns take over and you are able to follow them over the mountain, to the next settlement, or more accurately, to where you meet with the place names from that settlement. Here again, it matters that you are familiar with the place and the names the landscape has been given.

3.3 Multivocal knowledge

I suddenly feel chilly, a cloud is blocking the sun. The Icelandic summer is not warm enough at this time of day, to keep a tired but content walker warm without the sun. It has been a great day, a mixture of steady rhythms of the walk, surprises, hard work, overview, and fulfilment. Places are connected, and time and space have shrunk and collapsed in myself, I have been-with!

Being-with is an unclear concept but the vignette is an attempt to capture its meaning and how it can be felt. In the vignette I describe how through my subjective experience of bodily enactment I felt a sense of being-with the landscape. My subjective experience was acquired through the rhythm of the walk, hard work, overview, and surprise, together with the emotions I felt and the sensations of interacting with my surroundings in flux. Walking-with the old routes of V-Barð has been like being-with, as I have emerged with the landscape and felt the place's different mobilities and spaces. Analysing maps and reading place name archives amplified that feeling of being-with and brought forth two manifestations of space, the one that the old routes presented and the one that the modern road provided. These spaces bring V-Barð forth as different places which can become understandable and familiar by analysing the gathered multivocal knowledge, along with historical occurrences. That is, the connections of V-Barð at the time when the old routes were a beaten track, and how that has changed through new connections, for instance, new roads. This understanding manifests how V-Barð is mobile and constantly changing through different connections in time and

space. Additionally, it shows how the mobility lines of humans, the old routes and modern roads are good indicators for the emergence and mobilities of V-Barð as a place.

Irregular threads and lines form a meaningful meshwork as they appear as the old routes of V-Barð, the mobility lines of a community. They are created through connections and fluent in time and space. Just looking at the different types of routes and roads tells a story. Walking them and studying them connects to the landscapes, its rhythm, and layers. In this way, it is possible to explore V-Barð through old and new lines of movement, revealing its changing mobilities in different and meaningful ways. This notion of mobilities is supported by today's way of travelling by car or walking the past routes. Destinations are fluid and can tell us about the mobilities of a place (Jóhannesson & Lund, 2021). The examples of the changing mobilities show the development that has emerged in the community, which is entangled with more-than-human encounters, for example, with the establishment of the villages, changes in the basic industries, improved transportation, and marginalisation of the area, and how it is still changing.

Navigating the old routes, I was faced with the enduring mobilities of the place. My body was moving and sensing its surroundings, finding its way along the old routes guided by waymarkers; constantly learning, picking up signs and symbols of the process of travelling in the landscape, for example, in the form of waymarker cairns that had been placed there for the guidance of the human body. Furthermore, my body was a key to understanding the symbols of wayfaring, for they were put there for human navigation. I got the feeling that the old routes had been waiting for me, that it was an enduring space with enduring mobilities, which I had in a way walked into, a preserved world of old mobilities although it was also new. Every step brought me closer to an understanding of how the landscape and the travel would proceed. I felt with the landscape, and it was walking-with (Rantala et al., 2020) where the landscape is a companion on the walk (Einarsdóttir & Lund, 2023c). Slipping and being faced with the moss on the ground changed the rhythm and made me both surprised of the softness of the moss, but also more cautious about my walking companion – the landscape – and where I put my foot down. Adding place names to the embodied knowledge of walking gave me a layer deeper to the haunted landscapes of past wayfarers, revealing diverse dimensions and times when the routes were beaten tracks, and not merely for wandering, but often as a matter of life and death.

It is important to recognise multi-layered spaces to understand the world better (Armstrong, 2010; Jackson, 2002; Poorthuis & Zook, 2021), as this brings forth that spaces are created through the acts of many and that we all inhabit many spaces at the same time (ibid.). For V-Barð, it highlights the multivocality of the place and its multi-layers. Furthermore, this emphasises that V-Barð's future is not fixed but is instead dependent on its connections at each moment in time.

4 Road encounters

Having already looked at the internal road system in V-Barð in Chapter 3, it is now time to examine its outer road system, the one connecting V-Barð to other near and far places, which in that way reflect its mobilities and becoming. In this chapter, I scrutinise different manifestations of the roadways that connect V-Barð to other regions in Iceland to explore the mobilities of V-Barð as a place. I will give examples of how the road can be seen in different ways in V-Barð, how it appears and is enacted, that is, its connection to the world economy. Also, how it becomes as a place, for instance, in the encounters of more-than-human entanglements. Looking at the road in this way helps to understand V-Barð mobilities and becoming as a place. It is therefore meaningful to ask *what looking at the road from different perspectives, as a place and a connection between locations, tells us about the place making of V-Barð?* That question also invites another question: *What kind of encounters and power relations does the road of V-Barð channel and enact?*

As introduced in Chapter 1, V-Barð is a marginal area in consideration of its location in relation to the centre of the country, the capital area. Margins are, however, dynamic and always in relation to their connections. Indeed, the whole of the Westfjords are on the margins in relation to the centre, but diversely so. The Westfjords are a geological whole divided into four territorial groups, the North (the municipalities of the north), the East (the municipalities of Strandir), the South (the municipalities of V-Barð) and the Southeast (the municipality of A-Barð), with a relation to populations and geographical connections. The northern part of the Westfjords is the most populated area, but also the region within the Westfjords which is farthest from the centre of the country, although road connections within the north and to the capital are better than in V-Barð with regards to modern standards and measure. The dynamics of the margins are thus active in the Westfjords and sometimes it is a question of whether places, for instance V-Barð, can be looked at as a margin within the margins when considered in relation to the north of the Westfjords.

My research shows that life in V-Barð revolves around, among other things, its road connections. It is through the roads that the transportation of products and necessities runs and social connections outside of V-Barð are enacted. Communications between V-Barð and other districts in the country (see *Figure 38*, page 98) are firstly to the south, to the capital area and international airport, via the ferry over Breiðafjörður fjord or on land along the coastline of Breiðafjörður, and farther south to Reykjavík, via Vestfjarðavegur, V60. The road also gives access to the whole of the country. V60 has been under construction since the late 1990s, including crossings of fjords for shortening the distance and improving safety. Ongoing road construction in this area will in the near future replace old gravelled and steep mountain roads, established as early as 1953, with modern standardised lowland roads (Aðalgeirsdóttir et al., 2016). The new road will shorten V60 by 20 km and ease travelling year-round. The road is the answer to an invocation I heard when in the field, almost sounding like a request, regarding safe and fast roads to the capital area. Secondly, V-Barð's connection on land is to the north of the Westfjords, using new tunnels from 2020 and a difficult mountain road on V60. The tunnel makes it possible to connect within the

Westfjords via transport on land year-round. This new connection to the north of the Westfjords in many ways came as a surprise to locals in V-Barð who were waiting for a V60 extension to the south to be fulfilled my interviewees tell me.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. I commence my discussion on theoretical groundings for the outer road system of V-Barð in Chapter *4.1., Infrastructural matters*. In Chapter *4.2., Scrub*, I look at an ongoing road construction on route V60, which has been named Teigsskógur scrub route. This route is V-Barð's connection on land to the south. In Chapter *4.3., Tunnel*, I examine the new connection from V-Barð to the north of the Westfjords via tunnels and mountain roads. In Chapter *4.4., Fights about the future*, I summarise the findings of this chapter.

4.1 Infrastructural matters

I will approach the roads in V-Barð from two perspectives. On the one hand, I will explore them as a matter of fact, as infrastructure that connects places or locations, and on the other hand, as a matter of concern, bringing forth how the road is a place in itself, entangled in environmental and social connections (Argounova-Low, 2012; Latour, 2004). These two dimensions of the road can be seen in the concerns of locals, for neither would exist without the other, and the road is an assumption for the communities of V-Barð, as are the community's imperatives for the road (Dalakoglou & Harvey, 2012). The roads, being one of the main concerns of locals in V-Barð, draw attention to how fundamental the subject of roads is in societies, as Harvey and Knox (2015) emphasise, together with the manifestations of places which are maintained through them. Human life and roads are intertwined (Dalakoglou & Harvey, 2012), for roads tell of the external and internal connections that keep places alive. In that way, roads are capable of cutting off places as well as keeping them alive and flowing (Barðadóttir et al., 2023; Easterling, 2014), as noted in Chapter 3 regarding places that were once on the beaten track, such as Keflavík Bay and its fishing booths, which today are off the main modern road system that was constructed in V-Barð. In this context, Ren et al. (2024) quoted Easterling (2014) when they talk about infrastructure as a "switch which actively shapes spaces" (p. 4). Infrastructure like roads creates possibilities, and they "may suppress or redirect" (Easterling, 2014, p. 75), with their effects being noticeable upon their surroundings, whilst conversely, the environment also marks the infrastructure (ibid.). V-Barð reaches out beyond its administrative boundaries through the roads to places near and far. Road connections are a common denominator for life in V-Barð, channels that are like oxygen flowing through veins. For example, in the form of products being transported from V-Barð to their markets around the world, and resources being brought in. In that way, V-Barð takes part in the world economy with the demand of fluency and connection being one of the pillars of capitalism (Tsing, 2015), and with little tolerance for obstacles along the way. The road revolves and evolves around and through the mobilities of V-Barð, simultaneously controlling the place's mobilities.

In the understanding of infrastructure intertwining with places, new roads do not come into an empty space, they are socio-spatial phenomena which influence their surroundings just as their environments affect them (Easterling, 2014; Ren et al., 2024). This connection of the road brings forth what V-Barð is, and which connections it channels and emerges through (Ren et al., 2024). Ren et al. (2024) highlight these double meanings of infrastructure in their article about airports in Greenland, where they, as with the roads in V-Barð, do not only

enable connections within the country but also make new relations and raise concerns and arguments whereby "the value and meaning of connectivity [needs] to be negotiated" (p. 9). Looking at the road as a place emphasises its entanglements, that is, what it is connected with and what it consists of.

Figure 28 Sheep like to rest on the edge of the road. Image: EBE.

Harvey (2012) talks about how infrastructures are not just about the future, they are "fights over the future" (p. 85). Fights over how the future will play out in regards to how infrastructures connect to relations that were there before, whether they disrupt or create new connections, their relational scenarios as she calls them (Harvey, 2012), which I will refer to as infrastructural encounters. But infrastructural encounters also "involve various desires and imaginaries about the past, present and future" (Ren et al., 2024, p. 10). Infrastructure thus does not only fill gaps or create them, it "transform[s] relational fields. Thus if we approach roads topologically we begin to identify relational scenarios where the plugging of a gap does not bring closure but opens other relational possibilities" (Harvey, 2012, p. 85). Abildgaard (2023) calls the plugging or the opening up "infrastructural encounters", understood as the mutual co-shaping of local everyday practices and infrastructural systems" (p. 197). The road entanglements can be actualised in, for instance, its building materials, foundations, how it is constructed, where it is, the weather, vegetation along the edge of the road, sheep that rest there or pass through, and the traffic that rushes along it. The entanglements of the road also create the road, and they can make the same road good or bad, depending on whose perspective we take. Sheep like to sleep at the edge of the road because the dark asphalt preserves the warmth from the sun, which attracts them (Benediktsson, 2010). They also like the salt used for decreasing dust on the gravelled roads and the vegetation on the edge of the road, see *Figure 28*. On the other hand, truck drivers consider the same road to be bad because it is old, narrow, and gravelled, which does not fit

with their heavy transportation, be it salmon from the aquaculture in V-Barð, other fish, or necessities being delivered. Sheep on the road might even complicate the situation more.

Massey (2003) offers the concept of thrown-togetherness, which is a good concept to think with when considering places in space and time, as it emphasises the relations of a place to elsewhere. Massey calls this "place as meeting place: different stories coming together and, to one degree or another, becoming entangled" (Massey, 2003, p. 4). Because in coming together, different stories from different actors inevitably overlap and affect each other; sheep can be distracted by heavy trucks driving the road where they are resting, likewise, the truck drivers' travel might be interrupted by encounters with sheep that cause them to slow down or stop. The road can thus be described as a thrown-togetherness where different encounters of diverse actors take place, with each actor coming from their own "opportunities and irritations proposed by the others" (Marr et al., 2022, p. 5). This most likely occurs without any purpose but simply via random happenings, as Marr et al. (2022) suggest. That is why places always need to be negotiated, they are many stories coming together (Massey, 2003), and there is no ultimate template that they should follow. Nevertheless, there are power relations, patterns, and rhythms, and it is responsible (Haraway, 2016) to listen to the different stories, the many voices, that come together on the road because they matter for the road and the continuing stories, longings, and futures of the place the road is in and the place it enacts.

Harvey and Knox (2015) talk about the politics of connections through roads. How roads are political constructions that manifest power relations, where the power lays and through which "channels" it is enacted. The marginal position of V-Barð emphasises these power relations where modern roads through mountains and over fjords tell stories of power in the north of the Westfjords, and the seventy-year-old gravelled mountain roads in the south of the Westfjords also do. However, they do not tell the same story. Margins are not solely created through geographical distance from the centre, but also "through lack of connections" Barðadóttir et al. (2023, p. 97) stress. The marginal position of the Westfjords to the centre in the capital area also matters within the Westfjords themselves, which is always changing and becoming like the places themselves. Here it matters in what relations V-Barð is both to the centre and bigger communities in the Westfjords.

Moreover, the roads manifest other kinds of powers where different actors are involved. Harvey (2012) discusses how the development of infrastructural systems creates conflicts and contradictions, and how "the historical entanglements of modern states with calculative practice is self-evident" (p. 78) in such cases. Here the powers of Vegagerðin, the Icelandic Road and Coastal Association (IRCA), have great values based on the measured knowledge of experts. Furthermore, the IRCA is an official institution and thus it holds state powers. The power of the IRCA stands for what Harvey and Knox (2015) call "ordering powers" (p. 197), which in the IRCA's position of producing knowledge can manifest as standards and measures holding legal status. The measured knowledge of experts gives the IRCA the power to enact at a certain distance to the project at hand. They use devices and techniques, algorithms, and measurements, among other things, to shape knowledge, on which standards and legal provisions about road construction are based. Harvey and Knox (2015) also point out that these bases, measurements, and scaling are only provisional attempts to decrease other kinds of framing and they always have to adapt to the more-than-human powers on site. The two sides of the road, as presented in this chapter as the matter of fact and the matters of concern, are thus clearly evidenced in the work of the IRCA engineers. The site of road construction is an encounter between engineering expertise and the actual

circumstances of, for example, scrubs, tides, and rocks. The engineering powers are limited to certain extents. In the end, they have to adapt to more-than-human 'powers' in situ, because their own are designed and created in the laboratory and on the drawing board. Adapting their measured roadbeds to real situations is done as a matter of course and can be challenging. "Both measurement and experimentation are ongoing; while experience guides the expert engineer, they know there are no ready-made solutions for the material challenges they face" (Harvey & Knox, 2015, p. 196). Rather, as Harvey (2012) stresses, engineers are constantly working on temporary solutions. For them, it goes without saying that the road must be adapted to its ever-changing site. Similar things apply to the safety and health regulations, "in practice, of course, things go wrong all the time" (Harvey & Knox, 2015, p. 196). Here it is important to be "ready to deal with the unexpected" (ibid.).

Using recent road connections in relation to V-Barð, an ongoing road construction through scrub and over fjords to the south on V60, and newly built tunnels through a mountain to the north on V60, I will discuss what they can tell us about V-Barð's mobilities and becoming as a place, together with its controversies, concerns, hopes, and futures.

4.2 Scrub

"Skreppa suður!" is a saying in V-Barð that locals use when they need to attend to short errands in the capital, Reykjavík, for instance, stocking up on supplies or going to a doctor's appointment. People do not see it as long-distance travelling and joke about the distance being greater from the capital area to V-Barð than vice versa. This means that their friends and relatives moan about driving to V-Barð, whilst locals are used to it and they know what to expect, making the trip without thinking about it. Locals do not see travel to Reykjavík as an obstacle, because living on the margins, time spent travelling is a necessary part of everyday life. It is a journey along the road, but the convenience and safety of the transport make all the difference. "The road [to Reykjavík capital area,] it is good, and it is bad, and the service is what it is, but you can always go there. I think that is amazing!" This was stated by one of the interviewees in the research who, referring to V-Barð being a marginal place with great distances and difficult mountain roads, expressed amazement at being able to travel almost whenever she wants to. This is a rare positive comment about the roads in V-Barð when I am in the field, actually one out of two that I heard. There are different expectations and opinions about the road from locals who in diverse ways need to rely upon transportation of goods and products. For some it is crucial that the road is open nearly every day year-round, whilst others can wait a day or two for the road to open, for example when it is closed due to snow and bad weathers. Residents see the road as the main obstacle to their community for thriving.

Driving to V-Barð from the capital is quite a journey, covering approximately 330 to 400 km and taking around four to five hours, which depends on where you are going within the county. *Figure 29* shows how I experienced driving to V-Barð from my home in Reykjavík to visit my mother at Seftjörn, 337 km away. The vertical line shows lowland roads, and the bends show mountain roads. There is also a negative slope which represents tunnels under a fjord near Reykjavík. If you would like to go farther west to the villages in V-Barð or other countryside areas, there would be one or two more mountains to cross. The line brings forth the hardness of the journey. The mountain roads are often an obstacle because of bad weather in the wintertime, and some of them are also old, gravel roads that are often in a bad state.

Figure 29 Driving from Reykjavík to Barðaströnd, V-Barð. Drawing: EBE.

For the first one and a half hours when driving from Reykjavík to V-Barð, the travel follows the Ring Road, Road One (R1), that goes around Iceland. R1 seems to take the shortest way around the country, leaving out peninsulas and fjords, and perhaps emphasising or composing marginal areas. Dalakoglou and Harvey (2012) say that even though it has been stated that mobility "defines the contemporary human conditions as never before […] never before have so many people felt so deep consequences of their exclusion from a condition where mobility is embraced as a correlate of freedom (to trade, to work, to travel, etc.)" (p. 460). Here V-Barð is no exception and locals see their future depending enormously on connections that are far away as well as regional.

The part of R1 that is driven to the Westfjords is a well-constructed and well-travelled lowland road, although some parts of it are outdated due to heavy traffic and modern standards of road construction. The only undersea tunnels in the country are on this road, functioning as a shortcut to the northwest and north of the country from the capital area. When turning off R1 onto Vestfjarðavegur road V60, the first mountain road is crossed. There is a shift in the rhythm of the journey from lowland roads to driving up and down mountain roads and in and out of fjords. This new rhythm continues for the next two to three hours of the journey. The rhythm even exaggerates the meaning of the shift in road quality, as modern roads that were recently built onto the V60 occasionally replace the old, gravelled roads. It is like travelling through time, where you almost feel you are floating in the future over fjords between riffs and then suddenly you are in the past, struggling up a seventy-year-old gravelled mountain road. You are reminded that roads are fundamental things in societies (Dalakoglou & Harvey, 2012; Harvey, 2012; Harvey & Knox, 2015) and how they are capable of turning places on and off like operating a switch (Easterling, 2014). The road between V-Barð and Reykjavík has many obstacles, which my research participants have told me has been a constant struggle. They explained how the road, the lifeline of their communities, is often "broken" and that it does not suit the transportation that the communities need, which includes heavy transportation of fish from the aquaculture companies or fisheries in the villages. They also tell me that the road is dangerous, failing to meet modern safety standards. Furthermore, because of this and bad weather, it is often difficult to service the road, and it can take longer to travel. Finally, my interviewees stressed that if V-Barð is to continue being a part of the world economy, its road connections need to be smooth.

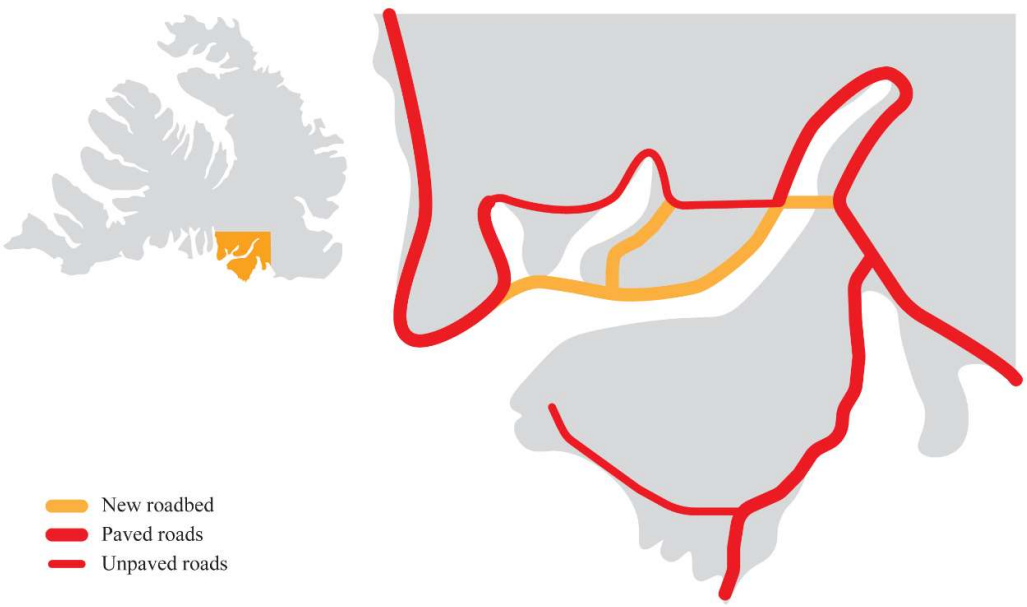


Figure 30 The construction area of Teigsskógur scrub. Image: ÞEH.

As noted earlier, considerable road construction work on the V60 has already been accomplished. In large parts of the area, the road is of the best quality existing in Iceland: Lowland roads that sort of float through the land and seascapes (for there are places where the road goes into the sea or follows the seashore), taking straighter courses than the old ones which are often twisted and follow the vertical lines in the landscape, over hills and mountains (see *Figure 31* and*Figure 32*). Still, the old roads differ among themselves depending on how old they are. The oldest ones are considerably more twisted than those from the late twentieth century. The line of the roads in V-Barð has never completely straightened out, and instead it is fragmented because of the shift of temporalities and times of its construction. Here it seems that locals are struggling with modern times from the last century as the road is from that time. They continue fighting to be able to commute to maintain their communities (Harvey & Knox, 2015), and here the connection to the world economy is crucial, as stated earlier. In that context, locals in V-Barð would prefer flatter, as well as straighter roads. The main obstacles for their transportation have been the old, gravelled mountain roads and fjords in their neighbouring county, Austur-Barðastrandarsýsla (A-Barð), a road construction that has acquired the name Teigsskógur scrub route (*Figure 30*).

4.2.1 Teigsskógur road construction

Teigsskógur is an old scrub area on the western coast of one of the fjords that characterises the area in A-Barð which the main road to V-Barð from the south, the V60, goes through. Parts of this area are considered natural monuments and others are under protection because

they are a part of Breiðafjörður fjord nature reserve with its fjords[14] and shallow waters. Additionally, due to the protection of certain ecosystems according to Nature Preservation Laws, for instance, no. 60/2013, in respect to mudflats, wetlands, and old scrubs (Lög um náttúruvernd nr. 60/2013) which can be found in the area. Teigsskógur scrub is the oldest and biggest of its kind in the area, eagles live there, and its seashores are an eider duck habitat. Two old farms are in the area, which are now summerhouses, with narrow and old roads connecting them to the main road. One participant told me that this area is often difficult for commuting because of snow in wintertime. He also said that Teigsskógur scrub is what it is, old and big, because of the snow and the cliffs where the eagles live, as the cliffs and snow shelter the scrub from the harsh northern wind. Being so old and big makes Teigsskógur precious for many. Nearby fjords and their mudflats are homes and food sources for birds, seaweed, fish, and other living beings in the area. However, the area around Teigsskógur is also the place where the V60 to the south hinders the most, with gravelled old roads over two mountains and fjords. The ongoing road construction in A-Barð is supposed to supersede the old road with a lowland road and the crossing of three fjords with bridges. The first plan for the new road was its roadbed going lengthways through Teigsskógur scrub, requiring mining of the cliffs which shelter the scrub and are home to eagles to source materials for the new road. Furthermore, narrowing the stream of the tides

Figure 31 V60 today over Ódrjúgsháls mountain road built in 1953. Image: EBE.

[14] Breiðafjörður fjord is actually more like a bay and many fjords which go farther into the land than the wide Breiðafjörður does, are a part of it, see for example image 6.

in the three fjords the new road is intended to cross would be necessary, risking the fjords turning into lakes with the consequences of changing their biology. Teigsskógur scrub is only a part of the ongoing road construction in A-Barð, but it is a fundamental part of it, for it seems that the road construction has mainly been delayed due to the scrub. Although other matters, for instance, fjord crossings, were also issues that needed to be negotiated (Massey, 2003). Furthermore, Teigsskógur has become a common denominator for administrational despondency or power ranking where different powers meet and tussle, leaving the interests and liveability of locals in the Westfjords in limbo for almost two decades.

A new road through this area is significant for the communities in V-Barð and A-Barð because it is their route on land to the capital, the rest of the country and the world, and for A-Barð it is also locally important. Moreover, from 2020 this road is important for the northern part of the Westfjords, because of the internal connection of the Westfjords with Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel which I will discuss later in this chapter. The purpose of the new road construction is to modernise the road and avoid mountain routes for smoother commuting (Aðalgeirsdóttir et al., 2016). The new road construction also fits how locals see themselves and their communities being and becoming: As a prosperous and well-connected modern community, constantly connected to the world economy. A community with modernised lowland roads that bear witness to state power in every curve, where it is possible to drive at maximum speed (Harvey & Knox, 2015) for maximum outcome. Local discussions reflect that the new road is seen as a bringer of fluency and life. However, the old roads are a hurdle to that image.

Figure 32 The new road across one of the fjords in the Teigsskógur area. Image: EBE.

Big segments of the existing road are from the 1990s, although some parts of it are from this century, but there is also a crucial part of road V60 which is from 1953 (*Figure 31*). Thus, whilst some parts of the road are relatively good because it is not that old, other parts of it are steep, curved, narrow, gravelled, and muddied roads that pass over two mountains and around three fjords. This road gets considerably more dangerous with dropping temperatures, heavy rain, or snow. According to the guidelines from the IRCA, the road is long overdue, even outdated, since on their website the IRCA stresses that roads are built to last for twenty years (IRCA, 2022). The old road has been an obstacle to transportation since the 1990s, a bottleneck that has made it difficult for the communities in the area to thrive. In the last decade, with the increase in transportation from V-Barð, this has gone beyond the limit where trucks transporting salmon, "salmon-trucks" as they are called, and other heavy vehicles have repetitively got into trouble on the road. Driving these roads, you are reminded of V-Barð's connection to the world economy in every pothole, as the heavy vehicles overburden the old roads and destroy them because they were not built for this kind of traffic. Additionally, you are also reminded of V-Barð's powerlessness in its connection to the world economy since the fluency of the connection seems to be restrained by diverse roads from different times. It seems like these connections do not fully collide. As Dalakoglou and Harvey (2012) stress, roads are indicators of connections that keep places alive. It is thus crucial for V-Barð, A-Barð and the northern part of the Westfjords to get a good lowland road through A-Barð, enabling them to thrive in the way they have chosen to, and their resources allow for, which is in line with the anticipations and requirements of today's Western societies. Furthermore, the time of travel and accessibility are important factors, as well as the distance involved when it comes to the thriving of communities and strengthening of the internal communities in the Westfjords (Ragnarsson et al., 2013). There, "asphalt [roads], the height of road above sea level, pass ability during the winter and road service are important factors for location, competitiveness and residence" (ibid. p. 37).

Having introduced the dilemma concerning Teigsskógur, it is thus evident that the scrub is a good example of how the fluency of the road is restrained, with it becoming a place where different stories meet and generate a need to negotiate about the future of that place (Massey, 2003). For, as Harvey (2010) notes, the infrastructure issue is a fight about the future, where it is always a question of how it will relate to other connections that were there beforehand. The actors, in addition to locals in the Westfjords, humans and non-humans, are different and with diverse interests that hold diverse roles and are responsible in various ways. For example, the Icelandic Institute of Natural History (IINH), the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute (MFRI), the Icelandic Environment Association (IEA), and the landowners have concerns and responsibilities related to issues such as the old scrub of Teigsskógur, eagles, eider ducks, tides and seaweed in the fjords, which will be crossed by the new road. The IRCA's role and responsibilities are about making a safe road that is fast and with as little environmental disturbance as possible (IRCA, 2021). Here, it would also be appropriate to mention cost, for the IRCA is also responsible for financing road construction (ENRBA, 2020; Ólafsdóttir, 2018a). Moreover, the National Planning Agency (NPA), is responsible for the administration of planning along with the environmental impacts of construction, together with the local municipality in A-Barð[15], and the Icelandic State which sets the rules.

[15] The municipality of A-Barð is Reykhólahreppur but addressed in this way to simplify names of places.

Furthermore, in the Teigsskógur dilemma, the road is performed or enacted, both as a divider and a connector, as it divides people into groups with different interests. Firstly, people who will gain from better, safer, and quicker transportation as soon as possible. Secondly, people living or having interests in A-Barð who are concerned about the suspected impacts of the intended roadbed. Thirdly, the aforementioned actors, such as the IEA, IRCA, NPA, and the municipality of A-Barð have diverse responsibilities. It was apparent in the local discourse about the road construction, and spoken of in the interviews, how the emphasis in V-Barð was on the community being heard as one voice on this matter, whereby importance was placed on bringing the fastest (with the fastest construction time) and safest roadbed through. One research participant told me that other voices were not welcomed because they could split the consensus and delay the road construction. This is further supported by the data around Teigsskógur where the power of the IRCA is great, and the general discussion supports the authorities. Intuitively, because the IRCA speaks in that regard, that is, according to safety, costs and timeline or delay of road construction (e.g., Árnason, 2010; Ólafsdóttir, 2018a), and as mentioned earlier, it is the IRCA's responsibility to make a safe and fast road at as little cost as possible (ENRBA, 2020; Ólafsdóttir, 2018a). Nevertheless, the municipality of A-Barð was responsible for permitting the road construction, as their planning authority is in control in A-Barð (ENRBA, 2020; Reglugerð um framkvæmdaleyfi nr. 772/2012).

In alignment with the "one voice", the "one solution" to the subject was arrived at. Since 2005 there has been a dispute about the location of V60 through A-Barð. Different propositions for roadbeds were made by the IRCA, with variations between the number of bridges being constructed, the height of the roadbed, tunnels, and the location of the road (Aðalgeirsdóttir et al., 2016). In the later stages of the dilemma, the municipality of A-Barð included a foreign engineering firm in the project to give a new perspective on the possibilities of the road construction. The new route considered the local community and connected the most populated area in A-Barð to V60, along with reducing the environmental impact of the road construction (ENRBA, 2020). However, that route was also questioned because of traffic safety and land use (ibid.). The IRCA's response was to recommend another route in a similar location and to ask the municipality of A-Barð to cover a part of the cost of the construction, because if a more expensive route is preferred by local authorities, the IRCA is allowed to ask that part of the cost is paid by them. Local authorities can appeal to the Minister of Local Government and Transport (now, the Minister of Infrastructure) who will decide on the matter (Vegalög nr. 80/2007). The municipality of A-Barð, however, did not appeal to the Minister about the matter (ENRBA, 2020). All propositions for the roadbed fulfilled security standards and the environmental impact varied between routes (ibid.).

As a planning authority, the NPA had from the start been a consulting actor concerning the road construction and provided preferences on routes according to their environmental impact. The NPA declined the route through Teigsskógur and later appealed the decision that was made about the Teigsskógur route by the municipality of A-Barð although they, finally, accepted it with limitations (ibid.). Many other statements and representations were made about the Teigsskógur road construction on behalf of, for instance, local stakeholders such as landowners, the IRCA, IEA, and municipalities in V-Barð and A-Barð (ENRBA, 2020; Ministry of Environmental Agency, 2007). To make a long story of negotiation about road construction of V60 through A-Barð shorter, the municipality of A-Barð agreed to give planning permission for the road going through Teigsskógur scrub in 2020. One of the

reasons for this was, after consulting with the Ministry of Infrastructure and information from the IRCA, the intended delays in the road construction if possibilities for a roadbed that avoided going through Teigsskógur scrub were put forward (ibid.): V60 "is a subject that concerns others than locals in A-Barð" (ENRBA, 2020), for communities further west and north in the Westfjords "have been waiting for better commuting for many years and further delay is not considered acceptable" (ibid.). The positive impact of the construction on the communities in the Westfjords, not least V-Barð, was already confirmed by the NPA (ibid.).

Conflict and contradictions around the evolution of infrastructure are well known (Harvey, 2012) and there, modern states are superior to others because they hold the calculative ordering powers, as stressed by Harvey and Knox (2015). Additionally, the IRCA has the status of handling matters of the state and measuring safety and standards (ibid.). The measuring knowledge and safety powers of the engineers of the IRCA was also stressed by participants in the research. As mentioned earlier, all the routes were considered safe but differently so (ENRBA, 2020). Here, however, it is worthwhile to remind ourselves that such intentions constantly require adjustments to connections in situ and that "things go wrong all the time" (Harvey & Knox, 2015, p. 196). Engineering is always working on temporary solutions and adapting them to changing sites (ibid.). Harvey (2012) stresses this also applies to safety and health regulations. With their ordering powers, which include standards and safety regulations (Harvey & Knox, 2015), referring to the cost of the construction and timeline, the IRCA emphasised the Teigsskógur route beyond others (Ólafsdóttir, 2018a). Furthermore, the state did not bring other routes forward or offered finance for building, for example, tunnels to save Teigsskógur scrub, thus concluding that the scrub is not worth saving, because according to the IRCA, tunnels are only built where no other way is possible (ibid.).

In the Teigsskógur dilemma, different voices demanded to be heard and some were loud and took a lot of space (Unnarsson, 2019). Thus, it often seems that there is only one voice when there are more, but other voices are often silenced or not heard, as frequently happens with the non-human voices. In the Teigsskógur dilemma non-human voices certainly had their advocates and diverse actors encouraged their voices to be heard, but in the end, it was the human public good that the scrub had to succumb to, albeit with some limitations. This happened even though parts of the construction area are considered to be a natural monument and there were other options available. "The [IRCA] calculation is incorrect", Felixsson (2021), the foreman of the IEA wrote, underlining that natural treasures were not evaluated as they should have been, and therefore the qualifications of the road construction were unreliable (ibid.). That is why, in Felixsson's opinion, the IRCA did, indeed, choose the most expensive option when asserting the Teigsskógur route above the others (ibid.).

Continuing with my picture of the hardness of the journey from Reykjavík to V-Barð, *Figure 33* and *Figure **34*** show the main obstacles for the fluent mobilities of V-Barð, the three mountain roads Hjallaháls, Ódrjúgsháls and Klettsháls. *Figure **33*** shows how the road is today, and *Figure 34* how the road will be after the construction is finished. The drawings focus on the road as a connection between locations and are in line with how many people in V-Barð see travel along the road. Not thinking about the places it runs through and the life that is lived there, but first and foremost about the momentum of the travel. My thoughts

upon looking at it are: “How can we get rid of Klettsháls!”[16] It is this continuity, a kind of a feeling of movement without any obstacles. It makes me wonder whether it should be the case that commuting should be prioritised at the cost of local places and life. I could have made another drawing, a drawing about the fluency of life in the fjords or about the prosperity of the scrub. However, it would have required me to know the place better or to focus on other kinds of fluency than, for instance, the world economy. That would have been another kind of drawing, telling another story. A story that recognises the road as a place and the different encounters it makes with diverse actors of various kinds.

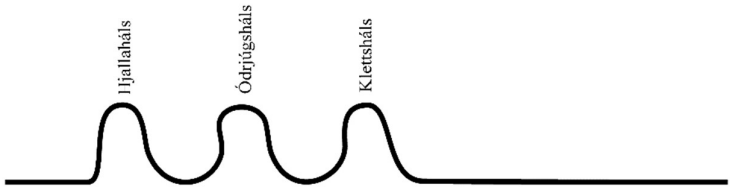


Figure 33 V60. The main obstacle for the prosperity of the communities in V-Barð are these three mountain roads. Drawing: EBE.

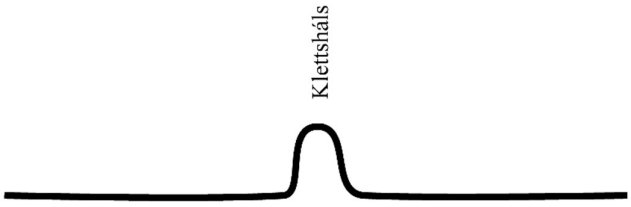


Figure 34 After Teigsskógur there will be fewer obstacles on V60, only Klettsháls mountain road will remain. Drawing: EBE.

The latency of the road construction makes one wonder about the efficiency of the methods, laws, and administrative powers of the authorities. Furthermore, what about consideration of other entanglements or relations of the road than the human ones?[17] These are entanglements which we perhaps do not have names for or recognise the power of since, as Tsing (2015) stresses, we are brought up with capitalistic thinking and often struggle to think differently. The words we use are “awfully” capitalistic, that is, charged with capitalistic value, and just by using them we are practicing capitalism and its way of seeing the world.

[16] Tunnels through Klettsháls are listed within the Regional Development Policy of the Icelandic State 2024-2038 (Ministry of Infrastructure, 2023).
[17] Which in the thesis I call the more-than-human ones but then also including humans to underline the unity of earthly connections.

But these more-than-human connections do have effects on the Teigsskógur dilemma. They "delay" road construction and there is a question about their validity and value. But how do we speak of them? Do we address them directly for instance, as scrub, tides, and eagles, or does that reduce their powers, as by doing so we point to relations that humans are used to in a certain way, in capitalistic ways, that is, "nature" for human utilisation and conquering. It is important to recognise connections and that the Teigsskógur road construction exists in relation to many things, some of which affect non-human life. It may not matter to the one that drives through at maximum speed, but for the local place, it makes all the difference. It was striking how participants in the research with relations to Teigsskógur scrub had different opinions on the road construction than participants with no or little connection. The former preferred a tunnel being created through the mountain to save Teigsskógur scrub, whilst the latter emphasised a lowland road through Teigsskógur. The same issue arose regarding other land uses far away. Thus, it seems that the lesser a connection you have to a place, the lesser responsibility you feel towards it. But it also includes the perspectives humans have towards non-humans, about nature. The problem is thus: "How do we make humans responsible towards non-human others regarding a construction project like Teigsskógur?" One answer is to bring forth these entanglements by telling stories about their importance, as I have done in Chapter 2. Höckert et al. (2022b) emphasise the importance of telling stories to bring forth the entanglements and encounters of places, along with their "nuances, feelings and power relations that occur in and shape [these relations]" (p. 186). Bringing the more-than-human relations forth in the Teigsskógur dilemma has identified relations to the elements, the weather, mountains, water in all its manifestations, dirt, rocks, wind, and temperatures, fauna, and flora, which are indeed powerful actors in the dilemma, and a great part of the scaling of the ordering powers needed to adapt to in situ (Harvey & Knox, 2015). But they are often without a voice other than that which humans give them.

Figure 35 Overlooking Teigsskógur scrub and the new roadbed in June 2022. Image: EBE.

Another answer to the question about how we make humans responsible towards non-human others is looking at places as "messy" and "thrown-together" (Massey, (2003). In the case of Teigsskógur scrub, the messiness of the road, old and new, is apparent in different stories

of diverse actors coming together and the making of the place so that it becomes the subject of negotiation: Continuing with the former stories of the old scrub, of the eagles and sea tides which are encountered along with the stories of intended modernity, human safety, and the world economy. These are some of the stories of the Teigsskógur road, and by recognising them, we are giving these relations a voice that demands to be heard. That is why the perspective on the road as a place is important: It looks at these different stories where diverse power relations and meetings occur and brings forth their entanglements and nuances (Höckert et al., 2022b). These are negotiating places (Massey, 2003) where there are certainly great imbalances in power, for instance, where the IRCA holds certain kinds of powers and the NPA another. The negotiations are about finding balance concerning scrubs, eagles, and tides, but simultaneously, intended modernity, safety, and prosperity.

The negotiation about Teigsskógur scrub (read: the whole road construction project) has taken place and a decision has been made. The roadbed will go through the old scrubs of Teigsskógur (see *Figure 35*) that, despite being the oldest and largest scrub in the area with eagles living on its cliffs and eider ducks on its shores, is not a nature reserve, although it is a natural monument[18], and therefore not under the state's protection and thus negotiable.[19] Furthermore, despite concerns about environmental impacts, and the public good for the communities in the Westfjords, delivering good roads in as little time as possible was prioritised. Here it is clearly stated how the road is realised and practiced, both as an engineering and economic operation, a threat to nature conservation, and a symbol of the community's participation in the notion of progress and modernity. Nevertheless, since Teigsskógur is not a simple execution, mediation and conventions have been responded to on behalf of the different actors involved and the final execution of the road construction has changed: The roadbed and mining within Teigsskógur scrub have been modified, now only affecting the eagles living there during the construction period and not disturbing the cliffs that are their home and give shelter to the scrub. Additionally, the bridges across the fjords will be longer and the ocean floor will be deepened under them to decrease the impact that the restriction imposed by the road will have on the tides and, for instance, seaweed. Furthermore, one bridge will be added to achieve the same purpose (Aðalgeirsdóttir et al., 2016). Here we see different powers at work where, as Harvey and Knox (2015) emphasise, scaling must be implemented, and adaptations made throughout the negotiation process as various actors in the Teigsskógur dilemma have done. Now, it is a question about what the future holds with the new infrastructure of the road linking to on-site connections. The expectations are high. In an interview, the managing director of the road construction in Teigsskógur described how the impression of the road is supposed to be as though it has fallen from the heavens, because of how well the scrub and local fauna will be preserved (Unnarsson, 2023c).

Teigsskógur has been a place of troublesome encounters between different actors that affect the place making and connections of V-Barð and other communities involved. It is a barrier and, as such, a shift in the temporalities of how V-Barð sees itself as a prosperous and well-

[18] A natural monument is a protected natural formation like waterfalls or old scrubs, which are preserved because of their importance for the environment, their beauty or uniqueness (EAI, 2024b).
[19] With Vatnsfjörður reserve in Chapter 2 in mind, I cannot but wonder if the conservation of the place matters at all if you have strong enough evidence against maintaining its conservation. There, as in the Teigsskógur scrub dilemma, the argument for the "public good" is strong.

connected modern community, whereas its most important connection to the capital and markets around the world has been restricted by the barriers of the old road. In this way the Teigsskógur dilemma instils a feeling of unimportance among locals in V-Barð since the county is not significant enough to prioritise their connection to the rest of the country – world. This is in great contrast to how locals see themselves and their communities emerging, that is, with their place making. One of the participants told me that he thinks that the feeling of being forgotten and not mattering to the rest of their fellow countrymen makes locals in V-Barð very angry about the Teigsskógur road construction, not the road itself: "It's more a disappointment that we're left out than how bad the road is. That there is nothing done in our affairs [...] of course the road is not good, but I think the road issue [in Teigsskógur] is more, "nothing ever happens in our favour" […] It has "become mental," he states, in the manner of people feeling that they are forgotten and that nobody cares about them. This assumption is also noticeable in the writing of Ólafsdóttir (2018b), when she talks about the people of the Westfjords being held hostage with bad roads and because of that, they do not have the same opportunities as other Icelanders.

It is commonly reported around the world that roads are bad, and that they should be better (Stewart, 2014). This universal inspection and appeal stresses the importance of mobility for humans, and flow and connection for their communities to thrive (Dalakoglou & Harvey, 2012). The position of V-Barð on the margins emphasises the need for good roads for prosperous communities, facilitating good transportation of goods and products. Power lies in relations and relationships that can be activated. At the same time, as locals in V-Barð feel the lack of power and hurdles in relations, Teigsskógur scrub has been carved length-ways with a roadbed (*Figure 35*). Despite the precautions, tides might have been constrained with crossings over fjords, and birds and seaweed are out of place and "on hold" with their habitats, locations and feeding places possibly changing. Looking at the road as a place of thrown-togetherness through more-than-human relations brings forth power relations that are important and gives voice to critical relations that otherwise might have gone unheard.

4.3 Tunnel

In 2010, the construction of the Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel began, a project that had been included on Iceland's Regional Development Policy for some years, but it had been postponed several times (IRCA, 2020). On June 2 of that year, schoolchildren from Þingeyri village and their parents started to dig the tunnel, as a protest to push forth the construction. The tunnel would supersede an old, gravelled, and steep mountain road, Hrafnseyrarheiði, opening possibilities of a year-round connection within the Westfjords, that is, between the northern and southern part of the fjords. People living in the north of the Westfjords had, for some time, looked to the southern part of the region for better transportation via a ferry or over land along road V60, as the northern route, V61, is relatively heavier in transportation because of snow and bad weather over the wintertime. The formal construction of the tunnel began in 2017 and was completed in 2020. The tunnel is 5.6 km long and the connecting road construction is 13.7 km. The road between the north and the south of the Westfjords has been shortened by 27.4 km (Ólafsdóttir & Ingvarsdóttir, 2017). Additionally, the new road is a lowland road which makes all the difference to keeping it open year-round in this area, which is known for heavy snowfall, although one difficult mountain road remains, Dynjandisheiði. Nowadays, when staying at my mother's home, I often go to the town of Ísafjörður in the north of the Westfjords, which is the most populated area in the Westfjords.

Before the opening of Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel, I would perhaps go there once a year during the summertime, but now I am able to go almost whenever I want to.

Figure 36 Coming through Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel, for the first time, on the way from the south of the Westfjords to the north. We are entering Dýrafjörður fjord and have skipped half of Arnarfjörður fjord and are about to realise that we have also lost half of the forthcoming fjord – or have we?! What have we gained from the inside of a mountain? Image comprised of a videoclip: Ragnhildur Helga Hannesdóttir.

Driving through the tunnels for the first time is an interesting experience. The road is smooth, and the tunnels are bright and broad, so I kind of float through the mountain. It is a floating experience compared to the turbulent experience of driving the gravelled roads of Dynjandisheiði, which was the first step on my journey from my mother's home to the north of the Westfjords. The last few kilometres leading to the tunnels do, however, set the tone for what is to come, as a new road complying with contemporary standards and measures has been constructed there together with the tunnel. Driving through the tunnels is furthermore a space- and time-collapsing experience, as when driving this road, I drive inwards to Arnarfjörður fjord from Dynjandisheiði but now, as I take the turn at the bottom of the fjord I drive into the mountain instead of driving outwards the fjord. Here the time travel is different from the one in Teigsskógur, where I am rapidly brought from today back to the past in various ways on different roads. In the mountain, I am instantly embraced by a timeless zone of road that seems to come from the future in the context of the road I used to travel before the tunnel opened. When driving through the mountain, I actually felt that I was driving beyond time, in a spaceship or similar, in unfamiliar and surreal surroundings. Straight lines (Ingold, 2007) and no disturbances from potholes, only a double-laned concrete road that gives the impression of floating when travelling. Concrete roads have been related to the future and the promise of the connections they are intended to give (Harvey, 2010; Lund & Jóhannesson, 2012).

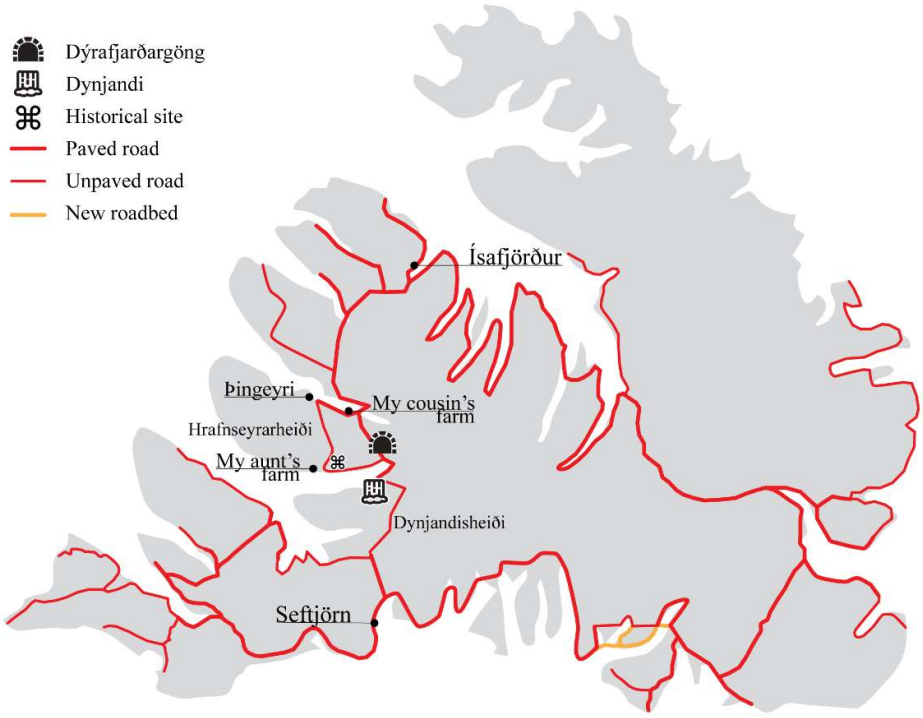


Figure 37 Map of Vestfirðir showing the change with Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel. Map: ÞEH.

Driving into the tunnel kind of slows me down, not only because of the speed limit, which is 70 km, but also because I feel like I am simultaneously floating and almost being still, experiencing a kind of a "speed blindness". The rapid changes of the landscapes "passing by" as I speed through it are suddenly exchanged for bright, smooth, and curved concrete walls and even doors and a telephone box. You are indoors, or at least in a mixed world, that for the first time I drive through the mountain seems beyond the one you know. The feeling of time- and space-travel or collapsing experience is exaggerated when I reach the other end of the tunnel in a different fjord than I entered from, Dýrafjörður (see *Figure 36*). Now driving outwards from that fjord and crossing a bridge over it. Usually, when I drive outwards along Dýrafjörður fjord, on the south side of it I am on my way to where I came from, but this is not so now. I am confused. I am not sure if I have lost one fjord or two, or which fjord it is that I've lost and which one I've gained or stayed in. I cannot get my head around being in both fjords, but differently for I am not following the road I have been used to follow till now, and my position to the landscape has also changed for the new road is in a different place than the old road.

When driving through the tunnel, my experience of time- and space-travelling also regards the 27 km of the old road that I skipped, a historic place, and my aunt's farm, and the difficult, steep, and narrow Hrafnseyrarheiði mountain road, together with the village of Þingeyri where I often stopped before, and my cousin's farm, although I can see it from a distance (*Figure 37*). When I ask my fellow travellers, they feel the same and we are confused, and the feeling stays with us until we are in a familiar place again, shopping in a discount store in Ísafjörður town. This was something that we never did before the opening of the tunnel,

and it is a surprising part of our journey, one we have difficulties getting our heads around, a journey that is so easy today, that would have been unthinkable in wintertime a few years back. The tunnels have changed how I see and move around in the world. My travels within the Westfjords are no longer only to the west, but also to the north. It is a whole new world.

I was in the research field before the tunnel opened, but its construction was on its way. Locals in V-Barð were a bit confused about the tunnel because they did not see the need to go to the northern part of the Westfjords. Therefore, they felt that the tunnels were not for them. It is mainly because of geological circumstances that divided the north and south of the Westfjords until the opening of the tunnel. Even though the V60 road between the south and north of the Westfjords is open during the summer and until the autumn, the obstacles posed by the two mountain roads, Hrafnseyrarheiði and Dynjandisheiði, among other things, prevented further communication between these parts of the Westfjords. This geographical division has been actualised in the social world, in which the inhabitants of V-Barð look to the south of the country, to the capital, and have done so for a long time. In the south they have all the services they cannot get locally, for instance, specialised medical care and wider entertainment. Therefore, their effort has been applied to pushing the Teigsskógur project forward to be a better connection to the south. Furthermore, that is why a connection to the north is of little importance to them, as my participants told me they assume they have nothing to gain from going there. In this case, obstacles other than the geographical ones have an impact. My participants tell me that Dynjandisheiði, as with Hrafnseyrarheiði beforehand, is known for bad weather and snow, being on the high plateau of the Westfjords. They have little expectations for keeping the mountain road, Dynjandisheiði, open year-round, and thus, little confidence in usable connections to the north of the Westfjords. In this context, the Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel has been named “the most expensive dead-end road in the country” (Ólafsdóttir, 2018b), because the tunnel is north of Dynjandisheiði, and people travelling from the north would be stuck there when Dynjandisheiði is closed. I would, however, not go so far as to say V-Barð was disconnected from the north of the Westfjords before the tunnel opened, but at the very least the connection was troublesome.

The north of the Westfjords has a larger population than the south by almost three times. According to Harvey and Knox (2015), power travels, among other things, through populations and this seems to be the case for the Westfjords, as for many Icelanders the town of Ísafjörður is the Westfjords. It can thus be said that other places in the Westfjords might be relegated to the margins of Ísafjörður (or the north of the Westfjords) because of its population. Harvey and Knox (2015) talk about the politics of connections through roads. They discuss how roads are political constructions which manifest power relations, where the power lies and through which “channels” it is enacted. The discourse in V-Barð about the Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel revealed a certain imbalance in power between the south and the north of the Westfjords, where locals told me that the north had always got what it wanted. They pointed to the Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel as affirming this power imbalance. The tunnels being built to enable locals to transition from the north of the Westfjords to Reykjavík, as it seemed to locals in V-Barð, would not serve the rest of the Westfjords. For the community in V-Barð, the tunnel came as a surprise because they had been waiting for the Teigsskógur road construction to be fulfilled and were not thinking in terms of connecting to the north. Moreover, the north of the Westfjords had already been connected to the capital area through the asphalt road, V61, from 2009 (*Figure 38*). Harvey (2010) talks about connections and the future that was promised in Peru through asphalt or cement roads, and

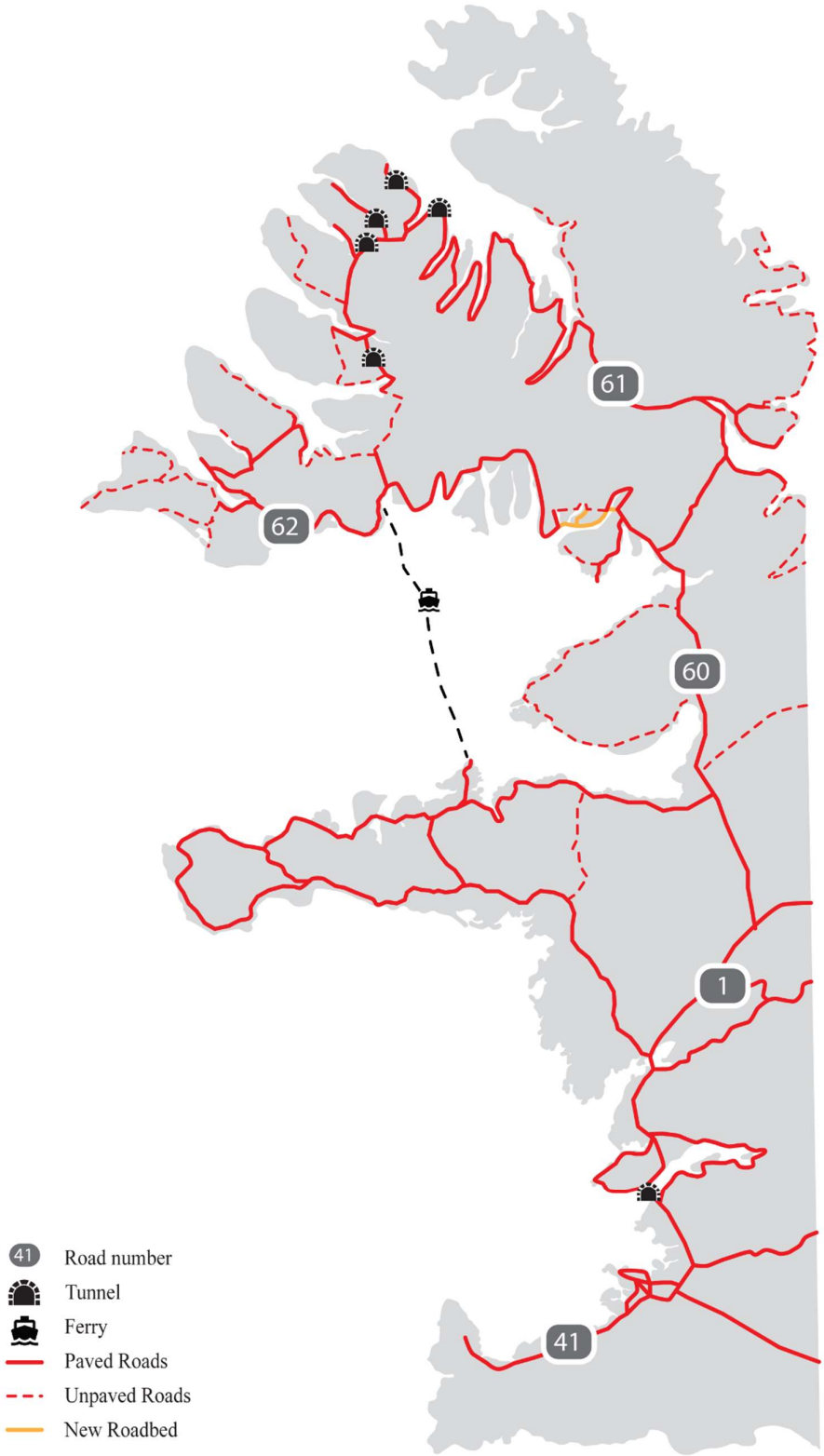


Figure 38 Connections of V-Barð. Map: ÞEH.

Lund and Jóhannesson (2019) note this also applies regarding a rural road in Strandir in the eastern part of the Westfjords. The connections that come with good roads are essential for the communities involved.

Moreover, power relations manifested in with the road are apparent in the tunnels between settlements in the north of the Westfjords and the changes that have effectively integrated the area into a single work zone since the 1990s (see *Figure **38***), whilst in V-Barð there are still heavy mountain roads between almost every settlement (see *Figure 39*). *Figure 39* shows different journeys within V-Barð and from V-Barð to the north of the Westfjords and the capital area. Here the mountain roads have been exaggerated with the line "bending" to imitate mountains, with the straight line representing a lowland road or a fjord which is crossed by ferry. Looking at *Figure 39*, it is noticeable how the usability changes seasonally. Locals in V-Barð have struggled to get tunnels between their three villages for some time now and the tunnels have been part of Iceland's Regional Development Policy for years. In the current Regional Development Policy for 2024-2038, tunnels between the villages in V-Barð are number nine on the list of ten tunnels referred to (Samgönguáætlun 2024-2038, 2023). The municipalities in V-Barð have decided that tunnels between their three villages are essential for their unification which are taking place (2024) (Ólafsson, 2023a).

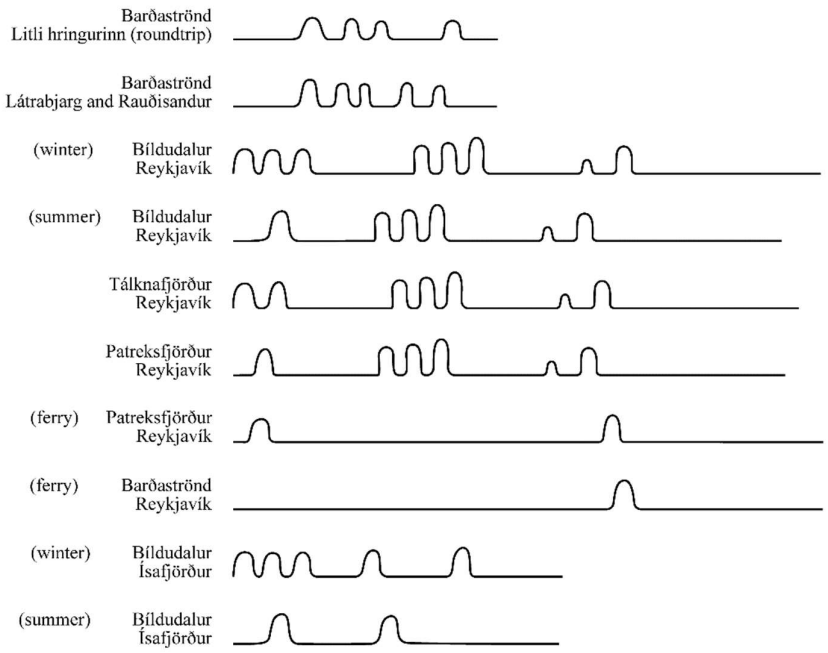


Figure 39 Different roads to, from and within V-Barð in September 2023. Drawing: EBE.

Harvey and Knox (2015) also talk about power that runs along infrastructure such as roads, in the form of resources and capital. The Westfjords are "nurtured" and populated due to the power of fish as a resource and its location near rich fishing grounds, as discussed in the introduction chapter. For the last decade, aquaculture has to some extent displaced or changed fisheries, with a large segment of the fish now coming from that industry.

Furthermore, since the Icelandic tourist boom in 2015, which was also mentioned in the introduction chapter, the tourism sector in the Westfjords has boosted the communities, and one of my participants told me that this is now on a par with the fishing industry during the summertime. The tourism sector is constantly getting stronger with winter tourism in the town of Ísafjörður, and since 2020, alongside the opening of the tunnel, with the actuation of the project *the Westfjords Way*, a tourist route around the Westfjords. The Westfjords Regional Development Office (WRDO) manages the project, which emphasises experiencing the Westfjords and stretching the tourist season over a longer period of the year (Vestfjarðaleiðin, 2023a). The opening of both the tourist route and the tunnel at the same time are good examples of how infrastructure connects to the previous relations of tourism and tourist destinations in the Westfjords (Harvey, 2012), with the road system of the Westfjords gaining a new meaning through tourist activities. At the opening of the tunnels in 2020, the Minister of Transportation and Local Government Affairs especially mentioned the road as strengthening the industries of aquaculture and tourism, as well as improving transportation within the Westfjords as a whole (Ministry of Infrastructure, 2020).

There is power in capital that travels the roads of the Westfjords in the form of fish and tourists. The former is harmed by these roads, whilst simultaneously breaking them down because of heavy transportation, and in the case of the latter, even going to the Westfjords has been in part due to the roads that have become a destination in their own right, as exemplified by the widely promoted Westfjords Way (Vestfjarðaleiðin, 2023c). They are both a sign of the Westfjords being a part of and connected to the world and its economy, where the demand for fish and hunger for adventures requires the movement of products and people. It is exactly what the roads hold, creating connections both near and far, power relations and "relational scenarios" (Harvey, 2012, p. 85). The latter are different futures of relations and things or phenomena connected with infrastructure, as is the case with the waterfall, Dynjandi, the location of which has effectively changed since the opening of the tunnels.

4.3.1 Dynjandi

The smell of a steak in the oven was a usual scent of Sunday mornings in my childhood, for my mother would start the preparation for Sunday lunch early. The commotion that special morning which followed my father's idea of having our lunch at Dynjandi waterfall was on the other hand something new. Tableware, steak, sauce, potatoes, beans, red cabbage, rhubarb jam, drinks, and dessert were to be moved to our blue Russian jeep, Bláskjár, where we, the children, were responsible for keeping it safe over the bumpy mountain road between our home at Seftjörn and Dynjandi, Dynjandisheiði mountain road (see Figure 37). I was eight, and I remember getting a large fruit cocktail tin to take care of, it was for dessert, and I took my role seriously, looking forward to the taste of sweet fruits after the main meal.

Dynjandi had always been a place of importance to my father because of the beauty and power of the waterfall. He had been there several times with my mother and others and enjoyed being there. Now he wanted to introduce the waterfall to his children, it was one of many Sunday trips we made to places near our home when I was a child. This was one of the characteristics of my upbringing, my parents making an effort for our family to enjoy and experience together.

Finally, at Dynjandi waterfall, we found a big flat rock on which we set the table. We gathered around it and enjoyed our lunch on this beautiful summer day, with the waterfall roaring in the background, its name referring to the noise it makes. A whole mountain side of waterfall, followed by many smaller waterfalls on their way to the sea. It was amazing. My memory from that lunch is the warmth on my cheeks from the sun, summer, and having a nice time. The waterfall was something, although the memory of dwelling and enjoying outweighs it. Or perhaps Dynjandi evokes the atmosphere and completes the picture of this nice family dinner in the outdoors. It was a day to be remembered.

Figure 40 Having lunch at Dynjandi on a summer's day in 1974. My father, siblings, friend, and myself in the middle with pigtails. My mother took the photo. Image: Bríet Böðvarsdóttir.

Dynjandi waterfall has been an attraction for locals and travellers for a long time. There is something about its formation, appearance and force that attracts people from all over the world to witness and enjoy it. Dynjandi has been a nature reserve since 1981 and, as such, under the care of the authorities, the EAI. For the last few years, cruise ships have docked in the harbours of Ísafjörður and Patreksfjörður, or at Dynjandi, and tourists are brought ashore or transported to Dynjandi by bus. In the seventies, there were small festivals at Dynjandi, where locals, mainly from Bíldudalur village, which is in the same fjord as Dynjandi, gathered over a night or two. Moreover, there were Sunday trips with the family and camping sites for travellers. Visiting Dynjandi today, you are likely to be in the company of other travellers at the site year-round, and on a "cruise day", you will share the place with up to 400 people at a time, as I found out on my field trips there. This is a different experience than visiting Dynjandi with my family on a Sunday tour in 1974 (see vignette and *Figure 40*), but visiting this great waterfall is always different because it is not only the other travellers who may be at the site, but the waterfall itself changes all the time due to the volume of water, seasons and its general variegation. In the presence of Dynjandi, with its tumbling waters, you cannot avoid feeling the energy it unleashes when it falls magnificently from the edge of the mountain, bringing you strength and a notion of being within powerful nature. But it is different at its sides, where the waterfall seeps down through the moss, so smooth that you can caress it, and as you do so it brings you softness and another kind of feeling, a gentleness. That is how Dynjandi is and what enchants me the most about it: its different expressions, being simultaneously both gentle and powerful.

It is interesting to look at a map of the Westfjords (*Figure 37*) and see that Dynjandi is situated almost in the middle, between the north and south of the region. Its location was between two difficult mountain roads, Hrafnseyrarheiði and Dynjandisheiði, until 2020, when Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel was opened and accessibility to the waterfall from the north became a year-round possibility. In the following year, people from the north of the Westfjords visited the waterfall often, and going to Dynjandi even became their Sunday road trip. At that time, locals in V-Barð joked about the Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel being built for the tourist providers in the north of the Westfjords, enabling them to drive their increasing number of cruise ship tourists to Dynjandi waterfall year-round. The expensive roundabout that was constructed at Dynjandi, along with other facilities for travellers, provided better infrastructure at the growing tourist destination, and would ease their travel turning their big buses around when seeking to return to the northern part of the Westfjords again. Irony is a good analytical tool for it gets to the core of things. Here I detect the intended privilege of the north of the Westfjords, with them being able to have things their way to enrich and develop their communities, and claiming ownership over Dynjandi as a part of themselves or as their place.

From what the research participants have told me that the interest shown by the northern part of the Westfjords in Dynjandi was maybe "the last straw" for locals in V-Barð. Additionally, the fact that they could drive a good road to a tourist destination whilst in V-Barð locals were struggling with the Teigsskógur dilemma which restricted their mobilities and liveability. There was a question about priorities in the local minds of V-Barð, even though the financial resources for the tunnels came from another source than the Teigsskógur project. It was, furthermore, apparent in local discourse and irony that locals in V-Barð found the north's movement to the south rather displeasing and even offensive. In this regard, it is interesting to see how the connection through the tunnels effectively changed the location of Dynjandi. When participants in the research were asked about whom Dynjandi belongs to, most of

them were definite that Dynjandi belongs to the south of the Westfjords, specifically to V-Barð, even though it is officially located in the north of the Westfjords. They argue that Dynjandi is in Arnarfjörður fjord which is a part of V-Barð. Or is it? Arnarfjörður fjord is split lengthways between V-Barð and the north of the Westfjords. Some participants in the research claim that residents in the north of the Westfjords had no interest in the waterfall before the cruise ships began docking in Ísafjörður. Their route to the capital was through V61 in the north and east of the Westfjords, and they would rarely drive the V60 road along the southern and western coasts of the Westfjords, where Dynjandi waterfall is, other than in the summertime. This would have been because V61 was for most of the time a better option, as it has been an asphalt road since 2009, whilst the V60 road was for the most part an old gravel road. Furthermore, road V60 between V-Barð and the north of the Westfjords was closed during the winter until the opening of the Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel in 2020. The preferences for people in the north of the Westfjords for using the V61 rather than V60 would, thus, have been a matter of course.

Infrastructure, as roads do not only connect or disconnect, fill gaps or create them, they also transform their surroundings (Harvey, 2012; Ren et al., 2024). Harvey (2012) stresses how the relational approach brings forth and identifies relational scenarios where other possibilities for the future are opened out. Dynjandi is such a scenario, which effectively changes its location in relation to its connections. The waterfall is now accessible year-round for locals in the Westfjords, as well as travellers from around the world. In V-Barð, Dynjandi is a part of the south of the Westfjords, and by including the waterfall, V-Barð's official limits are extended to the north, where it is one of V-Barð's most highlighted destinations for tourists. The same goes for the north of the Westfjords, and Dynjandi is actually a part of one of their municipalities. In V-Barð, the connections to Dynjandi have, until recently, been via boat across the fjord during the wintertime, although more in the sense of Dynjandi being a part of the fjord, rather than for people to go there during the winter. This highlights the obvious connection created by the sea in V-Barð and the Westfjords in general, where the seas are often more easily crossed, whilst the mountains can be troublesome, as discussed in Chapter 3. The land connection of V-Barð to Dynjandi was unreliable before the opening of the tunnels with a road service on Dynjandisheiði mountain road, and the waterfall was thus only accessible when the road was open. The tunnel changed the ability of travellers to access Dynjandi from V-Barð because Dynjandisheiði is kept open five days a week if possible. Connection to Dynjandi has also been eased considerably by the tunnels for those from the north of the Westfjords. The new connections through the Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel mess things up (Massey, 2003), as they effectively move Dynjandi even nearer to the north, which now has better connections to it than V-Barð with asphalt roads, because Dynjandisheiði with its old gravelled road is still an obstacle for travellers, along with ongoing road construction.

However, there are more scenarios related to the construction of the tunnel than Dynjandi effectively moving. The tunnel has opened new possibilities for the future and the connections to the north of the Westfjords, which locals in V-Barð did not see before are now actualising. Locals in V-Barð use the tunnel. They go shopping for groceries at a discount store and enjoy having a wider variety of shops and restaurants in Ísafjörður than they are used to in V-Barð. Regional sports collaboration is possible between the north and the south of the Westfjords because of the tunnels, and some children from V-Barð even attend school in Þingeyri village and are transported daily between their home and school, a 74 km route in each direction (Unnarsson, 2020). All this would have been impossible before

the opening of the tunnel and the service on Dynjandisheiði mountain road. Nevertheless, the V-Barð identity is still that its connections are to the south and to the capital, where the service is better, and they have built their networks through the last century, or even longer. In many ways, Reykjavík is thus nearer to V-Barð than Ísafjörður, even though the distance to Reykjavík is over 250 km greater than it is to Ísafjörður (IRCA, 2019). What the future holds we do not know, but the connection the tunnel gives has already changed the future for locals, both in the north and the south of the Westfjords.

When living on the margins, good communication with the centre is essential, and that applies to both the north and the south of the Westfjords. With the Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel, the volume of traffic coming through V-Barð to the capital area from the north has increased. Furthermore, when ongoing road construction in Teigsskógur scrub, on Dynjandisheiði mountain road and better tunnels in the north of the Westfjords are finished, the traffic is estimated to increase from its present level by 60% in some parts of V-Barð (Aðalgeirsdóttir et al., 2018). It is difficult to say if this change of connections was a part of solving the dilemma of Teigsskógur, that it was an infrastructural encounter such as the location of Dynjandi, or whether the aquaculture and other heavy transportation from V-Barð increased the momentum of the road construction through Teigsskógur scrub. Nevertheless, the Teigsskógur dilemma was settled one and a half years after the tunnel opened. At the "opening" of the construction, the authorities highlighted how the road through Teigsskógur scrub would shorten the distance between Reykjavík and Ísafjörður, which I might say, is a peculiar focus which underlines power relations that my participants talked about in relation to the construction of the tunnel.

Looking at place making and the acting powers of V-Barð I observe the same interests for the Westfjords in general, that is, of V-Barð and the north of the Westfjords at least, and partly A-Barð. Additionally, it is being voiced that locals in the Westfjords must stay together, as compared to the rest of the country they are few, comprising only about 2% of the national population. In the interviews, I also identified that Patreksfjörður, the biggest village in V-Barð, has the same power relations with the smaller villages and settlements in V-Barð as V-Barð does with the north of the Westfjords. This was no surprise, as the Westfjords are in the same position relative to the capital area, as Iceland itself probably is as a small nation in relation to bigger countries. This is something worth considering regarding V-Barð: how does V-Barð, as a community, see itself? What does it identify with and how does it see itself becoming in relation to its connections, hopes, and identity. This came up at a meeting with the local government when I was in the field, during which they expressed their concerns about the negative discourse regarding the roads in V-Barð, influences on tourism and people's willingness to travel to V-Barð in general. They wondered whether they should not try to focus more on what had already been done and how good it is, as the new roads are exceptionally good by modern standards, rather than constantly pointing out what is missing. Accordingly, one of them commented that when the road to the capital is finished it will be the best road in the country, and V-Barð will have the best transportation network there is.

What does this new connection to the north of the Westfjords and its infrastructural encounters tell us about the place making of V-Barð? It highlights how V-Barð is emerging, flowing over its administrative margins, withdrawing, and then expanding again. The connection or disconnection with the road matters and changes how a place is experienced or how it emerges. The new connection of Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel has emphasised how V-Barð is constantly moving and becoming through mobilities, connection, and disconnection

(Harvey & Knox, 2015). These considerations also bring forth the messiness (Massey, 2003) of the road, how it is not straightforward but always tangled up in its connection and infrastructural encounters. That is why Dynjandi might be a part of V-Barð and Reykjavík might be effectively nearer than the next town. These are the "natures" of places, and as they are constantly on the move, acted, changing, never still, and coming-into-being, a place is always being placed through its connections (Hetherington, 1997).

4.4 Fights about the future

What does examining the road from different perspectives, as a place and a connection between locations, tell us about the place making of V-Barð? Furthermore, what encounters, and power relations does the road of V-Barð channel and enact? The focus of this chapter has been on the road's complexity, its multiple appearances and presence, which have helped to gain a better impression of what characterises the road and its encounters. I have shown how V-Barð's mobilities can be seen in different ways through the road. It affects how V-Barð is connected to the global economy, where fish is transported from V-Barð to its markets around the world, and thus the road is a lifeline of the community through which transportation of products and necessities occur. Furthermore, this chapter has explored how infrastructural encounters can effectively move the location of places, which seems to be the case with Dynjandi, now in better connection to the north of the Westfjords (Harvey, 2012). Additionally, the power relations of different encounters and negotiations about place making have delayed V-Barð's emergence, hindered its mobilities, and deformed its image in the Teigsskógur road construction.

Looking at the road as a place also reveals how locals in V-Barð see themselves and what expectations they have for their community. Here I have detected a certain paradox, where on the one hand, V-Barð sees itself as a modern community in good relation to the world, both the capital area and the world as a whole, and an important part of the Icelandic economy. On the other hand, the Teigsskógur road construction has also placed a restriction on that image. The different temporalities of the road to the capital area are crucial, and in locals' minds it is a constant reminder that they do not count. Infrastructure can cut off or fill gaps, but it is also about how it connects to places, values and relationalities that must be considered when "infrastructural encounters" happen (Abildgaard, 2023; Easterling, 2014; Harvey, 2012; Ren et al., 2024). Negotiating about places is natural because many different stories converge in a place (Massey, 2003). But I wonder if the length of time it took to reach a conclusion regarding Teigsskógur is an example of powerlessness and complex power relations, or whether the legal and regulatory environment was the main actor? Which again would be an example of complex power relations. This is perhaps not for me to say, but it seems that constructions like Teigsskógur take a long time, and perhaps that is necessary because negotiation must occur, all relations have to be considered, and all voices heard, and considerations and responsibilities accorded towards non-human actors as well as humans. The power relations the road made apparent through the Teigsskógur dilemma and the Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel came in a way as a surprise. This was not in the understanding of there being power relations involved, but rather as to how easily these were revealed in the perspective of the method. The definition of Ísafjörður being the Westfjords acquired a deeper meaning, and the position of V-Barð as a marginal area (even a marginal area to another marginal area, the north of the Westfjords) sharpened the implications of the position of authority V-Barð finds itself in, which controls its actions and shapes its identity.

Looking at the road, it is also apparent how V-Barð's connections are stronger to the south and not to the north, whereby Reykjavík is effectively nearer and an obvious alternative when services or entertainment are needed. Also, the north of the Westfjords, which is considerably nearer to V-Barð than the capital area, is a place you do not need to go to, and it is still a troublesome connection despite the new tunnel that somewhat eases travel, whilst actually making travel between the south and the north of the Westfjords possible year around. This is an example of territorial disconnections (Harvey & Knox, 2015) that have been actualised in the social world. However, things are changing, reminding us of infrastructure being a fight about the future regarding how it connects to previous relations (Harvey, 2012). Stronger connections to the north create new opportunities for cooperations in education and sport. V-Barð is changing as it always has, and it will continue to do so, and the road is a good indicator of its mobilities.[20] Looking at the road like I have done in this chapter, as both a connection and a thrown-togetherness (Massey, 2003) or a place, helps in understanding the mobilities of V-Barð and its ongoing placing (Hetherington, 1997). It is another and helpful way of looking at place making and helps to reveal the complexity, power relations, and mobilities of places.

[20] See also in Chapter 3 where I use old routes and modern roads to look at V-Barð's emergence, through comparisons to historical occurrences.

5 A place of hospitality

My aim in this chapter is to bring V-Barð forth as a place of hospitality as it welcomes visitors who wish to experience and enjoy its spaces (Pyyhtinen, 2022). I examine how V-Barð is enacted as a place of hospitality, together with the consequences and disruption that this can create for local relations to the place, as humans and birds. In doing so, I tell stories of V-Barð's encounters with hospitality with references to philosophical discussion of hospitality and the outdoor access rights[21] of the general public (Lög um náttúruvernd nr. 60/2013).

The main motivation for travellers to visit V-Barð is its rurality, where there is peace and quiet and travellers can be alone in nature, which was stressed by participants in the research. They also told me that travellers like the freedom of being able to stop wherever they want to and do whatever they wish to do, which in the participants' opinion should not be the case. Exactly what it is that gives travellers a feeling of unconditional access is not apparent, but the research participants frequently talked about the outdoor access rights of the public and how this causes travellers not to behave according to rules. In this chapter, I bring forth examples showing how the tension between hospitality and the outdoor access rights can be experienced in the relationship of guests, hosts, and places in V-Barð.

The research interviews clearly revealed the hospitality that the participants felt towards their guests. They welcomed them and were concerned about their wellbeing and experience, whilst making an effort to ensure their guests' stays were as enjoyable as possible. They were concerned about V-Barð becoming too mainstream for travellers, as then the place would be crowded, which would decrease V-Barð's value as a destination of rurality, reducing the guest experience there. Furthermore, through the different encounters of guests, hosts, and places in V-Barð, which I either was told about or witnessed in person on my field trips, it is possible to say that the hosts expected their guests to behave in a respectful and responsible manner towards the place and their hosts. In this regard, I want to attribute the chapter to this discussion and ask: *How is the notion of hospitality apparent in different encounters of hosts, guests, and places in V-Barð through the outdoor access rights of the general public?*

The concepts of *hospitality* and *the outdoor access rights of the general public* are anthropocentric concepts, and generally they have been reviewed as such in research and discourse. My discussion will stem from this basis, as well as opening it up to a more-than-human relational argument, of which humans are a part. The structure of the chapter will be as follows: In Chapter *5.1., Hospitality: Welcoming the other to roam*, I begin by addressing hospitality and the welcoming of the other to roam. The discussion touches upon the negotiation of places, and how negotiation is an ongoing process. Chapter *5.2., Outdoor*

[21] *Almannaréttur*, is the Icelandic word for humans' non-motoric access to the outdoors. It is a compound word which means "Everyone's right" (Vergunst, 2024) and is known in the Scandinavian countries as *allemannsretten* (Granås & Svenson, 2021), and in the English-speaking world as, for instance, *the Right to Roam* (De Sailly, et al., 2020) and *the outdoor access rights* (Vergunst, 2024), the latter being the term I use in the chapter.

access rights, is dedicated to the discussion of outdoor access rights for the public in Iceland, how it relates to locals, and how landscapes can be seen in different ways, and as abstract and practical in relation to laws. Furthermore, how landscape is shaped through history, customs, laws and nature. In Chapter *5.3., Recognising the other: Mutual hospitality*, I touch on the notion of recognising the other in mutual hospitality, that is, the hosts' and guests' relationship being one that operates in both directions, according to certain theories about hospitality which will be further discussed in the chapter. As it is not only the host that welcomes the other, but the guest that recognises that welcome and behaves in a manner that is in accordance with that welcome. Additionally, what can happen when that is not the case is also considered, when the welcoming is, indeed, called into question. Chapter *5.4., A hospitable place?* is devoted to a discussion on the hospitality of the place, V-Barð, where I discuss how different more-than-human connections, for example, tides and gravelled roads, might be experienced by the unfamiliar traveller. Furthermore, how, despite allowing the public to roam freely, whilst being responsible and respectful towards nature and stakeholders, the outdoor access rights do not encourage travellers to be prepared for the unknown, to learn what to expect. And then yet again, the outdoor access rights do not encourage people to roam at all, they just assure the right of the public to the outdoors. I conclude with a discussion of the findings of the whole chapter in Chapter *5.5., Encounters of guests, hosts, and place*.

5.1 Hospitality: Welcoming the other to roam

The act of hospitality is a part of human culture, and as such it has changed with the spirit of the times. In this regard, Lynch et al. viewed "hospitality as both a condition and an effect of social relations, spatial configurations and power structures" (2011, p. nn.), rather than assuming "a particular context of hospitality as [a] given" (ibid.). Finnish researcher, Emily Höckert (2022a), tells us, based on the ideas of two French philosophers, Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, that its core meaning is how humans receive the other. For Levinas, the idea of hospitality and responsibility towards the other is a "subject of welcome" which requires the unconditional welcome of, and to, the other (ibid.), which can be said to entail the disruption of the self in meeting the other. Derrida predicates his "unconditional hospitality" on Levinas' thoughts, stressing that "a "come" must be open and addressed to someone, to someone else whom I cannot and must not determine in advance" (Derrida, 2000, p. 94 in Pyyhtinen, 2022, p. 9). Additionally, for Derrida, the welcoming to one's home must by no means balk at the otherness of the other, as the welcome is unconditional (Höckert, 2022a; Pyyhtinen, 2022). However, Derrida also understands that unconditional hospitality is a utopia, and it does not work in action. Their different positions are fundamental to the understandings of hosts and guests. One is in the position of welcoming whilst the perception of the other is of accepting that welcome. On this basis, Höckert (2022a) underlines that an unconditional welcome is a vision or a thought that cannot be actualised without the hosts losing their position of welcoming. Without any limitations upon the welcome, the hosts would have nothing to welcome the other to, because what they were keen to offer to their guests would (without any levelling or difference of the hosts and the guests), in fact, already be available for those visitors to enjoy with no need for them to be welcomed to it.

Höckert's (2022a) understanding of hospitality is to be together with the other. To welcome and be prepared to expect the unexpected, and she stresses: "the notion of hospitality

encourages one to keep the door open to the unpredictable and unexpected" (ibid.: 169). In relation to Derrida (1999), Höckert (2022) stresses that it is the willingness to accommodate and to acculturate, to change one's being if necessary, an interruption of the self by the other. Berenpas (2016) comes to the same conclusion, quoting Kristeva (1991) when writing about the challenges of Asian hospitality, and being "able to live with the others, to live as others, without ostracism but also without levelling" (paragraph 4).

I will now turn to how V-Barð meets with its guests as a host and negotiates their welcome through the outdoor access rights and, additionally, how these new relations of hosts and guests intertwine with V-Barð and shape its futures. As recommended by Nousiainen et al. (2023) that tourism should be woven in together with other sectors of life in communities but not isolated. The outdoor access rights have perhaps generally always been a bone of contention, and a utopia when it comes to practice, as there have constantly been some limitations, as with unconditional hospitality, the magnitude of this escalated with increased visitor numbers (Mortazavi, 1997). We are no longer talking about neighbours or a few travellers passing through but often a large number of people. This has, for instance, become a problem in the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom (Granås & Svenson, 2021; Kaltenborn et al., 2001; Mortazavi, 1997; Nousiainen et al., 2023; Vergunst, 2013, 2023). Granås and Svenson (2021) point out how the image of the landscape changes with increased tourism whereby, for example, landscapes in northern Norway have become a 'playground' for British alpine enthusiasts (for instance top-skiing and paddling). This has expanded the livelihoods of those working in tourism businesses in Norway. Granås and Svenson also indicate that together with other, and frequently romanticised outdoor activities, such as hiking, "these activities are often in great contrast to the practical landscape which is practiced through household economic pursuits such as reindeer herding, sheep farming and fishing" (2021, p. 18) in Norway. In V-Barð this can be related to hiking and horse-riding travellers, with farmers sometimes questioning hikers in the summer grazing pastures of their sheep, and hikers sometimes being obstructed by fences that farmers have erected. At Melanes farm in V-Barð, the fuzzy borders of the farm and route of travellers longing to walk to a historical site needed to be negotiated, with reasonable futures for both being brought forth.

5.1.1 Negotiating place

Ástþór and Sigga Maja live in Melanes farm in Rauðisandur Beach, V-Barð. The place has become a destination for travellers because of dramatic events at Sjöundá farm a bit further east to Melanes, an alleged murder scene in the late eighteen hundreds. These events were made famous by author Gunnar Gunnarsson's book Svartfugl in 1938, which later was performed as a play at the National Theatre. It was because of these tragic events that travellers began to walk through the farmyard of Melanes to go to Sjöundá. Today Melanes farm is at the road's end, but before, the road would have gone all the way to Sjöundá farm. Generally old routes were near farms and even passed their farmyards. Lately, Rauðisandur Beach has also attracted attention because of its almost red-yellowish sand, which contrasts beautifully with the rough appearances of Látrabjarg, the bird cliff that appears on the horizon to the west (see Figure 41). In the last decade, Rauðisandur Beach has been listed among the top ten beaches in the world by Lonely Planet, even reaching the top spot (Guðmundsdóttir, 2024). When arriving at Rauðisandur Beach, driving or walking, the contrast of the scenery always takes my breath away. The seals resting on the shore underline that this is a place of shelter where it is safe to bring up and give birth to seal

cubs, the beach is also a place of plenty for the adult seals near rich fishing grounds. When arriving at Rauðisandur Beach you are drawn to the seashore, down to the sand where the waves of the great fjord Breiðafjörður hit gently or powerfully but always generatively. These are powerful landscapes, an interplay of more-than-human narratives that embody both beauty and grief.

Figure 41 At Rauðisandur Beach, Látrabjarg bird cliff is in the distance, creating a striking contrast to the smooth sand. Image: EBE.

Ástþór tells me how before they made arrangements for travellers about access ability to Sjöundá at their farm, they sometimes had to harvest their hay during the night because of travellers occupying their driveways. He tells me how travellers were sometimes rude and complained about them building their farm on the route to Sjöundá farm. Here the outdoor access rights peak through with its undoubted rights of the public to roam freely, and old routes not being fenced in. Melanes farm has been where it is since early settlement and the new farmhouses are built on its lands. Here, there are the stories of numbers of travellers wanting to roam the land meeting the stories of the farmers that farm the land and fence off old routes to keep their livestock in or out to be able to harvest their fields.

Ástþór tells me how travellers make a bigger mess in the landscape than a whole herd of cows does. The cows make a path by always walking the same way whilst humans try to find the old route that is overgrown and by walking all over the place, they leave traces in wetlands and fragile places but no path for future travellers to follow. Ástþór tells me how he and Sigga Maja knew that the travellers would not be stopped, and they needed to do something about this. They needed to negotiate about the place so that the place would meet both interests: the farmers' and the travellers'. As a response to the great attraction the place got, Ástþór and Sigga Maja, in cooperation with the municipality of Vesturbyggð, decided to build a road with parking lots and facilities for travellers near the seashore. Also, in collaboration with the EAI, a marked path to the farm Sjöundá and down to the seashore to ease the accessibility to the beach and the historic site. Today, there is a campsite at Melanes farm, along with small lodging houses, toilets, showers, a kitchenette, and a big parking lot. Additionally, there is a beaten track from the campsite down to the beach and to the farm Sjöundá further east.

5.1.2 Negotiating hospitality

Places are negotiated and the relations of them change, and the same applies to the farmers in Melanes and many other farms in V-Barð. The livelihoods of locals have always been mixed between farming and fishing and, nowadays, many farms in V-Barð have mixed activities, for instance, sheep farming, tourism, dairy farming, forestry, and fisheries. Locals make the most out of the opportunities existing there and, in this case, have transformed an unpleasant intrusion to their everyday life and farming into a business, providing an opportunity to make a living, together with a changed future, offering a better welcome for visitors. Nousiainen et al. (2024) encourage us to look at old and new mobilities in places as "intertwined entanglements shaping the landscape" (p. 240), but not "as controversial, competing practices" (ibid.). For landscape is always shaping, and variations of mobilities change it (Nousiainen et al., 2023).

In consideration of the outdoor access rights, the laws give the public rights to enter but with stakeholders, such as landowners, able to impose certain restrictions. The outdoor access rights also make the landowners accountable for that access. If they restrict it in any way they are, for instance, obliged to have gates or ladders over fences that cross routes or are near water, rivers, or seashores (Lög um náttúruvernd nr. 60/2013). However, stakeholders are not responsible for those travelling on their lands (ibid.). Older versions of the outdoor access rights allowed farmers to move main routes from their farmyards or fields to a lesser occupied place in the neighbourhood, but they were responsible for doing so on their own account (ibid.).

In the encounters of many there might be clashes and disagreements, but as reminded of by Massey's (2003) negotiation of place in Melanes farm, there is a place for many. Circumstances can be changed, and actions have a mutual understanding, though they can have a different purpose, as is so with the farmers and the travellers. Conditions of hospitality are negotiated in a place, and the outdoor access rights can be seen as a way to negotiate those conditions. Regarding Melanes farm, the outcomes of those negotiations have led to, for instance, farmers harvesting during normal working hours and travellers being able to park their cars, camp in their tents, and roam the landscape to the Sjöundá historic place, using a well-marked route or going along the seashore. The negotiation of this place does, however, not end here, rather it is an ongoing process of new relations, new mobilities, and new encounters between different actors who are meeting and claiming negotiations. That is a part of the mobilities of places which are always becoming and never still.

Granås and Svenson (2021) stress that places are more complicated than the outdoor access rights can capture, because the laws only talk about certain circumstances and are based on a special understanding of landscapes, culture, and accessibility. Furthermore, the outdoor access rights are aimed at more homogenous circumstances than V-Barð is, for instance, faced with today by increased tourism. The outdoor access rights do not take the whole place into consideration with its different connections, customs, culture and more-than-human hospitality, and relations to the other who is not accustomed to the place. The mutual welcome of hosts and guests to a place is about receiving a welcome which means, for instance, being able to park your car on the side of the road in a safe place so that others can pass you, and about "reading" the place so that you will not cross the "line" of your "host". This underlines the views expressed by participants in this study regarding travellers not having the right to stop everywhere and do whatever they like. By considering the outdoor access rights using the concepts of hospitality, the role of the guests (and also that of hosts)

becomes clear. Guests have a responsibility in relation to the general welcome of their hosts. They should accept this and operate with a spirit of reciprocity to that which they have been welcomed to, behaving responsibly and showing respect for the place. Hospitality goes both ways.

5.2 Outdoor access rights

In Iceland, the outdoor access rights date back to the early ages of settlement and they were established in one of Iceland's oldest books of law, Jónsbók Laws (1281) (Jónsbók nr. 154a/2024; Óskarsdóttir, 2011). The Outdoor Access Laws are one of the customs that the settlers brought to Iceland from their old countries, and these are also practiced in the Nordic countries as well as in Scotland (Vergunst, 2024). A former member of the Icelandic parliament, Steingrímur J. Sigfússon (2014), went as far as stating that the outdoor access rights in Iceland were a part of Icelanders' existence, and the feeling that Icelanders own the country together. According to this, the outdoor access rights are a part of how Icelanders see themselves, a part of their identity. This seems to be a common feeling around the Nordic countries (Granås & Svenson, 2021). How people detect ownership of land is also established, with the right to outdoor living in nature outweighing the right of landowners or keepers (Olwig, 2003; Vergunst, 2013). Furthermore, the need for such laws underlines the private ownership of land.

Mortazavi (1997) states that the old Nordic outdoor access rights are based on the need of people to travel through rural areas in sparsely populated countries such as Sweden, to camp and find food, for instance, fish, mushrooms, and berries, along the way. "[T]he whole institution of "everyman's right" is based on mutual respect from all parties involved" Mortazavi (1997, p. 612) continued. The outdoor access rights are thus based on the Western concept of common wayfaring and survivability from early centuries. They are even related to the old Roman Empire, where human accessibility to common goods, for instance, "atmosphere, ocean, and seashore were assumed to be of such great human importance that they must be accessible to the public for free and unrestricted use" (Óskarsdóttir, 2011, p. 317). This right was further developed in Britain, as the theory of public trust doctrine, a principle establishing that at all times the government is "to ensure the public access to this important quality." (ibid.). This theory has been applied in the United States in similar ways, as well as regarding the utilisation of resources (ibid.). Furthermore, wider outdoor access rights are associated with Kant's cosmopolitanism, the idea of world citizenship, where outdoor access rights are included in the word *kosmou politês* (world-citizen), or existence of the human in the world. That is, of being a person of the world (Nussbaum, 1997), and in that way belonging to it in such a way that the person is welcomed everywhere. Levinas (1979) describes the receiver of that right as a subject of welcome, where there are no limitations to that welcome and the guest is received as he is. The welcoming of the guest is on the terms of the unconditional hospitality Derrida (1999) stresses, as I have mentioned above.

Outdoor Access Laws are a part of the Nature Conservation Law in Iceland which aim to protect Icelandic nature for the future. Furthermore, the laws aim to promote the relationship between humans and nature, and guarantee public right of entrance in harmony with nature (Lög um náttúruvernd nr. 60/2013). Looking at the legal agreement, the Outdoor Access Laws, the emphasis is on the hosts making the rules and guests showing mutual respect and

responsibility when travelling outdoors (ibid.). The laws bring forth respect, responsibility, and reciprocity as well as the right of humans to wander the landscape, where they are allowed to stop and enjoy the outdoors to the limits of the rights of landowners or land-keepers.[22] In that accord, the outdoor access rights are a certain safety precaution for the public, ensuring that the keepers and owners of land cannot close routes or access to the seashore, lakes, or rivers (ibid.).

5.2.1 The right to access my mother's farmyard

I am enjoying the sun in my favourite place at my mother's house down by the shore, sitting on the terrace facing northwest to the driveway and the mountains. Suddenly, I see four people coming down the driveway to the farm. I conclude they are coming from the lodging in the old pastor's house beside the church about 500 m closer to the mountains. From up there, there is a beautiful overview over the fjord and the coastline, and I can imagine how

Figure 42 The marina cairn on the ness of my mother's farm is an attraction for travellers. Image: EBE.

they wanted to reach the beach on their afternoon walk. As they approached, I put on my jumper and stood up. They proceed towards me and are now only 10-12 m from me on the other side of the fence, around the garden where I am situated. It is not until I walk towards them and greet them that they stop. I ask them if they are going to the old marina cairn (see Figure 42) on the point of the ness where my mother's farm is. They confirm that, and I tell them that they are welcome to do so. They are very friendly, but to me they appear kind of

[22] Among other things, the Outdoor Access Laws mention guests' responsibilities, respect, and reciprocity: Respect for nature, landowners and others, forestry, revegetation, special care towards domestic animals, seals, birds nesting, hunting places, together with responsibility in respect of nature, landowners, and others. Respect and reciprocity towards the rules of landowners and others about passing through and in association with the landscape, following marked paths, using gates or stairs, and closing gates all feature (Lög um náttúruvernd nr. 60/2013).

bulky and noisy where they make their "intrusion" to our lands. Are they used to be able to roam freely where they come from and even in people's homes, I ask myself?

This is nothing new. Since at least 2013 I have witnessed this behaviour of travellers. People walking from places nearby or driving up the driveway and parking their cars beside my mother's car to take a walk to the marina cairn on the ness and the beach down below. They never ask for permission. They just go, although this is literally in my mother's farmyard and as I see it, through her home: because the moment you are in the driveway to the farm it is my mother's home. My mother, and earlier my father, does not think the guests' arrivals are an intrusion to her home. She understands that people want to go there, and from her behalf they are welcome to do so. I, on the other hand, feel that I need to let people know they are at someone's home. Hence, I make an effort to go outside of the house and talk to people, almost like a watchdog. I know that the route through my mother's farmyard is one of few routes to the beach for a kilometre or so because it is fenced off. Further south and north, the access to the sea is without limitations. I am also aware of the marina cairn on the ness being an attraction. My parents were rather pleased with travellers wanting to go there. My mother is well aware of the outdoor access rights. She is also against people owning land. My mother has kind of this understanding of the land being bigger than us humans that pass by in "a blink of an eye", whilst the land has another dimension of time, has always been and will always be. My perspective is the same as that of many second homeowners in V-Barð, wanting to have the place for myself or at least that people acknowledge the homes of locals and ask for permission to pass.

5.2.2 Double meaning of landscapes

The geographer, Kenneth R. Olwig, divides landscapes into the abstract landscape of the law and the practical landscape, which is shaped by a long history of local customs, law, and nature (Olwig, 2006). Quoting de Certeau, Olwig uses the word "pedestrian" when talking about landscape, referring to its "double meaning both to the common place and to the peripatetic movement by foot, an irregular form of movement that contrasts with the straight line of state justice" (Olwig, 2006, p. 25). The straight lines of state justice are different to the performed lines of humans, but Olwig stresses landscape includes both. His approach allows for understanding landscape as "bottom up" as Granås and Svenson (2021, p. 20) tell us. For de Certeau, space and place are created in movement and practice. That is why de Certeau talks about cities, which were the subject in relation to his place thinking, being processes of meaningful overlapping places that made the city (Olwig, 2006).

In his ethnography of walking, Vergunst (2013) explores this "bottom up" understanding physically, whilst using de Certeau's approach to place, but rurally when walking in Scotland. Vergunst further stresses how one must understand landscape to be able to talk about the general outdoor access rights. Because, as he experienced himself, the act of walking reveals the "systems of governance and social organisation while maintaining a materialist orientation" (2013, p. 140), for it is through bodily gestures that social space is made (Vergunst, 2013). De Certeau's emphasis on space as acted place is related to the act of movement. Olwig (2006) takes this further as he argues that "anthropological space of landscape […] is practiced location […] in geometrical space" (2006, p. 26). This was something I stressed in Chapter 3, about humans simultaneously inhabiting many spaces, for space is always multi-layered (Armstrong, 2010; Lefebvre, 2014; Poorthuis & Zook,

2021).[23] Vergunst (2013) uses both methods, that is of geometrical- and pedestrian space, to be able to talk about the outdoor access rights. Just as Lorimer and Lund (2003) encourage, the approach demonstrates being responsive towards different ways of producing knowledge.

Vergunst (2013) points out how difficult it can be to carry out outdoor access rights as a traveller in lowland agricultural landscapes and on roads "where vehicles and their drivers are part of the rural landscape" (p. 137), and in geometric fields which "appear to be full of boundaries, even though farmers are able to progress easily between them" (ibid., p. 135). The fields are fenced off by ditches or fences which are hard to pass, and the fields themselves can also be difficult to pass because of the crop being produced there, but also because it is not allowed according to the Outdoor Access Laws (Lög um náttúruvernd nr. 60/2013; Vergunst, 2023). Farmers do, however, have access through their network of routes between the fields, knowledge of where they are and the use of suitable vehicles to pass obstacles that might be a hinderance to humans on foot. Kaltenborn et al. (2001) concluded in the same manner when they deduced how the outdoor access rights rarely have a "direct influence or sanctions on how the landscape is used or transformed by forestry, mining, agriculture or other infrastructure" (2001, p. 420). This is also my experience when walking the landscapes of V-Barð, where old routes are disrupted by construction, the seashore is fenced off, and the only road leading through the landscapes is "taken over" by vehicles, often heavy trucks.

Based on Olwig's (2003; 2006) emphasis concerning the bisection on landscape[24], de Certeau's definition of place, and Vergunst's (2013) use of ethnography of walking and phenomenology of landscape, it becomes clear how the association with landscape is revealed through different performances and actions. Additionally, how these movements are a base for the sense of places and a reflection on them is stressed by Tuan (1996 in Olwig, 2006; 1980). Moreover, how in the case of V-Barð, the politics, customs, and culture of the landscape is disclosed in the performance or actions of the "other", of the guests who come and are encountered by the local humans, non-humans, and the landscape (Vergunst, 2023). It is through the other, that maybe does not know how to act in these landscapes, and thus possibly acts "wrongly" or to a degree, rather than according to customs, culture, and politics or the "structure"[25] of the landscape that such disclosure occurs. The legal environment, the juristic landscape, might allow guests to stop wherever they want to and go almost anywhere doing whatever they want to, though within some limits. Although the practical landscape can be an obstacle because of different businesses in the landscapes, for instance, places that have meaning for agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, fisheries, and conservation. A place is more complicated than the outdoor access rights are able to capture because it is about a place with different connections, customs, culture, and more-than-human hospitality and relations (Granås & Svenson, 2021).

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[23] In Chapter 3 talked about as Euclidean space (Poorthuis & Zook, 2001), here geometrical space (Olwig, 2006).

[24] "[…] the morphology of landscape as a material phenomenon is understood in the context of landscape as an area of cultural activity, a political landscape in its broadest meaning. […] as world pictures, or cosmologies, that are deeply implicated in the ways that ethics and national identities are generated" (Olwig, 2003: 875).

[25] Structure of landscape here means how the landscape is structured and practiced on behalf of land users or owners.

5.3 Recognising the other: Mutual hospitality

In relation to the openness of the host to the other, as stressed by Höckert (2022a), Berenpas (2016), Kristeva (1991), Derrida (1999), and Levinas (1979), I ask myself if the guests should not also be open to the unexpected. For as a guest, it is possible to argue that the unexpected must inevitably accompany those who travel as a fellow traveller. Such an acceptance would make providing hospitality easier for the hosts, whilst making both the host and the guest responsible for their meeting. It is possible to relate the search for the unexpected or unusual to John Urry (1990, 1992), when he speaks about the search for unusualness being the main drive for travellers to leave their mundane everyday lives by undertaking travel. Urry associates this search to something he terms the *tourist gaze*, that in his mind is socially constructed, fitting with the ideas of travellers being attracted by something unusual in another culture, for instance, romantic Paris (ibid.). Rural landscapes can also be subject to the tourist gaze.

The word hospitality is connected to both hostility and welcoming the unknown (e.g., Höckert, 2022a; Lynch et al., 2011; Pyyhtinen, 2022), and the notion of power and the unknown have been connected to the concept through the ages (Höckert, 2022a; Lynch et al., 2011). In Icelandic the word for hospitality is "*gestrisni"*, with the word for guests being "*gestur"* or *"gestir"* in plural. The word relates to the ones that are coming, who may be strangers or friends (Jónsson & AMI, 2023). However, the Icelandic hosts are directly related to the guests as they are the "*gestgjafi"*, the ones who give to the guests, literally the "guest's giver" when it is translated directly. It is a gift and a notion of care that is offered on the host's behalf towards the guests, and in return the guests accept that gift, and that means behaving in a certain manner as guests, whether they are friends or strangers. The hospitality that is offered is thus not a one-way process, but a mutual encounter and agreement, as I observed and which also concurred with my participant opinion on the matter.[26] French scholar, Marchel Mauss, made the act of giving the subject of his book *The Gift* (2000 (1950)), which has influenced many, for example, Derrida. He argues how societies are built up through collective actions of giving and receiving, but not least through reciprocity, which remains a key factor in building relationships between humans, even when the "exchange" does not happen at the same time. This is interesting, as in the French language, the mutual relationship and responsibility of the host and the guest is more apparent, as the same word is used for the guests and the hosts, "hote-hote" (Höckert, 2022a). The use of this term underlines the roles: both hosts and guests are simultaneously subjects and objects of care (ibid.). It is the relation of the self and the other that is, as Höckert (2022a) stresses in relating to Levinas (1979), "the openness to the other […] is the subject that welcomes and receives the other" (p. 46). For when inviting the other, the welcome is already in the offer of welcoming and the receiving is already in the acceptance of that welcome, as Serres and Latour (1995) emphasise. The relationship between the host and the guest is thus a mutual relationship of responsibility and reciprocity.

Grimwood and Höckert (2023) explore multispecies hospitality with berries through storytelling to bring forth important relations of more-than-humans. Their method affiliated what they say, "resonate with the theoretical and methodological terrains of morality in

[26] I do not know if it is a custom in the whole country, but where I come from you are a guest for three days, after that you may be asked to take on the duties and responsibilities of the ones you are visiting. You are not a guest anymore but a part of the household.

tourism" (p. 3), that is, relationality, responsibility, collaboration and the method itself, telling stories of blueberries and cranberries to learn from. In doing so, their stories "are suggestive of how tourism landscapes and practices are a function of relationships always in-the-making" (p. 11). Furthermore, how it is possible to learn from other species, for example, plants, and how they can be teachers for us to build respectful relations by, such as, slowing down and asking questions from other perspectives than the human ones. As stated earlier, hospitality changes in relation to its connections, for instance, to spatial configurations (Lynch et al., 2011). Taking the more-than-human relations into account, as ought to be relevant when writing about tourism and tourists travelling to V-Barð to enjoy its rural nature, peace, and quiet, it is interesting to observe how human guests and non-human hosts, such as birds, recognise each other, and to consider whether the guests are, indeed, welcomed by the non-humans. In this context, hospitality is more like an overall meaning and relation towards the encounter, with the other a specific term such as places to stay and food to eat. It is a comprehensive approach to hospitality in V-Barð, which can only be thought through beforehand to some extent, and often needing to be considered or valued in every encounter, and with the responsibility and care that comes with the roles of the ones involved.

5.3.1 Untidy others

At first, we detect the ravens. They come in a big flock of thirty to forty ravens flying and shrieking from the east of the great cliffs of Látrabjarg, flying up and down near a great cliff that sticks out from the bird cliff and into the sea. They terrify the seabirds from their nests and expose their youngsters, leaving them defenceless: the hazard is immense. I am attending a "Ranger's day" at Látrabjarg bird cliff with few other travellers. Látrabjarg being the westernmost point of Iceland and a great bird cliff attracts travellers and others for different purposes. We walked to the edge of the cliffs and the ranger told us about the birds and their behaviour. He now notes that this is very strange behaviour of the ravens. Later he tells me it was the young ravens: "they like it when something is happening and play joyfully along", referring to the incident we are about to witness. When the most hassle from the young ravens is over, we notice five strange dots approaching from the same direction as the ravens came from before (see Figure 43). The birds on the cliffs react to these "strangers" with fear and it is obvious that the encounter disrupts the balance that is usually amongst them. It might seem strange to talk about a balance in the chaotic bird cliffs, but you can notice when something is disturbing the birds.

As the strange objects come closer, we can see that they are paramotors. They fly along the edge of the cliffs and one of them lands close to us. It has had a motor failure and must land to restore it. When this happens, the ranger tour finishes because the ranger must attend to the incident. The group is no less rattled than the birds on the cliffs. I sense that this is a rare happening, and actually incidents like this should not happen in this place. Later in the evening I have an interview with the ranger, and he tells me about what happened after he left us. The conductors of the paramotors claimed that they did not know about a bird cliff in the area, which is odd because they had already been flying along the bird cliff for quite a long time before the incident, for Látrabjarg is 14 km long. Perhaps it is more like the incident varied for 14 km, than just when we witnessed it. Later I also heard from another source that the paramotors had previously been searching for information about a good place for gliding in the area, and therefore should have had some ideas about the bird cliffs, as they took off from a deserted airport in the next fjord.

Figure 43 Paramotor flying above Látrabjarg and the young ravens flying up and down the great cliff, standing out from the bird cliff. Image: EBE.

5.3.2 Lack of recognition

Since 1994, unnecessary flight traffic and noisiness in the vicinity of a bird cliff is not permitted according to so-called Wild Animals Laws in Iceland (Lög um vernd friðun og veiðar á villtum fuglum og villtum spendýrum nr. 64/1994), and is now specially prohibited around Látrabjarg due to its conservation status in 2021. It can disrupt nesting if birds are frightened from their nests at this vulnerable time (Ólafsdóttir, 2019). The responsible behaviour would have been to refrain from paramotoring along Látrabjarg bird cliffs. In their article about the outdoor access rights, Granås and Svenson (2021) point out how peripheral landscapes change with increased tourism, as they become a playground for adventure tourists. They stress how that is often in contrast with the practical landscape of places (see also Olwig, 2003). I can see that this was the case with the paramotor incident.

The story about the flyers of paramotors lacking respect and responsibility and creating a mess is a story about "intrusive species", or the untidy guests (Veijola et al., 2014), who take over local spaces, use resources, destroy, and mess things up. Látrabjarg bird cliff is first and foremost a nesting place for seabirds, but as with other places it is also a place of encounters. The cliffs are the home of the Arctic fox; and the halibut who besieges the ocean beneath the cliffs for falling eggs, with it being possible to say the same about the grey seal. Some sheep have their grass areas in the cliffs and the sparrows, big and small, nest among the seabirds – with the raven being the biggest of them. Furthermore, humans pick seabird eggs to eat and sell, as noted in Chapter 3, and the seabirds, especially the puffins, attract travellers, which for some visitors seem to be unreal in their colours and "cuteness". Lund et al. (2018) argue how the puffin's resemblance to extinct species, such as the Great Auk, is a reminder to travellers of how humans have treated nature. Furthermore, how the Atlantic puffin itself has become a symbol for the Arctic ecosystem, pure and in balance (even though it is not) and something visitors seek to see. Sixty percent of the Atlantic puffin population nests and raises its young in Iceland, with the Látrabjarg bird cliffs being a major habitat. Látrabjarg being the westernmost point of Iceland is also an attraction in itself. Practical landscape or not, it is a preoccupied landscape and that is perhaps how we should look at it, as landscape (space if you prefer it), or a meeting place of heterogenous narratives: Because this is what we get when trying to classify everything, there is always something that does not fit and evades definition, and there are relations that escape notice.

When taking the more-than-humans into account, we are faced with a different perspective than only accounting for the human part of the relations can offer, as stressed by Grimwood and Höckert (2023) in relation to multispecies hospitality and berries. On Látrabjarg cliffs this is made clear because it is a place of multiple meanings regarding more-than-human relations and beings. In such a place, the gravity of the paramotoring incident is apparent. Even though the paramotors were greeted joyfully by the young ravens, most of the local birds were negatively disrupted and some of them tried to attack the intruders. Such irresponsible behaviour clearly had a great impact upon the place, changed rhythms, and it might have had dramatic consequences for some. For example, eggs and hatchlings that might have fallen off ledges and into the sea where the halibuts and others were waiting, making them a casualty of the paramotor flying hazard.

Looking at the incident through the lens of hospitality and responsible guest behaviour, this visit was a failure. Obviously, rules were broken here, even though the Outdoor Access Laws

do not apply to flying objects,[27] which might seem peculiar, nowadays, with the increased traffic or use of such objects and, additionally, with revision of the laws in 2013, with comprehensive evaluation on behalf of the government regarding nature reserves (Óskarsdóttir, 2011). Furthermore, it seems that there was also a total failure when it came to listening to the multispecies other, together with showing respect to the landscapes and relations the guests had invited themselves to. As for the birds that were involved, disturbed or enthusiastic, I do not know what consequence the paramotors incident had on them. However, the Wild Animal Laws and the conservation of Látrabjarg cliffs[28] in 2021 show that this behaviour is not acceptable, as there is a risk of irreversible consequences. So, to reiterate, it is not the case that guests are allowed to do anything they choose in V-Barð, and because of their actions, the paramotor flyers received a warning from the ranger, with a report being written. However, from what I sensed from the ranger, there would be no further consequences.

This is, however, just one story of intrusion in Látrabjarg. The place is in constant negotiation, as is the "being" of places, and the encounters where other stories come together and "tussle". For instance, the stories between the human egg collectors, the Arctic fox, and other birds in the Látrabjarg cliffs are likely to feature consequences that are no less notable than the one I have told, although relating to more localised places in the cliffs. Here, the double meaning of landscape which Olwig (2006) talks about comes into play and adds "rights" because of culture, nature, or customs. It is the new actions in Látrabjarg that raise questions about who is to be welcomed and who is not. In this regard, yet again, we witness the intertwining of diverse entanglements and mobilities shaping the landscape, and we must look at them as such, and not as controversies (Nousiainen et al., 2024). In so doing, it is possible to negotiate and find ways for the future.

5.4 A hospitable place?

Addressing the more-than-human connections without being anthropocentric is perhaps one of the challenges of researching in the Anthropocene. This is because more-than-human agency in places is more recognised by researchers, and methods of researching these relations are developing. Höckert (2020) stresses that researchers strive towards "exploring beyond the anthropocentric imaginary" (p. 54). She, among others (for instance Haraway, 2016; Tsing, 2015), has brought forth ways of researching more-than-human relations and beings, with storytelling and story listening, as described in Chapter 2, and continued with in this chapter, with the focus placed on the relations of hospitality. More-than-human relations are important, not least in bringing forth the entanglements and encounters of places, along with their "nuances, feelings and power relations that occur in and shape" (Höckert et al., 2022b, p. 186) those relations. This also relates to places' relation to

[27] The incident happened in August 2018. Back then there were no rules against flying objects of any kind at Látrabjarg bird cliffs and the place was not yet a conserved place. However, due to the willingness of the authorities and the Minister of Environment, to take care of the place and guard its relations, a ranger was appointed there over the summertime.
[28] Conservation of Látrabjarg, for example, in the aim of "protecting the unique biosphere and bird habitat and maintain[ing] the area's natural state and landscape" (EAI, 2022).

hospitality and that is why I ask myself, what does it mean to explore the idea of hospitality beyond human relations?

Trying to wrap my head around hospitality beyond human relations, I am reminded of an incident I encountered last summer when taking a walk along the seashore at my mother's place in V-Barð, accompanied by my mother and daughters. Along the way, we sat down on a sandbar to have a rest whilst overlooking the sea. Feeling comfortable and at ease, I crossed my arms around my chest but was immediately hit by a sting in my thumb. At first, I thought that some sharp object must be stuck to my wool jumper, but with further investigation I saw that it was a small bee that had stung me. I had somehow entered the bee's space, and it mine: As I told my fellow walkers that the bee was an intruder on my body, I simultaneously recognised that I was also on its body, folding my hands as I did on the spot where the bee was resting. Perhaps its home was in the sandbar we had sat down on. Maybe, I was indeed the intruder, and the bee was joining us in hospitality until I threatened it. Contradicting that anthropocentric view, I am, of course, saying that bees show hospitality in the way humans do by joining in a group or welcoming guests by greeting them. Could it be said that the bee showed me hospitality by not stinging me until I threatened it by literally touching it with my hand? The bee sting, however, encouraged me to think about how it would be to tell stories that were non-anthropocentric, where the main characters were non-human others (Haraway, 2016; Höckert, 2020). I imagined they would tell a different story about relations and how humans would react to them. Additionally, this got me thinking about V-Barð's hospitality in relation to the more-than-human relations, and on how eager humans are to their promising openness to guests on behalf of, for instance, the seals at Rauðisandur Beach,[29] puffins in Látrabjarg cliffs, and the scrubs, moss, and landscapes in the whole of V-Barð.

Emphasising the more-than-human perspectives in V-Barð, the hosts would be present in the place as a whole, with its relations, landscapes, fauna, flora, humans, winds, and waters. Pyyhtinen (2022) brings forth the idea of place, where it is not only the location of an encounter between the guests and the hosts, it is also the third actor in that encounter. The place is a spatial dimension that influences these encounters, as I have frequently stated earlier. Stressing the place of encounter as the third actor, Pyyhtinen draws attention to the agency of the place. This approach echoes my discussion of hospitality in V-Barð well, as it addresses the place making discussion and recognises the more-than-human actors. Hospitality in V-Barð would thus be described as being together with the place, in all the relations one finds oneself in, together with the other (Höckert, 2022a). I expect hospitality in V-Barð to look at this in various ways, for instance, in how the guest is received in the form of friendly landscapes, abundance of resources, and shelter.

Having said that, the landscape – steep and high mountains, and infrastructure – narrow gravelled roads, elements, and tides, of V-Barð are perhaps not always the most welcoming for humans, or perhaps I should say that it can be divergently welcoming. In V-Barð, the landscape itself is often an "obstacle" which guests must "overcome". Though, as noted at the beginning of the chapter, these circumstances can also attract travellers, for instance, the gravelled narrow and steep roads, which can become a playground for travellers that have not experienced roads like that before, and they play joyfully and take pictures while

[29] There are, however, restrictions against travellers going to the seal hatching areas during early summer and until the cubs are relatively mature and able to help themselves.

cleaning their dirty cars at Hótel Flókalundur after driving the wet dirt roads. The Westfjords Way, spoken of in Chapter 4, plays on this image of the roads and uses them as an attraction for travelling to the Westfjords. Furthermore, some relations among the more-than-humans are something that guests must adapt to, to be able to live with through the visit or to enjoy, so that the experience will meet their expectation. These roads can also become deadly if one does not respect their relations with rubber tires, speed, and changing circumstances. The same applies to the tides around the area, which at Rauðisandur Beach will alter travellers' experiences of the place, depending on whether they visit at high or low tides; changes in the landscape are resounding and even dangerous if you are not familiar with them.

5.4.1 The risk of not knowing the unknown

We are again in Rauðisandur Beach where the rescue squad, Bræðrabandið, has now stationed a boat to be prepared for rescuing travellers from the shallow waters of Bæjarvaðall. In Bæjarvaðall, the circumstances are so that the sea level can vary from five to six metres during the low and high tides. This totally changes the landscape of Rauðisandur Beach, where on low tides it is possible to walk across the shallow waters to the two riffs that "fence" it off from the sea, making the appearance of the place beach-like.

But on high tides the intended beach changes to "a fjord" and it becomes shallow water which will only be crossed on a boat if it is not frozen. This is obvious in Figure 44 andFigure 45 which show Bæjarvaðall shallow waters from opposite angles and different tides at high and low tides. Until recently this has not been a problem, since locals know their surroundings and thereby, the variation of the tides and have considered them in their travels. The problems the Bræðrabandið is faced with today are that the travellers do not know these landscapes. They have perhaps never been to the sea before, and do not know how it behaves. Not to mention its relations to this specific place, and its ongoing shaping and relational interaction to these landscapes.

The last few years this unfamiliarity to the place has become a problem where travellers visiting Rauðisandur Beach at a low tide go out to the shallow waters and even try to reach the sand riffs in the distance. If they are there for a long time or on the shift of the tides, they might get stranded on a little sand islet in the middle of the shallow waters. This islet will eventually also be flooded on the peak high tides, but that is something you cannot know if you are not familiar with how the sea acts in these landscapes. I am told that people that get stranded on the islet become scared and sometimes it has happened that a rescue would have been needed.

Once a family of four with small children got stranded out there and had to wade across a relatively deep and cold sea, holding their children in their arms, all the way to the shore. It was after an incident like this that the Bræðrabandið rescue team felt the urge to station their boat at Bæjarvaðall so that the rescue reaction time would be minimised. Before this happened, the rescue boat was stationed in Patreksfjörður fjord on the other side of a mountain with a difficult road to cross over it.

Usually, these incidents are not that hazardous, and people wade across the incoming sea when they notice the sea coming up to the dry sand they have been walking on. They might get wetter than they thought they would in the beginning, a local tells me, but most of them are not really bothered about it, though some might be slightly shocked. There are only a

few incidents where travellers get really shocked or are even in danger, and the Brœðrabandið rescue team wants to be prepared for that.

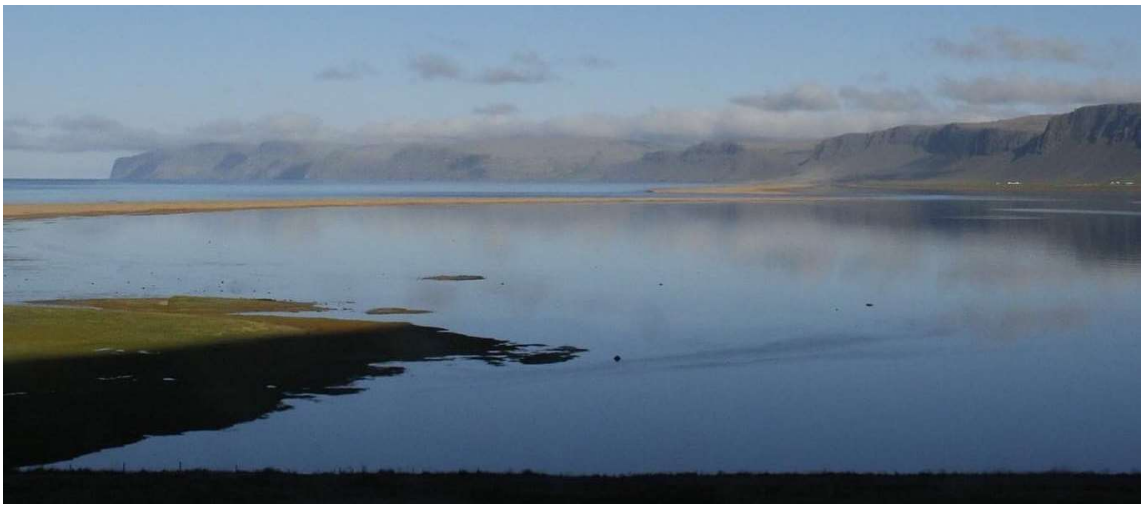

Figure 44 Rauðisandur Beach and the shallow waters of Bæjarvaðall on high tides. Image: Ástþór Skúlason.

Figure 45 Rauðisandur Beach and the shallow waters of Bæjarvaðall on low tides. Image: Silja Björg Ísafoldardóttir.

5.4.2 Be ready for the unexpected

There is a certain risk if we start to "read" a particular kind of hospitality into nature. Firstly, hospitality is a humancentric concept. Secondly, if we consider that there is another kind of hospitality than the human one, what does it look like? It is possible to describe intended more-than-human hospitality in the ways we humans relate to. For example, how Bæjarvaðall shallow waters is welcoming travellers to walk out onto its sand and explore the beach (because it is what it does on a low tide: as a traveller you cannot but walk there because it is so "inviting"). However, it is not hospitable for those same shallow waters to

be filled more deeply with seawater, leaving travellers stranded on a sand islet in the middle of it. We could rather relate that kind of behaviour to hosts that were holding the guests "hostile", which are also relations that have a historical meaning in relation to the word "hospitality", a point that has been made before (Höckert, 2022a). In the intention of discerning other kinds of hospitality than those related to humans, it is also possible to follow rhythms and tell stories, which I have done in the story of Bæjarvaðall's shallow waters. There, the rhythms of the tides and the actions of travellers do not always go together. The anecdote is about the relations of tides and humans, about how the hospitality of Rauðisandur Beach can outreach the limits of human experience if they do not know the place, and how knowing the place and actions in relations to that knowledge is an act of care and hospitality.

Hospitality is a humancentric concept where we are supposed to be open to the unexpected and the unknown, both as hosts and guests. But how does one prepare for the unexpected? This problem, where the unfamiliar other does not know how to behave, is experienced worldwide. We have all been somewhere and been shocked because of one thing or another; the waves are too powerful; the insects or snakes too poisonous; or someone's pickpocketing skills being too adept. The stories serve as a reminder to listen to more-than-human voices. Places might not be familiar to us but not listening to their multivocality can alter our existence, and thus it can be crucial that everyone listens to the different voices a place is summoning forth. This can be said regarding Bræðrabandið rescue team moving its boat to the Bæjarvaðall shallow waters, as it was a response to familiarity with the rhythmic voices of the place and hearing the voices of the newcomers that had just arrived.

The Outdoor Access Laws do not speak to the unfamiliar other, rather they speak to the ones that know the landscapes of Iceland, and sometimes that is not enough because the variation of the tides in V-Barð are greater than elsewhere in Iceland. Furthermore, the Outdoor Access Laws do not encourage travellers to be ready for the unknown. However, they encourage one to respect, for example, stakeholders, nature, rules, livestock, fauna, and flora, and to be considerate in their behaviour. The Outdoor Access Laws open landscapes, waterfronts, and seashores for the public to roam. Responsibility and respect towards more-than-human relations is also encouraged, but perhaps the guests that are unfamiliar with the landscapes of V-Barð are not sufficiently encouraged to be prepared and to expect the unknown. This was probably never the intention of the laws, but to ensure access of the public to the outdoors.

This story of Rauðisandur Beach brings forth the importance of travellers showing responsibility by knowing places they visit, and listening to their multivocality, whilst being prepared. The story also tells about the agency of places (Larsen & Johnson, 2016) and highlights the differences between locals and travellers, hosts and guests, where the knowledge of the place gives locals a voice to speak out which should be heard, or at least to be prepared for the encounter of the Bæjarvaðall shallow waters and travellers.

5.5 Encounters of guests, hosts, and place

The aim of this chapter was to bring forth encounters of hospitality in V-Barð through philosophical discussion on hospitality and the public outdoor access rights of Iceland. I began with the assertion of participants in the research, that travellers coming to V-Barð want to be able to experience nature alone and away from the crowd, whilst having the

opportunity to stop everywhere and do whatever they wish to do. In writing this chapter, I have brought forth short stories – anecdotes, that have shed a light on the encounters of local hosts and guests in both positive and negative ways. The stories have been about the messiness of those encounters (Massey, 2003), and the multivocality (Bursta et al., 2023) of different actors and the agency of the place (Larsen & Johnson, 2016).

Although hospitality encourages us to welcome the other with no restrictions (Derrida, 1999), that is impossible because in doing so we would eventually not have any place to welcome people to. This is because without any levelling, our place that we welcome guests to would no longer be ours. The whole concept of hosts and guests depends on a distinction between them, which means they cannot be the same. Hospitality comes with responsibility, reciprocity, and respect, which also applies to the outdoor access rights. When different stories meet, as was the case at Melanes farm, with farmers and travellers, negotiations need to take place. At Melanes, farmers were confronted with travellers who would not be stopped; they came and enjoyed the powerful landscapes in the interplay of more-than-human narratives, but also, at times, they made it difficult for the farmers to harvest. The farmers' action was to respond to the travellers from the angle of their responsibility as the landowners and to ease the travellers' accessibility to historical sites and seashores, simultaneously also supporting their own livelihoods.

The outdoor access rights can be a bone of contention, as they both increase the Icelanders' public understanding of owning land (Sigfússon, 2014) and support travellers from all nations being able to roam the outdoors of Iceland, whether they know about it or not. Borders of homes can be unclear, and areas where the public has access rights are fenced off. Furthermore, the laws emphasise private ownership of land, which raises the question of whether there should be laws to negate privately owned land.

Encounters of guests and hosts bring forth different landscapes and how they are constantly changing and becoming in relation to what is there (Ingold, 1993). The landscape is rich with the politics, culture, customs, ongoing activities, and various interests that matter when visiting a place, staying and wishing to do certain things. Vergunst's ethnography of walking and phenomenology of landscape, for instance, detects these kinds of different politics, because it is not least through pedestrian activities that the politics of landscape are revealed (Vergunst, 2013). In V-Barð, the different interests are, for example, those of farmers, landowners, travellers, and other more-than-human relations. My mother's farmyard continues to be a stumbling block for me and travellers, but not for her. Her opinion is in accordance with people roaming freely and welcoming the other to enjoy what is there. This sometimes gives her much joy, together with opportunities to be interrupted. My own and my mother's different experiences of travellers walking through the farmyard demonstrate how one's sense of interruption can be hospitality and welcoming to visit from the perspective of others.

We are to expect the unexpected and be open to being with others, which is the notion of hospitality according to Höckert (2022a). At the same time, we expect our guests to show the same openness to the hosts and to display respect and responsibility. It is a mutual understanding of the guests and the hosts. Otherwise, they are not guests but intruders, who should expect to experience the consequences – or perhaps not, as was the case with the paramotor flyers at Látrabjarg cliffs. The young ravens welcomed the interruption of these

untidy guests[30], whilst their feathered neighbours were terrified, and the visit most likely had negative consequences for them at some point, as does the egg collecting of locals, but this is far more localised in the cliffs. Here, old and new ways of mobilities and practice around Látrabjarg cliffs matter, where the new ways are seen as using the landscape for a playground, whilst the old ways are in relation to culture, old habits, and practical landscapes of the past.

One of the challenges of the Anthropocene is moving beyond anthropocentrism and thinking in a "more-than-human-centric" manner, which also applies to approaches in research. Storytelling is one way of approaching the more-than-humans, telling open-ended stories about more-than-human relations and beings so that it is possible to follow and see what there is, as I have done more or less through the thesis. Our analysis will, however, always be human. That is why when approaching more-than-human hospitality in the tides of Rauðisandur Beach, I used an approach exploring how the elements affected the one that is not familiar with the land- and seascapes of V-Barð, how the elements present themselves there (in V-Barð) and claim agency of the place (Larsen & Johnson, 2016). As well as being the local rescue team, Bræðrabandið, does more, in playing out their hospitality towards guests and place, and being ready for the unexpected. Concerned about the willingness of humans to the openness of more-than-human hospitality, I found out that the Outdoor Access Laws do not address the travellers that are unfamiliar with the landscapes of V-Barð. That is, in other ways than encouraging travellers to be respectful and responsible. Perhaps that is seen as being enough and it is intended that travellers refer to it in their own way, according to their relations with the land- and seascapes they visit.

The anecdotes have brought forth different encounters of hospitality in V-Barð. Furthermore, they have, among other things, generated challenges, opportunities, agencies, and mobilities that are worth thinking about and discussing regarding the relations of travellers coming to V-Barð. The meetings of hosts, guests, and place in V-Barð are relational and to be negotiated. That is why the anecdotes are open-ended stories and, as such, they do not have fixed endings, or perhaps any ending at all. They are to be continued and negotiated further and to create different futures, presents, and pasts. They are different mobilities which V-Barð emerges through, constantly moving and becoming.

[30] Untidy guests refers to those who interrupt the business as usual and stir things up (Veijola et al., 2014).

6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I will discuss my findings, along with the contribution offered by the study and my conclusion as follows: In Chapter *6.1, Main findings*, I will address the findings of the research. In Chapter *6.2, Walking into relations*, I will further explore the contribution of the walking methodology and, in Chapter *6.3, Place making*, I contribute to the place making discussion, going over the main findings of the research and the emphasis within each chapter of the thesis, along with why it matters for tourism studies. In Chapter *6.4., Further contribution*, I discuss my contribution to the local research field of V-Barð and, in Chapter *6.5, Further research and limitations*, I refer to the research limitations and bring forth ideas for further research. Finally, in Chapter *6.6, Salute*, I conclude with a salute.

6.1 Main findings

The aim of the research has been to examine how the place of V-Barð, Iceland, is created through mobilities, human–nature relations, and tourism encounters. Mobility is a central concept in place making, which is able to capture well how places are constantly being made through different actions and relations with more-than-humans. Relations, actions, and perspectives of places change how we see them and how they are presented and valued. The thesis highlights the complexity of places and their connections, which, irrespective of the traditional conception of them (not least the rural ones), are mobile, diverse and a part of the world and its rhythms (Lund & Jóhannesson, 2019). Each chapter of the thesis presents a new perspective on the place making of V-Barð and stresses the diverse relations through which V-Barð emerges. These are relations which address how the place, V-Barð, can be understood or is made through the different relations of diverse, more-than-human actions and mobilities of the past, present, and future times.

By emphasising place as something that is complex, dynamic, mobile, and messy, the thesis highlights how V-Barð is created through human–nature relations that characterise the place where human communities can thrive in relation to work and safety, but also in the form of nature conservation. Furthermore, it explores how V-Barð's mobilities throughout the ages is made apparent via walking and driving mobility lines, such as roads. Moreover, it examines how viewing the road as both a place and the connection between locations discloses different stories. The stories the road tells, and which are being told about it, vary depending on how it is approached, for instance, from the angle of power relations and social connections. Finally, how the notion of hospitality is displayed in V-Barð in the way it welcomes its guests, and the complexity of the guests, hosts, and place relationship is stressed. V-Barð is created differently through these various connections, all of which locals recognise, which can thus be helpful in understanding the place, its different appearances, challenges, and possibilities.

The main findings of the thesis regarding place making are primarily that places are multivocal (Bender, 2002; Bursta et al., 2023), multi-layered (Jóhannesson, 2023; Lund & Jóhannesson, 2012), and, therefore, we can call them messy (Massey, 2003). This means

that in a place there will always be different perspectives and diverse voices of more-than-human relations, as brought forth in Chapter 5. These voices are not all noticeable through the usual channels of human voices, and then again not all human voices are welcomed in all places and the tendency is to listen to the loudest ones. Listening for other kinds of voices than the human ones requires a different type of listening, following rhythms and sensing the unseen and unheard. Furthermore, the meaning of places being multi-layered refers to their many layers (Jóhannesson, 2023; Lund & Jóhannesson, 2012) and dimensions. A multi-layered place is perhaps not always apparent, but using another angle than usual, different methods, or approaches to thinking about places will help to reveal these layers (Haraway, 2016). In that way, it is possible to discern the relations of places that usually go unnoticed, but which may have a dynamic saying in the making of them. For example, the earthly materials present at the site connecting to the measured knowledge of engineering in road construction, referred to in Chapter 4, or the old routes of V-Barð presenting a different place than contemporary V-Barð does, as discussed in Chapter 3. Furthermore, the messiness of places refers to the diverse and dynamic connections that places are made of. As Massey (2003) stresses, places are different stories coming together and negotiating, as is the case, for instance, with human–nature relations in V-Barð in Chapter 2, where aquaculture, avalanche fences, and conservation are discussed. Above all, places are messy and complex, and there is nothing simple about them. Therefore, the thesis stresses the importance of taking the diverse voices of places into account and negotiating about them (Massey, 2003). There can never be a final conclusion because places are constantly entering into new relations and new negotiations, although there will be an understanding, or a conclusion, based on the relations in every time and place.

Secondly, power relations are a core factor in place making and central in this research. Looking at place making through relational phenomenology and the analysis of power relations, as I do when I look at the road as a place and a connection between locations in Chapter 4, has brought forth how power manifests itself in unexpected ways and shapes societies, not only socially and economically, but through material relations such as roads. I have detected the power of non-human connections, as well as within the population, access to authorities, politics, institutions, expertise, knowledge, location, access to the world economy, and culture. This leads to the third and final findings of the thesis, which exists in the agency of places. My findings show that places have agencies which will not and should not be ignored in their development or in research. For example, regarding this, in Chapter 5, I discuss how hospitality of places and how the hosts – guests – place relationship needs to be negotiated from more-than-human relations. Additionally, negotiations about road construction that took both time and effort are described in Chapter 4. Indeed, examples of all three main findings can be found in each of the chapters in the diverse relations and connections that are mentioned.

The findings show that we need to rethink how we develop places. This then raises the question of how do we develop places considering all this messiness, and all the voices of a place? I argue that I cannot provide a direct answer to this question, rather my argument is that when thinking about place making, researching, or developing, we need to consider three factors: How a place becomes through multivocality, power relations, and agency. This brings me to the other major contribution of the thesis, its ontological approach, the material relationalism which makes it possible to take the more-than-human relations into account, that also reflects the complexity of places.

I will now explore the further contributions of the thesis and how they were a driving force for the research in the first place.

6.2 Walking into relations

I came to this research walking, because through walking I could discern things that I wanted to look more into. It was a new feeling or awareness or connection I felt when walking in V-Barð and being introduced to relational materialism in academia assisted me with noticing and understanding this. I came to recognise the more-than-human relations while walking old routes and making new paths, ascending, descending, feeling the rhythm of the landscape in my body (Edensor, 2010), walking-with (Einarsdóttir & Lund, 2023c; Rantala et al., 2020) and becoming-with (Haraway, 2013; Wright, 2014). The concept of more-than-human relations helped me understand that humans are *a part* of nature, not *apart* from it or separated in any way, but *together-with*. Discovering that these relations were indeed relational ontology which stresses the more-than-human perspective and relations, and a theoretical approach I could use in my research, emphasises how the research is derived from the core of my motivation for the research. Furthermore, the method that deepened that understanding, the walking, helped me in observing V-Barð as a different place than it is today. This approach is thus also a contribution of the thesis, for through the walking I developed a methodology that enabled me to reveal the mobilities of V-Barð through time and the layers of the past.

Up to some point, the more-than-human is a concept of our times, of the Anthropocene. It articulates how important it is to look at the world as a combination of dynamic relations where every connection counts. The approach emphasises that the more-than-human relations are of all kinds, and by taking them into account you have a place that is totally different from the one you would arrive at if you only considered the human part of them. Stressing these relations encourages an understanding of recognising of other relations than, for instance, the economic ones, which have more or less been the focus of human–nature relations in the western world since the dawning of capitalism. Moreover, I argue that emphasising the economic values of human–nature relations might indeed be one of the reasons for the Anthropocene. Highlighting other connections is important, not just in V-Barð but also in general regarding how humans deal with the situations that they are faced with today with climate change and species extinction, which is a part of everyday life everywhere on Earth. Thus, the thesis contributes not only to the field of research but also to this ontological perspective, both academically and in relation to V-Barð.

The method of walking old routes, looking at maps and place name archives, and further looking into them regarding historical occurrences, is a contribution to the field in general. In the beginning of my research, I emphasised the lines in the landscape that captured my mind in addition to the method of walking, or how the landscape was layered (Casey, 1996) or woven together (Ingold, 2023b) with me, itself and in other connections. This is the ethnography of walking, where I add diverse things to the walking to get a fuller picture of the field, and to chase the stories that lay within the field, which I could discern through my walking. Being used to driving around in V-Barð, my view of the place was from that perspective, the view from the car while driving or as a passenger on contemporary roads. Walking the old routes, a new place emerged. When I showed people in V-Barð the maps of the place that the old routes exposed, they too were surprised. Had the place changed so

dramatically? Even though we had known about these old routes before, they had not mattered that much. Bringing the old routes forward changed how I saw V-Barð, its past and multivocal aspects. It was a reminder of the continuous relations of the open-ended stories that Haraway (2016) invites us to write, to take in all the threads of a place or situation, which also means to contemplate or bring forth its possibilities in the future, past, and present. This made me curious and motivated me to dig deeper into how the place was created differently, and I am going to take a more detailed look at that.

6.3 Place making

Looking at V-Barð from different perspectives using diverse approaches and methodologies has highlighted the complexity of the place, its multivocality, power relations, and agencies. This includes V-Barð's mobilities, and how multi-layered, undefinable, and fluid it is (Casey, 1996; Lund & Willson, 2010). At the beginning of my research, the approach of more-than-human relations and walking ethnography was apparent. Chapter 2 is about the different connections of more-than-humans in V-Barð. I draw forth the most obvious more-than-human relations I detected in the field, the human–nature relations of, firstly, human utilisation of nature, secondly, nature as a threat that humans need to be sheltered from, and thirdly, fragile nature that needs to be conserved from human utilisation. These relations were the relations people talked about or those that I saw in the human-made landscape or natural landscape, for example, signs and infrastructure of all kinds. I witnessed some of these myself during my fieldwork, for instance, when landslides on the road blocked my way home from my first interview and I had to wait until this had been cleared.

It is the economic connection that is most obvious, and people relate to in the research, along with the utilisation and thinking of nature as being there for humans to thrive, a resource for human life and liveability. Looking around for other human–nature connections, the avalanche fences in Patreksfjörður and Bíldudalur villages made it clear that nature was a threat to humans. The avalanche fences were manifestations of humans needing to defend themselves against the forceful nature that holds almost no boundaries and can be unpredictable. The third example of human–nature connections I bring forth in V-Barð might be described as the opposite to the former ones, that of nature being fragile with the need to be protected against humans, or for them to enjoy in the future. Additionally, though, nature is seen as a resource for tourism, which truly boosts the livelihoods of some locals, and which I have discussed in Chapter 5 as another kind of utilisation. The approach of fragile nature becomes clear in the discussion of Vatnsfjörður reserve in Chapter 2. Bringing forth the more-than-human relations has been my attempt to make other connections, but the human ones count in the big picture, because they are the big picture in the times we live in, and they underline how multivocal V-Barð is.

Chapter 3 opens V-Barð up as a different place than most of us living today are familiar with. It is a place of different temporalities, rhythms, and mobilities, with another way of travel and more distributed settlements. The ethnography of walking brings forth how the place has changed, and that places are dynamic and constantly becoming. Additionally, it is highlighted that this development does not stop here, for it is the normal state of places to change and be fluent, and V-Barð will continue emerging through its diverse connections. Matching historical occurrences to the walked and mapped old routes helped to bring understanding of the lines of mobilities in the landscapes, bringing forth the "changing ties"

in the perspective of places, such as V-Barð, and also revealing the greater influences and development in the world, for example, the Industrial Revolution. Examining V-Barð in this way also revealed how it is a part of the world. Relating the old mobility lines to historical occurrences answered the questions that arose for me when walking these old routes. That is, to see how the development of the place could be seen in its mobility lines, the old routes people used to travel, and the contemporary roads that we drive today. This is a new perspective, approach, and methodology to place making which is available to future researchers. This approach tells a story and draws the many layered places forth in colourful ways. It also brought deeper meaning to the place than I had hoped for, with the unveiled knowledge showing that places are constantly changing in relations that span near and far.

According to Latour (2004), searching for the matters of concern in empirical research data is a good way of discovering more about the meaning of places. That the road was the main issue and matter of concern in V-Barð was perhaps of little surprise to me, as I know the place well. Beforehand, I knew that this was a central controversy, and I was not really inclined towards discussing it in the thesis. However, the discourse in V-Barð and in all my data showed that the roads were a subject that I had to cover. My way of approaching this was to look at the road itself, looking at it as a connection between locations on one hand, and as a place of encounters on the other, whilst always speaking in terms of the more-than-human relations that the road is a part of. This approach opened up a whole new world where, for instance, I could see how local identities and their vision of a prosperous community were interfered with by the seventy-year-old road. Moreover, power relations and culture were exposed, and finally, the social relations clearly emphasised connections to the south, with the habitual connections of the locals being in the capital area. This was irrespective of recently improved connections to the north of the Westfjords, where larger communities offer a higher level of service than the residents are used to in V-Barð. Additionally, roads also blur the outskirts of V-Barð, but they correspondingly connect to other parts of the country. My approach of exploring place making through the roads also made it clear that V-Barð is not isolated but connected to the rest of the country and, further, that V-Barð is connected to the rest of the world. The approach also highlighted the importance of these connections for V-Barð. Moreover, it was emphasised how, when the ongoing road construction is finished in the near future, V-Barð will be as connected to the rest of the country as every other region of it is and, with new roads with modern standards and measures, even more so (Harvey & Knox, 2015).

My emphasis on place making and mobility are an aspect of tourism studies, which are my contributions to the academic field, and my coverage has been focused on that until now. Tourism or tourists have, however, always been a part of the arguments I present in my writing, for instance, in the more-than-human relations discussion in Chapter 2 about conservation and livelihoods. Moreover, this aspect is also covered in the different mobilities and place making of contemporary V-Barð, in Chapter 3, where new destinations being made and happening are explored. The discussion about tourism has thus been a part of the argument, a *layer* in the thesis that is always present even when it is not spoken about directly, rather it is present simply as one of the more-than-human connections. This is what happens when tourism is included as one of the threads or connections that make a place (Nousiainen et al., 2023). The emphasis of Chapter 5 is specifically on tourism, on the guests, hosts, and place relationship in V-Barð and the agency of places (Larsen & Johnson, 2016). It is about encounters of hospitality in V-Barð where the guests' – hosts' – place relations are examined using a philosophical discussion of hospitality. This perspective gives a

welcomed understanding of these relationships and brings forth questions of negotiation, agency, more-than-human hospitality, mutual respect, responsibilities, and reciprocity. The question of whether the welcome travellers expect in V-Barð fits within V-Barð's hospitality is also featured. That is an ongoing question which is a good contribution to tourism research in V-Barð and elsewhere.

Bringing the contribution together, the multivocality, power relations, and agency of places, and looking at what this means for tourism studies, it is apparent that tourism must be considered in relation to places and their multivocality and agencies. Furthermore, the contribution of the thesis provides encouragement to view places as complex and messy, with their research therefore requiring diverse approaches and taking their multivocality into account. Moreover, researching places includes being responsible, respectful, and reciprocal towards them.

6.4 Further contribution

The practical contributions of the thesis are firstly, the overall research findings, which bring V-Barð forth as a multivocal place with complex relations and entanglements, and thus reveal a mobile and dynamic place. The findings speak against the general view on marginal places which are shown as homogenous and fixed (Jóhannesson et al., 2023). Secondly, and not unrelated, is the ontological perspective of the thesis, which draws forth the importance of listening to and tracing the diverse voices of V-Barð and in another relation than as a resource for humans to thrive. Thirdly, researching with proximity calls for knowing the research field inside out. My close connection to V-Barð is, thus, a contribution to the field, as in tourism studies the researcher is engaged in the field, creating the research field along with others (Jóhannesson et al., 2018). In this way, I have been able to stay proximate, whilst acknowledging the information that the field has yielded.

Fourthly, alongside the research I have been in discussions with local governments in Vesturbyggð Municipality, the Westfjords Regional Development Office (WRDO), and the Environmental Agency Institute (EAI) concerning tourism in general in V-Barð, and the establishment of a *Seashore Centre*, which is being contemplated for establishment in Barðaströnd. The location for this is excellent due to the fact that Barðaströnd is on the north coast of Breiðafjörður fjord, where the seashores, islands, and riffs have been in a conserved area since 1995. In Breiðafjörður, the tides can vary between five and six metres, and the seashore is the largest in the whole country, with Breiðafjörður's countless islands and riffs extending it considerably. The Seashore Centre is supposed to be a centre where humans can learn about the borders of land and sea which enclose the country. I must say that I am surprised to discover that no such place exists already in Iceland. I have also presented it as a place of play and joy, and a place that should encourage humans to think of the more-than-human relations, and to recognise themselves as connected to and a part of a larger unity. The idea is also that the centre will have an academic angle with researchers connected to universities or university centres. Furthermore, the local community will gain from it in various ways. The idea about the Seashore Centre came from the field in V-Barð and my book of walking in Barðastrandarhreppur. Analysing the data, I could not proceed with writing my thesis until I had written about my idea for the Seashore Centre and passed it to a specialist at the EAI. The idea was introduced in the EAI, in the local municipality of Vesturbyggð and Barðaströnd, at the WRDO and in the Breiðafjarðarnefnd committee,

which is a committee concerned with the fjord's affairs. People have confidence in the idea and are willing to develop it further. A formal committee has been established to bring the idea to reality, this mostly consisting of local people, but I am pleased to also be included. There have already been several meetings regarding the centre and the place for it is probably in sight. We are now seeking funding and other support to bring the idea of the Seashore Centre to the next level. It is really something I look forward to.

Fifthly, I will be presenting my research in V-Barð, both for the local government but also for the public. Furthermore, as the WRDO and the municipality of Vesturbyggð are participating in the MoM project which my research is a part of, there have been discussions about arranging a meeting, with the possibility of me working with the WRDO. Here the focus will be on the findings of my research, not least in relation to tourism. In addition to the research, my discussions and work with local residents have also been in terms of other organisational subjects, such as nature conservation, and I have been in dialogue with the authorities about the preservation of Vatnsfjörður reserve. Regarding this, I have spoken to a committee appointed by the Minister of the Environment, Natural Resources, and Energy and met with the prime minister and the assistants of the Minister of Culture and Business Affairs, which also handles tourism matters. I have met with a member of parliament regarding the same matters and kept the other concerning members of parliament and municipalities, journalists, and the president informed about the matter and development of the subject. I have also published articles about the matter and been interviewed by the media. Moreover, I am collecting stories from people about their experiences of Vatnsfjörður reserve and I intend to publish these in a book in 2025, on the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of Vatnsfjörður reserve. The book has the aim of bringing forth stories from the reserve, stories of the meaningful connections that have been made over at least half a century, and in that way to underline that places are complex and that their complexity is important.

Finally, I have gathered data around old and new sea routes in Breiðafjörður which can shed a light on mobilities on the sea. Seafaring on Breiðafjörður is part of the cultural heritage of the Breiðafjörður region, as well as something that is continuing. Research on this matter is thus important for the recording of information regarding this, as these stories could otherwise die with the older generations that used to travel this way. This leads me to further discuss the thesis's limitations and areas for future research.

6.5 Further research and limitations

The luxury of profuse data is perhaps the main limitation of the research. Through ethnographic field work I have gathered much data, but only a part of it has been taken further and spoken about in the research. The data that I have not explored in the research relates for example to the old sea routes, and it is actually this that speaks to me most strongly at the moment. A research study focused on the old sea routes would give more information about the mobilities of people in V-Barð and place making. For example, it could explore how V-Barð connects to its neighbouring communities, and how V-Barð is a part of many other communities. This is the case with the Breiðafjörður region, where the easiest way to travel was often by sea, as spoken about in Chapter 3. Therefore, Barðaströnd was even more related to the Breiðafjörður region than it was to the rest of V-Barð county before the automobile roads were established in the middle of the twentieth century.

The field of the research itself can further be seen as a limitation. However, although it is about just one place, V-Barð, Iceland, the research can be applicable to rural places in general, at least in the Arctic region, if not the whole world. This is because all places are combinations of complex relations that together make places via diverse mobilities. Additionally, this is because power relations matter in the mobilities of places, for instance, concerning which mobility will be put forward and which will not. Furthermore, the agency of places matters in their mobilities and has an impact on their making, as knowledge of places plays a role in the power that they have in contributing to the place, as it is with the aquaculture industry, roads and welcoming travellers.

Coming to the end of the research, I find it appealing to give support to more-than-human voices and the agency of place receiving more attention in future research regarding tourism in rural areas of Iceland. Such a research study would give the place a voice and possibilities for offering hospitality and welcoming on the basis of the place itself. I feel this could take the form of research conducted through the regional development offices of the country, such as the WRDO, and university centres around the country. Continuing research could also be connected to the forthcoming Seashore Centre in Barðaströnd, which I am proud to be a part of, and it is one of the contributions of the research to the local community of V-Barð. The Seashore Centre is intended to be a research centre conducting research related to the place, including the seashore, tourism, place making and the aforementioned sea routes.

Further research limitations relate to the 'nature' of places. Their constant mobilities and becoming has also been a challenge because it has been difficult to stop and conclude chapters as things kept changing, requiring me to keep adding to and updating the discussion. The limitations that this brings are perhaps those of the researcher, and giving recognition to the fact that when researching places, it is always possible to do more, but at some point, it is time to stop.

6.6 Salute

In August 2023, my mother and I are at the same place in Vatnsdalur valley as I was when greeting the Vikings at the National Celebration of 1100 years of settlement in 1974, when I was eight. It was a coincidence that we stopped there to get some water from the river, Vatnsdalsá, after completing our unusual and important morning task: We had been guiding the parliamentary group from the Left-Green Movement to the innermost part of the valley, along with a specialist from the EAI.

The Left-Green Movement is a part of the government and their leader, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, is the prime minister in a coalition government that reaches from the middle and furthest to the left and right of Icelandic politics. The idea about the walk came from Katrín herself when my mother and I had a meeting with her last winter about Vatnsfjörður reserve, focusing on the subject of keeping the reserve for the future, as it has been for almost half a century. Katrín Jakobsdóttir's government is a government that does not easily agree on issues like the Vatnsfjörður case. However, showing their respect for the place, these landscapes, conservation, and the future, together with undertaking this walk to see the place for themselves, is a promising act. An act that leaves them with the knowledge of the place, its rhythms, and mass of life and ensemble. That is something that most people, whose voices

have been loud about alleviating the conservation of Vatnsfjörður reserve talked about in Chapter 2, do not have.

My mother and I offer a salute to Vatnsfjörður with its unbridled waters as we consider how big the act of the morning was and how, in my mother's idealistic terms, as spoken of in Chapter 5, we are indeed small in comparison to these landscapes in time and space.

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Appendix A

Research periods in the field, V-Barð and elsewhere

07.24.-08.12.2018: First field work in V-Barð, stationed in a summerhouse. Sites visited are listed in the table on page 153 “Field research”, more have been added throughout the research period.

07.21.-12.17.2019: University of Melbourne, Australia, contact person, Timothy Edensor. My aim was being as far away from home as possible and exploring belonging and home. The focus was also on reading and writing about walking and rhythms. Furthermore, on researching whilst travelling, and this I did by always staying long enough in each place to be able to work there as well as observing the place.

08.10-13.2020: MoM research group in V-Barð. Visiting sites such as Selárdalur, Flókalundur, Dynjandi, Pollurinn, Vatnsfjörður reserve, Garðar, Látrabjarg, Hnjótur museum, Rauðisandur, the Old hydropower plant in Patreksfjörður, Barðaströnd. Having a meeting with Vesturbyggð municipality and the Westfjords Regional Office which are our partners in the MoM-project. Stationed in Flókalundur.

09.11.-20.2020: Field work, taking part in the community (berry picking, gathering sheep). Stationed at Seftjörn.

03.4.-09.2021: Field trip to Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel and Ísafjörður and other towns and villages in the north of the Westfjords. Stationed at Seftjörn.

04.20.-27.2021: Fieldwork in Barðaströnd and walking a part of Þingmannaheiði old route. Stationed at Seftjörn.

06.15.-19.2020: Fieldwork in Rauðasandshreppur, walking Látrabjarg bird cliff and visiting sites in Útvíkur. Stationed at Kvígindisdalur, Patreksfjörður.

06.2.-09.2021: Fieldwork. Among sites visited: Vatnsdalur reserve, Rauðisandur, Reykjafjörður, Ketildalir. Stationed in a summerhouse.

09.24-26.2021: MoM research group in the field in Melrakkaslétta in Northeast Iceland. Walking visiting sites, having writing sessions – “thinking at the edge”.

01.19.-02.1.2022: Fieldwork during the hardest part of the winter with heavy storms, rain and snow. Stationed at Seftjörn.

05.10.-13.2022: MoM-group in the field. Sites visited: Dynjandi, Garðar, Látrabjarg,

Bíldudalur, Patreksfjörður. Stationed in Patreksfjörður.

07.20.-08.08.2022: Staying in the field and visiting sites such as Flatey, Ketildalir, Reykjarfjörður, Vatnsfjörður walk, Bíldudalur, Patreksfjörður. Walking three old mountain routes. Stationed in a summerhouse, in Flatey and at Kvígindisdalur in Patreksfjörður.

08.26.-09.22.2022: Staying in the field writing, reading, observing and taking part in the community (berry picking, sheep gathering, repairing field fences, cleaning the beach of trash). Among sites that I visited were Vatnsdalur reserve, Reykjafjörður, an old brown coal mine in Arnarfjörður, Patreksfjörður, Bíldudalur, Ísafjörður, Laugarnes swimming pool. Stationed in a summerhouse and Seftjörn.

02.17.-26.2023: Staying in the field, writing and observing wintertime and taking part in the community in V-Barð (e.g. Þorrablót, one of the main get togethers). Stationed at Seftjörn.

05.05.-11.2023: Staying in the field and taking part in the lambing season at Seftjörn. Also introducing my thesis to students from Iceland University of the Arts and taking them on a field trip in Barðaströnd. Stationed at Seftjörn.

06.08.-10.2023: MoM mini conference in Patreksfjörður and field research at Látrabjarg, Breiðavík, Dynjandi, Garðar, Patreksfjörður, Barðaströnd. Stationed at Patreksfjörður.

08.19.-23.2023: Staying in the field walking in Vatnsdalur and visiting the avalanche fences at Patreksfjörður. Meeting with the community in V-Barð because of the Seashore Centre. Stationed at Seftjörn.

11.04.-13.2023: Staying in the field visiting sites, writing and taking part in the community (sheep, slaughtering season). Among sites visited were the seashore. Stationed at Seftjörn.

03.20.-04.08.2024: Staying in the field rewriting. Field trips and walks mainly to Barðaströnd, Patreksfjörður, Vatnsdalur. Stationed at Seftjörn.

Field research

Field research was carried out throughout the research period. The table shows sites visited. Most of the sites were visited several times.

Sites visited	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Summerhouses in Vatnsfjörður reserve	x			x			
Vatnsfjörður nature reserve	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Dynjandi	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Dynjandi on a cruise ship day	x					x	
Dynjandisheiði mountain road	x	x		x		x	
Reykjafjörður pool, Arnarfjörður	x				x	x	
Ketildalir	x		x		x	x	
Monster Museum, Bíldudalur	x				x	x	
Bíldudalur	x		x	x	x	x	
Tálknafjörður	x		x	x	x	x	
Pollurinn hot tub in Tálknafjörður	x		x		x		
Rauðisandur	x		x	x	x	x	
Sjöundá historical place, Rauðisandur	x						
The French café in Rauðisandur	x				x		
Barðaströnd	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Garðar BA, Patreksfjörður	x		x			x	
The old hydropower plant, Patreksfjörður	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Avalanche fences in Patreksfjörður	x					x	
Patreksfjörður	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
The Exhibition on French Sailors, Patreksfj.	x						
Flatey island, Breiðafjörður	x				x		
The ferry Baldur	x	x		x	x	x	
Látrabjarg	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Hnjótur Museum	x		x				
Laugarnes, swimming pool, Barðaströnd			x	x		x	x
Potturinn, baths in Vatnsfjörður reserve	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Breiðavík, Útvíkur	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Hótel Flókalundur, Vatnsfjörður	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Stúkuhúsið, Patreksfjörður				x	x	x	
Húsið / Flak, Patreksfjörður	x				x	x	
Hópið, Tálknafjörður	x					x	
Vegamót, Bíldudalur	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Mt. Lónfell, walk			x	x			
Roads within and connected to V-Barð	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Interviewees

I conducted 22 semi-structured interviews, all but two when I was in the field in V-Barð 2018. All but one were conducted in V-Barð, one in Reykjavík. To keep the participants anonymous the interviews are only numbered and dated.

02.20.2018: Interview # 1

05.01.2018: Interview # 2

07.28.2018: Interview # 3

07.30.2018: Interview # 4

07.31.2018: Interview # 5

07.31.2018: Interview # 6

07.31.2018: Interview # 7

07.31.2018: Interview # 8

08.01.2018: Interview # 9

08.01.2018: Interview # 10

08.01.2018: Interview # 11

08.01.2018: Interview # 12

08.03.2018: Interview # 13

08.03.2018: Interview # 14

08.04.2018: Interview # 15

08.08.2018: Interview # 16

08.08.2018: Interview # 17

08.08.2018: Interview # 18

08.09.2018: Interview # 19

08.09.2018: Interview # 20

08.09.2018: Interview # 21

08.10.2018: Interview # 22

Walks, focus groups and participation observation

06.30.2018: Leading a hike of thirty people along Sandsheiði old mountain route between Barðaströnd and Rauðisandur, 17 km.

07.31.2018: Municipality council, Vesturbyggð – focus group.

07.31.2018: Taking part in a Ranger's day at Látrabjarg.

08.06.2018: Harvesting in Barðaströnd, participant observation.

08.02.2019: "Welcome to country" ceremony at the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne, Australia, participant observation.

11.27.2019: Whau Conversation: Hikoi – a walking workshop with artists from Aotearoa/New Zealand in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. Pre-conference event.

09.18-20.2020: Gathering sheep, slaughter.

06.18.2021: Látrabjarg walk, Rauðasandshreppur and Útvíkur, 14 km.

06.30.2021: Leading a hike of five along Fossheiði mountain route, 16 km.

07.01.2021: Three days' hike leading a group of forty along Lækjarheiði and Sandsheiði mountain routes and Vatnsfjörður reserve.

07.30.-08.03.2021: Harvesting in Barðaströnd, participant observation.

06.18.-21.2022: Leading a three days' hike along Fossheiði old mountain route, Barðaströnd hike and Vatnsfjörður reserve, group of nine people.

07.22.2022: Leading a walk in Barðaströnd, group of twenty, 6 km.

07.27.2022: Þingmannaheiði old mountain route in Barðaströnd, 25 km.

08.01.2022: Dalsheiði mountain route in Rauðasandshreppur, 16 km.

08.02.2022: Dalverpi mountain route in Rauðasandshreppur, 18 km.

08.03.2022: Kerlingaháls mountain route in Rauðasandshreppur, 10.5 km.

07.22.2022: Vatnsdalur walk and Mörk, in Vatnsfjörður reserve, 6 + 8 km.

09.10.2022: Gathering sheep, participant observation.

05.5.-11.2023: Lambing season at Seftjörn, participation observation.