

## Narvik, a Swedish Norwegian Border Town

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This article gives an insight into the industrialization and colonization processes of northern Scandinavia. Urbanization due to industrialization is a vital part of the perspective, and brings us into an industrial mega system in Swedish Lapland in the late nineteenth century based on iron ore export. It was to be connected to the industrial centre of Europe, especially the Ruhrgebiet of Germany, and paved the way for a new kind of urban development in peripheral Europe – the industrial network town. The history and foundation of the Norwegian harbour town Narvik is vital for gaining insight into this mega system. By studying Narvik we can envisage particularities of, and similarities and differences between Norway and Sweden when it comes to their urban economic foundations, urban development/planning regimes, and the relations between the municipalities, the modern nation states and the dominating companies. Even the development of a uniquely Scandinavian identity connected with the labour movement and the development of a post-war social democrat order visibly results from the new industries. Thus the common Swedish-Norwegian figure of the *rallar* – something like navy or construction worker – has a significant place in this study, and the use of the figure in addition to later processes of memory creation, both within the Norwegian and Swedish labour movements, is addressed.

Keywords: Urban History. Modernization. Industrialization. Norwegian History. Swedish History. Technology. Urban Planning. Memory Studies. *Rallar*. Labour History.

Of his journey to Narvik in 1899, the Norwegian historian Yngvar Nielsen wrote, “Many things have already changed in and around Narvik. But still bigger changes will appear”.<sup>1</sup> In two years, the small place had experienced its own Klondike. A town had formed and urban structures had been built over marshland and pastures. The town had streets, pavements, and even beautiful modern houses and quarters, and modern shops and offices.<sup>2</sup> The rapid urbanization of the settlement previously called Victoriahavn (Victoria’s Harbour) led to a formal resolution by the Norwegian parliament to establish a town in the Ofoten fjord in the Salten region of Nordland County in 1901.<sup>3</sup> The town was established during the common Swedish-Norwegian union (1814–1905), during the reign of the Swedish king Oscar II (1829–1907).

However, there was considerable tension between the Norwegian and Swedish authorities with regard to the construction of Narvik. The Norwegian Home Office and several other departments had substantial interests in the outcome of the founding of the new town; these interests were linked to national security, communications and property development. Thus, the Norwegian central authorities were greatly involved in its urban development, both in the initial phase and later. In Norway, until recently one could not establish a new town without a parliamentary proposition, debate and resolution. As a result of this, the establishment of the new town became part of a national debate that was linked to tensions between the two future neighbouring states.<sup>4</sup>

1 NIELSEN, Fra Ofoten, 8.

2 NIELSEN, Fra Ofoten, 1.

3 INDST.O.NR.66. 1900–1901. BESL. O. NR. 72. 1900–1901.

4 AAS, Narviks historie, 57–69.

Narvik soon became a modern town, growing rapidly as part of the Swedish industrialization and colonization of its northern borderland. This article examines the background of the urbanization process and discusses the creation of a significant labour culture. In addition, it deals with the common Swedish-Norwegian memory process regarding the new urban settlements on the northern peripheries. The article demonstrates how urbanization and industrialization paved the way for the creation of a common Swedish-Norwegian figure – the *rallar*<sup>5</sup> – who, for both countries, was to be made the symbol of the founding of the modern industrialized nation. In this manner, he became a symbol for post-war social-democratic Nordic hegemony, and thus became the symbol of the working-class pioneers in instigating the later Nordic welfare-state model. The article demonstrates how Narvik became part of this narrative and argues that the processes of urbanization and industrialization were vital by virtue of their connecting the *rallar* and the later welfare state.

### A Swedish harbour town in the Norwegian borderlands

Narvik's origins date to the end of nineteenth century in the northern part of Sweden. The reason for the existence of the town is found in its geographical position west of the mountain range between Sweden and Norway – Kjølén. However, the driving forces behind its urbanization are found on the eastern side. At that time, this northern part of Sweden had many novel nicknames, such as "the land of the future" and "the America of Sweden".<sup>6</sup> In the rhetoric and propaganda of those times, the most optimistic visionaries considered the northern borderland to be "our latest Sweden". In public debate, there were widespread visions of a virgin region ready for exploitation.<sup>7</sup> Supporters of a more active process of colonization in the Swedish north claimed that the Swedes were destined to colonize and expand into such relatively less populated areas full of timber and minerals, and of waterfalls that could potentially be used in the development of hydropower plants. In this view, the initiative should result in Swedes populating, colonizing and expanding in the region. The language deployed by the colonizers made the area seem like Sweden's America for another reason too. In these marginal areas of tundra, woodland and marshland, the dominant people were the indigenous Sami population. Social-Darwinist views on the cultural struggle in the north were significant. Writing in 1900 while visiting the emerging town in the hidden fjords of Nordland, Nielsen, an example of someone who held such an ideology, stated that he expected what he then called the Sami race to be driven away by expanding civilization.<sup>8</sup> Adapting to the environment, they raised reindeer, fished and hunted – and no progress had hitherto threatened their culture. Sami people had long been using the Norwegian coastal areas as summer pastures and spending the winter season in the hinterland of Norway or the Swedish Lapland. The Sami world was in many respects "borderless", and, in the then twin-kingdom of Sweden-Norway, the Sami moved freely across borders after the establishment of the union in 1814. After 1905, a new, stricter management of the national borders was implemented, and this negatively affected the reindeer herders. Other problems they faced were

5 THEANDER, I *rallarens spor*, 61. The normal definition of the Swedish world is "Navy" or "casual labourer", "construction worker".

6 SÖRLIN, *Framtidslandet*, 49f.

7 PERSSON, *Från ødemark til stad*, 26. SÖRLIN, *Framtidslandet*, 13.

8 NIELSEN, *Fra Ofoten*, 1.

advancing railroad construction, the establishment of new mining towns, and other modern installations. All these modern developments threatened the Sami way of life by hindering their reindeer husbandry.<sup>9</sup>

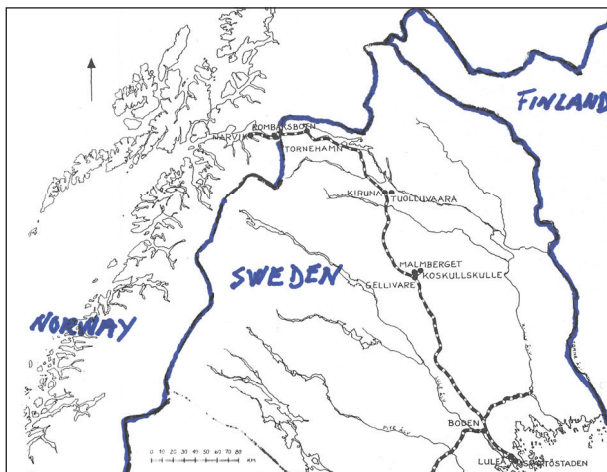


Figure 1: The Ofoten–Luleå Railway connected the harbours of Luleå (Sweden) in the south with the harbour of Narvik (Norwegian district of Ofoten) in the north west. The mines were in Malmberget/Gällivare and Kiruna, while the fortress defending the railway was in Boden. (Photo: Brunström, Umeå 1981)

The combination of the growth of the nation states and their associated nationalisms meant that the future of the Sami culture and language was put under pressure. There was a strong standardization process occurring in Norway, especially towards immigrants of Finnish or Kven origin, as well as a strong “Norwegianization” policy in relation to the Sami population. This was particularly marked by a strong assimilation policy directed at Sami and Kven people in the northernmost parts of Norway, partly as a component of the security policy that was applied to the border areas with Russia and Finland. The Norwegian historian Einar Niemi concluded that the aim of this policy was the inclusion of minority groups according to the terms of the greater society, so that they were gradually completely transformed into part of the majority group of Norwegians.<sup>10</sup>

The first discovery of iron in the mountains of Kiruna – 130 km east of the Swedish-Norwegian border posed an additional threat to the Sami population. The mountains, which the Sami called *Gironvårri* (Grouse Mountain) and *Luossavaara* (Salmon Mountain) contained enormous amounts of iron, but it was unusable until the development of the Thomas-Gilchrist process in 1875. This process also made it possible to use the residual phosphorous as fertilizer.<sup>11</sup>

9 EVJEN – MYRVOLL, *Från kust til kyst*, 18–19.

10 NIEMI, *Hvem er kvenene?*, 7–9.

11 HELLAND, *Ofofbanen og jernmalmfelterne i svensk Lapmarken*, 34.

However, the logistics of accessing this resource posed challenges. The wilderness of Swedish Lapland had no infrastructure, and its vast marshlands were isolated and distant. Nonetheless, thanks to the earlier invention of the steam locomotive and the fast development of railroads during the last half of the nineteenth century, technological solutions could be applied to these problems. However, railroads were expensive both to build and to operate, and the distance between Kiruna and the Swedish coastline was great. Instead of building the railroad to a Swedish harbour, the industrialists built it westward to a harbour on the Norwegian coast. The director of the regional Road- and Waterway Building Board (Väg- og Vattenbyggnadsstyrelsen) in Sweden, Robert Schough, had his way. The railroad was built through Kiruna from Swedish Luleå in the Gulf of Bothnia, as shown in Figure 1, to the small and remote bay of Narvik in Nordland County, Norway. This solved three problems: transportation costs, construction costs and problems with climate. The Swedish winter is harsh, and the Gulf of Bothnia normally freezes from November to May because of the low salt content of the seawater. The Norwegian side of Kjølén, on the other hand, offered a year-round ice-free coastline for the transport of iron ore.<sup>12</sup>

Construction of the railroad started in 1898 and was completed in 1902. During this period, hundreds of mostly young, male workers from all over Scandinavia participated in the construction effort. The railroad was built in a harsh climate, a treeless subarctic terrain, using manual power, pickaxes, sledgehammers, shovels and dynamite. Approximately 5,800 employees worked on the railway on the Norwegian side of the border. From 1898 to 1900, during the course of the construction of the railroad, the population of the place called Narvik grew from 300 to 3,342.<sup>13</sup>

### **A northern Scandinavian industrial mega system**

The harbours of Luleå and Narvik were adapted to accommodate ore from the Kiruna and Gällivare mines in Swedish Lapland. Railroad systems with shunting yards were established, and the capacity of the mines was coordinated with the ship traffic in both harbours. The Swedish historian Staffan Hansson introduced the concept of a “technological mega system” to describe this mining industry: the iron-ore railway, the power station of Porjus and the Narvik and Luleå harbours, as well as the military installations at Boden fortress near Luleå.<sup>14</sup> Every component of the institutions and plants of the system connected to one another in a single unit, as visualized in Figure 2. The establishment of the system resulted in the growth of railway stations, steel works, sawmills, wool-spinning mills, dairies, bakeries, mechanical industry and workshops and the timber industry. To secure this complex system from the threat of Russia, which controlled neighbouring Finland until 1917, fortifications were constructed, and garrisons established in a new garrison town – Boden. Now four Swedish urban settlements had sprung forth as a result of the industrial mega system: Kiruna, Gällivare, Boden and Luleå.<sup>15</sup>

12 AAS, *Narviks historie*, 22–23, 85–91.

13 AAS, *Narviks historie*, 49–50.

14 HANSSON, *Malm, Råls och electricitet*, 45–76.

15 LAGERSTAM, *Program förr Norrbottens industriarv*.

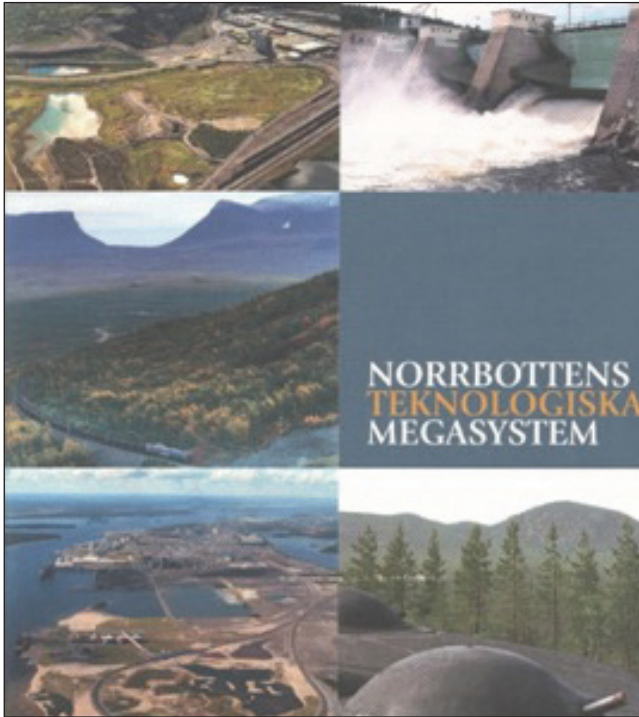


Figure 2: The development of the North Swedish mining industry resulted in a vast range of other activities – or a megasystem, as Swedish historians have characterized it. The harbour in Luleå and Narvik, the hydroelectric plant in Porjus, the fortress in Boden, mines and railways along the route are all part of the mega system. (Photo: Länsstyrelsen Norrbottens län)

The expansion had lasting consequences. The fortifications and garrisons required to protect the harbours, power plants, railway and mines resulted in the establishment an officer candidate's school in the neighbouring Norwegian town of Harstad and infantry regiments in Setermoen and Elvegårdsmoen, as well as in the Swedish towns across the border. After 1897, military service became compulsory in the three northernmost counties of Norway. One motive for this decision was the planned railway and the need for military defence. The establishment of the industrial complex created the western and eastern harbour cities, Narvik and Luleå, with the railway as the lifeline connecting their common fate. Compared to other towns in northern Norway and Sweden, the system also created its own economic foundation. Kiruna, Gällivare, Boden and Narvik became urbanized. Some of the new urban areas, like Narvik and Kiruna, hardly had any hinterland. They became "company towns" like Kiruna or towns with few central functions for the hinterland, like Narvik. In this respect their functions differed from other towns, which typically played a role as market places for the surrounding area, had administrative functions within the public sector or finance, or acted as business hubs. The Norwegian town of Narvik was founded more or less due to the strategies of the Swedish king Oscar II and his government. Together with the other towns in the

mega system, Narvik was meant to play a role within the system, more than in a network with other Norwegian towns.<sup>16</sup>

Narvik not only became a “Swedish” town in Norway, but an archetypical “network” town too. Other Norwegian towns were essentially central towns with important functions for the areas surrounding them. In Norwegian urban history, when describing categories of towns, one uses the archetypal dichotomy of “central town” versus “network town”.<sup>17</sup> The categories are based on towns’ functions regarding trade, public services and business in connection with their surrounding regions. The established North Norwegian towns – Bodø and Tromsø – were both “central towns”: they had connections to regional trade and commerce as well as to public administration and service and to the service industry, which were directed towards the surrounding region.

“Network towns” such as Narvik (Figure 3), on the other hand, were part of a network in which commerce and the handling of iron ore were the core functions of the town. The Norwegian town not only became a part of a network within the Swedish iron-handling industry, it also became a part of a larger, international web that from the beginning included harbours and steel works in France, Great Britain, the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium. Other networks were connected to Narvik too. The Ruhr region of Germany, with its steel giants Krupp und Thyssen (then two different companies), became the most important purchaser of Swedish iron ore from Lapland, as illustrated by the statistics of export in Figure 4. Consequently, the most prominent harbours on the continent that connected with Narvik were Rotterdam in the Netherlands and Antwerp in Belgium.<sup>18</sup> Ships from the continental harbours called more frequently at Narvik than ships from the neighbouring North Norwegian towns of Harstad and Tromsø. Narvik became part of an economic web that was separate from that of its neighbours in the Norwegian north.<sup>19</sup>

The extension of Swedish railway lines, both from Norrland to Stockholm by the main line and the inland line, connected Narvik to the Swedish and European railway network. This made Narvik more closely connected to the Swedish towns of Norrland than to neighbouring towns in North Norway. It was easier to travel from Narvik to the Swedish capital, Stockholm, than to the Norwegian capital, Oslo. As part of the mega system, Narvik shared its fortune with the towns of Kiruna, Luleå and Gällivare. Good times for the iron-ore industry on the international markets would consequently be positive for all the towns in the system. In this respect, Narvik had more in common with these towns than with its Norwegian neighbours. Instead of being a part of a Norwegian hierarchy of cities and towns according to its importance as a hub in a web of urban settlements, Narvik’s place was within an international web of cities. Consequently, its prosperity depended both on the effectiveness of the miners in Kiruna and on the international iron-ore markets, and this understanding characterized Narvik’s citizens for generations. They knew their prosperity and fate depended on the international iron-ore markets.<sup>20</sup>

16 AAS, *Narviks historie*, 11–31.

17 MYHRE, *Byenes hamskifte. Fra førindustriell til industriell by*, 21–35.

18 Swedish National Archives, Arninge (hereinafter SRA), Archives of Trafikaktiebolaget Grängesberg – Oxelösund (hereinafter TGO), TGO-protokol for 1904:1267.

19 AAS, *Narviks historie*, 82–85.

20 AAS, *Narviks historie*, 87–88.



Air view of Narvik from the north-west

North Telegrambyrå

Figure 3: Narvik became a town within four years. Its major function was to export Swedish iron ore from the north to the world markets, in particular via Rotterdam and Antwerp to Germany.

Although the towns were established at the same time, they were governed in different ways. While the Swedish town Kiruna became a typical “company town”, Narvik had autonomous status as a legal city, with a municipal government, budgetary powers and income from the taxes of the Swedish mining company, Luossavaara-Kiirunavaara Aktiebolag (LKAB). Even though LKAB and the Norwegian government together decided on the founding of the new town, the municipal council attained a more autonomous position after legal proceedings concluded with a judgement that, from 1912, the council could deduct taxes from the company’s earnings. This position was strengthened by the Planning and Building Act of 1924. The city council then gained the legal power to execute general town planning independently of the interests of the Swedish mining company. Until then, LKAB had intervened more directly in the governing of the municipality as, in 1910, as much as 75–80 % of the male working population was directly or indirectly involved in iron-ore handling activities in Narvik harbour or its surrounds.<sup>21</sup>

Kiruna, on the other hand, had a paternalistic structure. The general manager of LKAB, Hjalmar Lundbohm, ruled the town and its inhabitants. While Narvik was an autonomous city in 1902, Kiruna’s status was that of a *municipalsamhälle* (municipality community), which meant that the society and its inhabitants were more dependent on the strategies of LKAB. In practice, this meant that LKAB made area development plans

21 NOS, V, 211, Folketellingen i Norge 1.des.1910. Fjerde hefte. Tabell 6.

and decisions regarding housing development, public transport, hospitals, schools, churches and the like. Kiruna was almost entirely a company town.<sup>22</sup>

### The industrial group and Narvik

LKAB in Narvik was part of LKAB Sweden, a subsidiary company of the industrial group Trafikaktiebolaget Grängesberg-Oxelösund (TGO), a Swedish company that was influential in trade and industry and that existed from 1896 to 1956.<sup>23</sup> This connection to the giant company strengthened Narvik as a network town. The board of TGO determined the strategies of LKAB from 1903; these strategies involved railway transport, mines, industry and even shipping. The industrial group wanted its own shipping firm, Luleå-Ofoten, to undertake all iron ore transport from the Narvik harbour. TGO already had mines in southern Sweden with an adjacent private railway line, railway equipment and an iron ore harbour. At the time, Norway had no company comparable to this industrial group. It almost had a monopoly within the Swedish iron-ore production industry, and was a central political actor in Sweden until 1957 when the Swedish government took control of LKAB.<sup>24</sup>

Narvik harbour was one of three harbours in the TGO system and primarily shipped Kiruna iron ore, while MalMBERGET/Gällivare sent their iron ore to Luleå. However, during winter, LKAB sent iron ore from MalMBERGET/Gällivare to the waiting ships in the ice-free harbour of Narvik. Consequently, Narvik became the most important harbour for iron ore from Swedish Lapland.<sup>25</sup> In addition, with the increasingly important market for Northern Swedish iron, supply grew rapidly during the first decade of the twentieth century. Between 1890 and 1910, Norrland increased its share of Sweden's total exports of iron ore from 14.6 % to 75.1 %, and, as a result, Narvik became even more important as an iron-ore port.<sup>26</sup>

The economic system that created these Norwegian and Swedish towns also determined their fate and paved the way for a common understanding of the destiny of the working classes. Labour movements in Narvik, Kiruna and MalMBERGET/Gällivare joined forces to coordinate their common interests in relation to the mighty company. Consequently, the Narvik labour organization became a member of the Swedish district trade organization Exportgruvfeltarbetarnas Samorganisation – a common union for iron-ore workers. The first editor of Narvik's Labour movement paper *Fremover* (Forwards) called Narvik "a city of capitalism par excellence" after traveling by train between Narvik and Luleå in 1903 "because here it is a complete cultivated plant. I can see its root, its leaves, its flowers, and its fruit".<sup>27</sup> He could almost physically feel the industrial complex which owned all the means of production as well as making considerable amounts from investments: "One can notice its finger everywhere. The workers are, if they do not own a strong organization, completely in this beast's power".<sup>28</sup>

22 BRUNNSTRÖM, Kiruna: ett samhällsbygge i sekelskiftets Sverige. PERSSON, Från ödemark till stad, 27.

23 ERIKSSON, Gruva och arbete, 29–39.

24 EKEROT, Trafikaktiebolaget Grängesberg – Oxelösund.

25 SRA, TGO, TGO 2–599, Statistik.

26 BJÖRKLUND, Den samhällsekonomiska bakgrunden till Bodens fästning, 26.

27 PUNTERVOLD, Socialismen nordpaa, 22.

28 PUNTERVOLD, Socialismen nordpaa, 22.



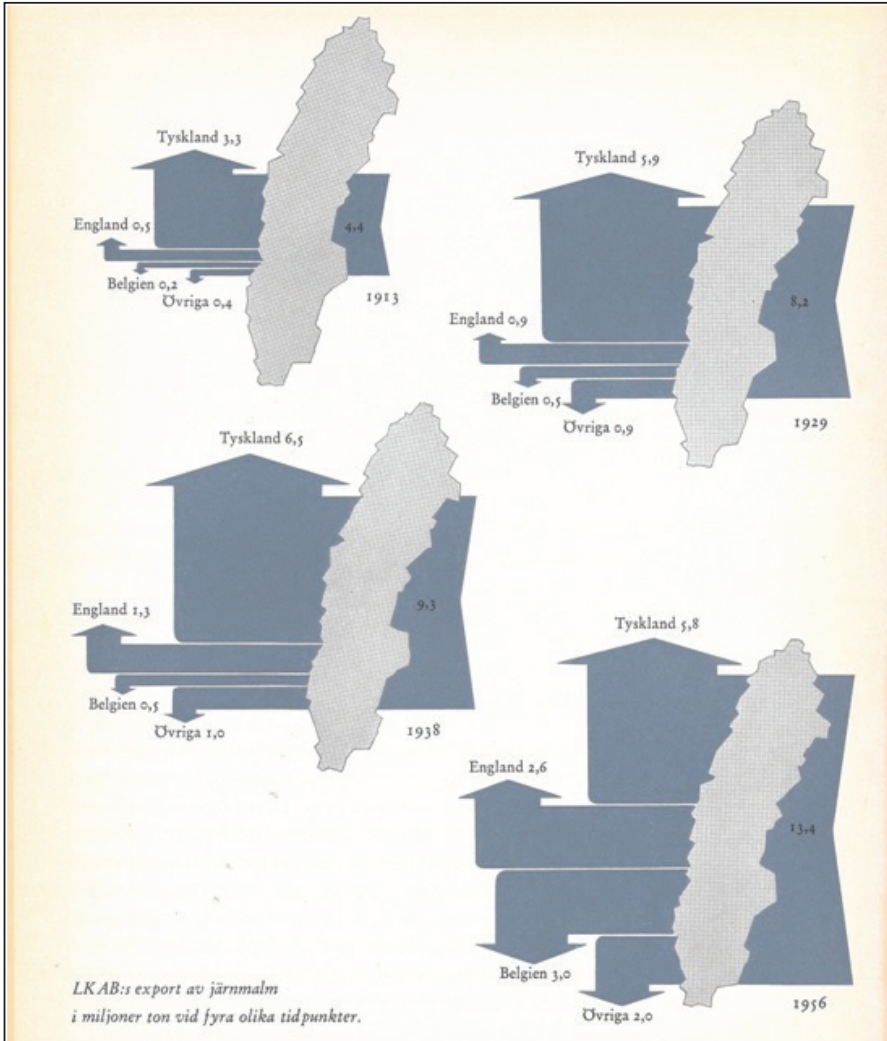


Figure 4: LKAB's exports of iron ore from 1913–1956 show that the main importer of Swedish iron ore was Germany (Tyskland), with the United Kingdom (England) and Belgium (Belgien) as second and third most important. (Photo: 54 år i Lapland, TGO)

### Narvik planned by the Norwegian state and LKAB

Before the establishment of a municipal council in Narvik, the Norwegian state and LKAB enacted vital strategies for the future of their industrial activities which had consequences for civilian life in Narvik. LKAB created its own property company, A/S Taraldsvik, and hence Narvik was affected by the Swedish company's strategies in the same way Kiruna was when it came to property development in civil society. LKAB owned the water supply and the graveyard, and the population in Narvik had to apply to TGO to build houses. A/S Taraldsvik influenced public investments, taxes, the water supply, road construction and housing development in the town because it owned a substantial amount of the property within the borders of the town. After 1905, when the Swedish state became a co-owner of LKAB, Narvik became subject to Swedish governmental or parliamentary oversight.<sup>29</sup> In 1897, the Norwegian state property company implemented the first development plan in Narvik because the authorities wanted to control national interests and prevent LKAB from controlling the town. This influenced the municipal development plan and had long-term implications for the physical placement of parks, houses, schools and streets, as well as trade, transport and commerce. The development plan was never presented for local debate or public comment, nor to the municipal government, which is inconsistent with what occurred in other Norwegian towns. The harbour's industrial area became the central area around the bay of Narvik, the heart of the future town rather than a zone outside the town.<sup>30</sup> The commercial and residential areas and public institutions were situated behind the harbour and its iron-ore stores and the railway line connecting it to Sweden. In this respect, the railway cut the town into two parts as a river would, while the harbour and iron-ore stores formed a triangular delta at the seafront which was literally cut off from the town behind it. The development was in line with the strategies of the industrialists, which created the shape of the city, as shown in Figure 5. The town's development was a result of the efforts of LKAB and the Norwegian government. They did not wait for the establishment of the local municipal government.<sup>31</sup>

This tension between local municipal interests, LKAB and Norwegian state authorities continued for years. The Norwegian government's property development policy intensified the tension. The municipality and the citizens of Narvik were squeezed between LKAB and the Norwegian state. In 2007 still, 400 to 500 houses in Narvik were on state-owned property. In 2007 still as much as 30 % of all Norwegian state-owned property in Norway was in Narvik. These special circumstances have made future planning by the municipal government more complicated even in recent years. By the turn of the twentieth century the conflicts between the municipality and the Norwegian state as well as LKAB had already become significant. Decisions regarding the details of the building of schools, roads, churches and other public buildings were subject to governmental or parliamentary oversight. The Norwegian parliament, the

29 SRA, TGO, TGO-protokol for 1906. p. 1878f, and 1886f.

30 YTREBERG, Narviks historie, 238. Malmageret I Narvik, 19–20. Byanalyse Narvik, 24. NOS, V, 93. Bind II, XVIII. Nordland Amt, 2. Narvik Library, Blix-Collection, Letter from E.M.C. Johansen to Einar Blix, 27.2.1925, 2. THOMASSEN, Herlege tider, 62.

31 THOMASSEN, Herlege tider, 62. LØVVIK, Minder fra Ofofbanen, 4. Byanalyse Narvik, 22 f.

Storting, had to decide on local issues because of the strong central governance of the town.<sup>32</sup>

LKAB and its property company A/S Taraldsvik still owns a significant amount of land in the town. This company then owned the property of the town's water supply, and the municipality leased the land for the local graveyard from A/S Taraldsvik. Additionally, the Narvik railway station was on A/S Taraldsvik property. At the turn of the twentieth century, the local newspapers heavily criticized the private ownership of these lands.<sup>33</sup> During one of these conflicts between the municipality and LKAB, regarding the enlargement of the storage area in 1924, Narvik's mayor Julius B. Olsen claimed that when battling against the "mighty Swedish million company's interests, the interests of Narvik and its citizens weigh little". The company then enlarged the storage area to the townspeople's disadvantage. This caused an increase in problems associated with dust and noise in the residential areas.<sup>34</sup>



Figure 5: Land ownership on the Narvik peninsula was largely distributed between two main actors, the Swedish company LKAB, with its property company A/S Taraldsvik (brown colour), and the Norwegian state property company (Statens eiendommer, light green). The dark green area is the industrial area with the connecting railway line, owned by the Norwegian State Railway company (NSB). (Photo: Narvik municipality)

32 OT.PRP.NR. 60 (2007–2008) Department of Culture and Church, INST. S. NR. 108 (1995–1996) Department of Administration.

33 Ofotens Tidende, 13 May, 1 June and 21 October 1899. SRA, TGO, Board Protocol from The Tgo-Board for 1907, 2264. Appendix C.

34 Narvik municipal archives (hereinafter NAKOM), Letter from J. B. Olsen and O. Chr. Normann to the Norwegian Parliament 20 March 1924.

### Narvik integrated into the Swedish economy

Unlike the rest of Norway, the town experienced strong economic and demographic growth during the 1920s. Following a decline during World War I, shipments of iron ore reached pre-war levels again in 1921. Unlike the stagnating Norwegian economy, the growth of Narvik continued throughout the 1920s.<sup>35</sup>

Compared to other Norwegian towns, the integration of Narvik into the Swedish economy became particularly evident during the 1920s. In 1927, astonished journalists from newspapers based in neighbouring towns in North Norway reported on the level of growth in Narvik compared to its Norwegian neighbours. While Tromsø's population, for instance, had grown by 256 people during the 1920s, the population of Narvik had grown by nearly 4,000 people. A Tromsø paper wrote that Narvik was about to surpass other towns in the Arctic north to become the most prominent town there. This growth was due to the iron-ore trade. Between 1,600 and 1,700 employees worked at the Narvik branch of the Norwegian State Railways and LKAB combined. Among the 600 to 700 jobseekers in town, only 10 % of them were native to Narvik. The majority came from other parts of the country.<sup>36</sup> This implies that by then the town had become a central town for jobseekers from surrounding districts in Norway.

Shipping traffic clogged Narvik bay, with as many as 20–30 iron-ore steamers waiting in the bay. The town was marked by "life and business", the journalist stated. It was not similar to the rest of Norway, he added. Narvik overshadowed even much larger cities such as Trondheim. Its North Norwegian neighbours did not compare when it came to business, economic growth or increase in population. By 1932, annual iron-ore shipments were double those of 1927. Among the reasons for the generally negative development in other parts of the Norwegian realm were the extraordinary financial measures taken by the government during the 1920s. The aim of the Central Bank of Norway was to keep the Norwegian kroner on a par with the gold standard because of inflation during and following World War I – the so-called "Par policy". Inflation resulted in lost fortunes, bankrupt banks and companies, and public sector debt. Unemployment rates increased rapidly because of reduced production, strikes and lockouts. Conflicts between employers and employees' organizations increased during the 1920s. The Norwegian historian Pål Tonstad Sandvik states that the "Par policy" was common throughout the world, but that it had more negative effects in Norway than anywhere else.<sup>37</sup>

Narvik did not experience the same economic upheaval. A short stagnation occurred in 1922 but was soon followed by growth, as in Sweden. The Swedish economic boom-and-bust cycles influenced Narvik's economy more than did the Norwegian economy. In this period, the influence of Swedish industries resulted in state investments in hydroelectric power plants – such as Porjus in Swedish Lapland – which led to the electrification of the Swedish side of the Ofoten Railway. Narvik harbour and Norwegian State Railways also profited from these investments. Transport became more efficient and paved the way for additional industrial development on both sides of the border.<sup>38</sup> The Porjus investments completely reshaped the industrial delta of Narvik, and the

35 SRA, TGO, TGO 2–599, Statistik.

36 *Nordlys*, November 8, 1927.

37 TONSTAD SANDVIK, *Nasjonens velstand*, 188.

38 NAKOM, LKABs styrelsesberättelse för räkenskapsåret 1919–1920, 3; 1921–1922, 3; 1930–1931, 3. NAKOM, II-E-5-n-4.

changes created a greater demand for workers in order to prepare for the technological transition to electric operations in and around Narvik harbour. TGO's strategies had a direct impact in Narvik and demonstrated the towns' dependence on Swedish strategies.<sup>39</sup>

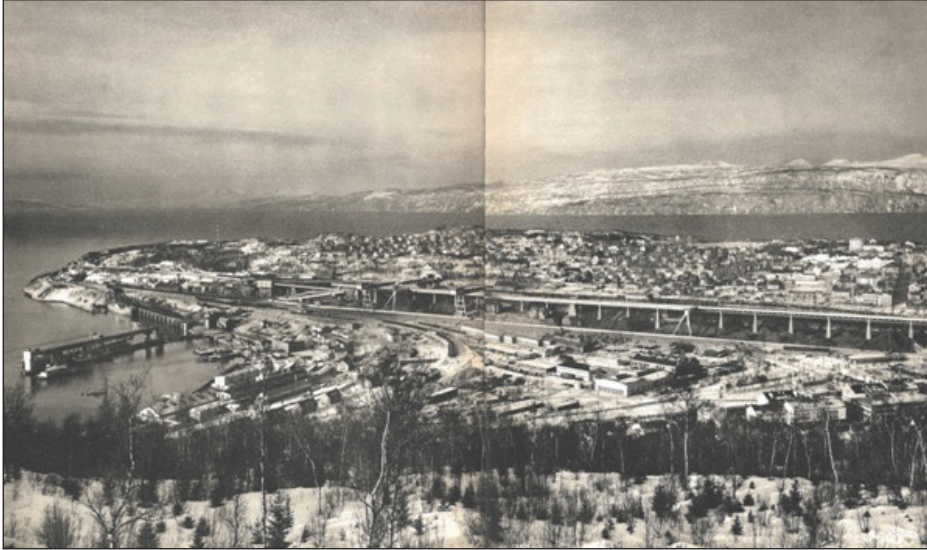


Figure 6: Narvik, with its harbour and iron ore storage, lay in the middle of the City, like a delta between two of the main quarters. This photo shows the area in the late 1950s. (Photo: 54 år i Lappland. TGO)

### **A Swedish town?**

The question remains, however, as to whether Sweden's influence over Narvik has been greater than that of Norway's. To answer this question, factors such as demography, culture and language need to be examined. Let us thus analyse the national background of the population first. As with most Norwegian urbanization, the majority of the population of the new town came from the closest regions surrounding the town or from the same county. In the census of 1900, taken during the first urbanization period of the town, only 3.2 % of the population in Narvik had been born in Sweden. At the next census, in 1910, the proportion of Swedish-born inhabitants of Narvik had risen to 5.4 % – still a marginal population. LKAB was well established and the head of the company was Swedish. The Swedish branches of TGO recruited personnel for the shipping line and the railway company, but even then the percentage of Swedish employees in Narvik remained low. Later, in 1936, a company census conducted by Statistics Norway counted the workers at LKAB Narvik. The census included typical Swedish family names like Alqvist, Blomsköld, Eck, Engblom, Gustavsson, Hammarström,

<sup>39</sup> NAKOM, VII-E-8-h, Årsberetning for Narvik Offentlige arbeidskontor 1922. Jul. Brekkes, 9. and NAKOM, II-E-5-n-4, LKABs styrelsesberättelse för räkenskapsåret 1925–1926 and 1926–1927, 3.

Hellström, Karlsson, Karolin, Lindquist, Lindström, Ljunggren, Nylander, Olsson, Petterson, Söderblom and Östergren. Some of these families still live in the town.<sup>40</sup>

According to the Norwegian history of immigration (*Norsk innvandringshistorie*, 2003), Swedes easily assimilated into Norwegian society at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. As many as 100,000 Swedes moved to Norway during the second half of the nineteenth century, and they held a unique position as the best-integrated immigrants of Norway.<sup>41</sup> The Norwegian historian Jan Eivind Myhre states that due to the union between Norway and Sweden from 1814 to 1905, the countries had common economic and labour markets, resulting in Swedes being simultaneously both foreigners and good neighbours. Additionally, the Swedish language is similar to the Norwegian language – although speaking Swedish was indicative of high social status.<sup>42</sup> The cultural similarities and connections, as well as the mutual comprehension between Norwegians and Swedes, resulted in a close connection between the two peoples. Additionally, inter-ethnic marriages between Norwegians and Swedes were common. Generally, Norwegian women married Swedish men. Of the inter-ethnic couples in Narvik in 1900, the husband was Swedish in 55 of the married couples. Only four inter-ethnic couples comprised a Swedish woman and a Norwegian man, and nine married couples were of a Swedish husband and wife.<sup>43</sup> This asymmetry has not been thoroughly studied yet, but may be explained by the higher social standing of Swedish men relative to Norwegian men, or by the fact that Swedish men were more mobile, but surely were much more sought for by the industrialist, thus they came to Norway in greater numbers than Swedish women.

Nevertheless, many aspects indicate the higher social status of Swedes in Narvik, particularly when it concerns language. The dialect of Narvik contains many Swedisms, that is, words from the Swedish language. A locomotive is *loket*, as in Swedish. Similarly, words such as Swedish *farsan*, *morsan* and *brorsan* are used in Narvik, as in Sweden, for “father”, “mother”, and “brother”. A crazy man can be characterized as *tokig*, and *lessan* means depressed or blue, as in Sweden. Prison is *fnka* in Narvik, *finkan* in Swedish, and *fengsel* in Norwegian. These words show the cultural exchange between Narvik and its Swedish neighbours, as well as being an example of the social influence of the Swedish language in Norway in the twentieth century. However, the Narvik dialect is a North Norwegian regional dialect, not a Swedish one. This is because of the town’s location in North Norway and because the majority of inhabitants populating the town from the start were North Norwegians.<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, because of urbanization, the founding of the railway, the harbour and the mines occurred in similar manners during the course of the process of dissolution between Norway and Sweden. There were tensions between the two nations, especially between 1884 and the final year of the union, 1905. During this period, Norway had its own defence force, its own parliament and government, and its own government

40 RHD, Printed Census of the municipality of Ankenes 1900, and for Narvik 1910. Norwegian National Archives (hereinafter NRA), SSB-archives, The company census of Narvik 1936.

41 “På flyttefot til og innen Norge”, *Norgeshistorie.no*. Accessed 2 November 2018. <https://www.norgeshistorie.no/industrialisering-og-demokrati/kommunikasjon-og-kunnskap/1505-pa-flyttefot-til-og-innen-norge.html>

42 MYHRE, I nasjonalstatens tid 1814–1940, 260ff.

43 RHD, Printed Census of the municipality of Ankenes in 1900.

44 DANIELSEN, Schnakkes, 132–134, about the Swedisisms of Narvik. NETELAND, “vann og kan og mann”, 9–12 about the North Norwegian origin of the Narvik dialect.

departments such as, among others, those occupied with communication and trade. Norway had won self-government on the domestic front but lacked an independent foreign policy. From 1893 there had been military preparations on both sides of the border; however, much due to the liberal political forces in Sweden, the dissolution of the union was to be completed peacefully during the summer and autumn of 1905. With the dissolution, Narvik again became the centre of attention.<sup>45</sup> The continuation of the iron-ore traffic had to be arranged. This was in the interests of both the new nation, Norway, and Sweden. The Norwegian State Railways were, for instance, transporting the iron ore on the Norwegian side of the border, earning the Norwegian state substantial income to invest in other projects.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the hostile environment at the end of the nineteenth century, Swedes became integrated into Narvik's business community. Like the Norwegians, they worked in the mechanical workshops, at the harbour, in construction or on the railways. They were also barbers, artisans, sailors or hotel cleaners. The labour market did not segregate the two national groups, nor did the residential areas. Swedes worked together with Norwegians and lived together with them. Under the auspices of the Swedish company LKAB, the residential areas could have become ghettos based on ethnicity or nationality. However, this did not happen. Only one small enclave developed, in Harbour Street (Havnegata), and this was due to social rather than national or ethnic segregation. On this street, close to the LKAB administration building, TGO erected houses for the management and upper administrative echelons of the company during the 1920s. At the beginning of the 1930s, the majority of the principal wage earners in these ten houses were Swedes (seven out of ten). This residential area was popularly referred to as *bolaget*, which is the Swedish word for "the company". One man who grew up on this street later stated that there used to be *surströmming* parties in the street. During this reverential Swedish ceremony, the stench of fermented herring from the opened tin cans on the terraces completely enveloped the residential area.<sup>47</sup>

### Ties between Sweden and Narvik

The Swedish mega system created a lifeline between Narvik and the other towns in Swedish Lapland. This formed the basis for stronger ties between the towns. These strong ties were evident in the organizational activities in Narvik and in neighbouring Swedish towns along the railway line. The labour movement met and had common assemblies at the railway stations and in the towns. The temperance movement was another vital movement that had a considerable impact along the Ofoten line during this formative period. Clubs and societies met to strengthen relations between the two peoples. Religious associations and cultural activities were part of this fraternization between Norwegians and Swedes in these border regions. In addition, sports activities took place between Swedes and Norwegians, even in the middle of the conflict concerning the dissolution of the union of Norway and Sweden before 1905. During the tensest period of the conflict, pupils from schools of Narvik travelled to Kiruna in Sweden, and some Norwegians tried to forcibly prevent them from going. Despite this pressure, a delegation of 60 Norwegians went to Kiruna and were welcomed. One

45 MYHRE, Norsk historie 1814–1905, 285–290.

46 AAS, Narviks historie, 194.

47 AAS, Narviks historie, 304.

argument for the Narvik students going to Kiruna came from the editor of the local labour newspaper in Narvik: Grownups should not “instil hatred in young hearts”.<sup>48</sup>

Even Norwegian rifle clubs travelled to Sweden in 1905. Established in 1893 by the Norwegian parliament, the National Rifle Association of Norway was considered an unofficial army with which Norway might have countered any Swedish military intervention should the dissolution of the union have met with a sticky end. In 1905, Norwegian officers were in Kiruna competing on the rifle range with rivals from Sweden. The event took place just months before the dissolution of the union.<sup>49</sup>

The good relationship with the Swedes did not disappear after the dissolution of the union. Sports clubs, especially football associations, competed against one another. The first football club of North Norway, Narvik/Nor, typically played versus Kiruna from Sweden before playing against Bodø/Glimt from the neighbouring town of Bodø in Nordland county, Norway.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, especially after the dissolution of the union, Narvik began to integrate into the Norwegian realm. Associations and organizations, sport and leisure, cultural activities and other formal matters had to connect more closely within a Norwegian state for the good of the development of the nation state after 1905. Consequently, communications too were strengthened between Narvik and the other regions of North Norway. Steam ships, roads and ferries, as well as telegraph lines and postal systems were developed. The administrative arrangement of regional systems of law and order, and clerical and other administrative institutions, integrated Narvik into the Nordland County administration. Consequently, football clubs and sports associations were also to be part of the regional and national organizational sports system. This was to counterbalance the Swedish connection.

### Swedish-Norwegian cultural memory

Despite these efforts to integrate Narvik into Norway, aspects of a common Swedish-Norwegian culture remain because of the urbanization processes in Narvik and Swedish Lapland. Individuals, museums and public and non-governmental organizations have all promoted this common history of Narvik through remembrance of industrial history and of the connection with Sweden. The French historian Pierre Nora introduced the concept of “memory places” (*lieux de memoire*) in his study of the growth in cross-cultural research in “memory studies”, paying attention to how memories have been constructed as well as perceived.<sup>51</sup>

Central concepts in memory studies are the concepts of “collective memory”, “community of remembrance”, and “social memory”.<sup>52</sup> References are often made to the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs’ (1877–1945) 1950 book *The Collective Memory*. According to Halbwachs, all memory is collective, and people can only remember as members of a social group. In addition, forgetfulness plays an important part in the concept of collective memory; forgetting means a withdrawal from the social

48 AAS, Narviks historie, 191.

49 AAS, Narviks historie, 192–193.

50 AAS, Narviks historie, 186–195, 346. HÖRRIGMOE, Fotballklubben Narvik/Nor, 95.

51 NORA, Rethinking the Past, XI.

52 ERIKSEN, Det var noe annet under krigen, 14. CONNERTON, How Societies Remember, 1. KVERNDOKK, “De kjempet de falt de gav oss alt”, 3. OLICK, The politics of Regret.



community of memory and remembrance.<sup>53</sup> Most recent studies of collective memory have relied on Halbwachs, paying special attention to the study of war memorials. Another scholar writing on collective memory, the American historian Jay Winter, has attached importance to memories, both “personal and social”, and asserts that “sites of memory are created not just by nations, but primarily by small groups of men and women who do the work of remembrance”. Winter emphasizes that such groups are virtually the “social agents” of remembrance and that “without their work, collective memory would not exist”.<sup>54</sup>

Since World War II, memory places, as described by Pierre Nora, have been created in Norway and Sweden in connection with the memory of the places and persons involved in the industrialization and urbanization of the northern regions. They have been heavily connected to the mega system and its industrialization processes. In Nora’s world, one should search for memory places – *lieux de memoire* – to find evidence for the studies of symbols which can tell us something about later generations’ use of the memory places and symbols in memory processes. In this view, the industrial heritage of Narvik has a strong Swedish connection.<sup>55</sup>



Figure 7: The monument to *Rallaren* (The Navvy) was unveiled by the Norwegian king Olav (left) in Narvik in 1959. By the ceremony the king paid homage to the “famous figure who had been contributor to the development of both railways, roads and hydroelectric power plants” – essentially the creation of a modern Norwegian nation state. (Photo: Vår konge og hans hus. Oslo 1959)

53 HALBWACHS, *The Collective Memory*, 24.

54 WINTER, *Remembering War*, 136.

55 NORA, *Rethinking the Past*, XI.

One reason for this is that the industrialization of the north mobilized a considerable workforce on both sides of the border. Norwegian historians have called the period between the dissolution of the union and 1920 “the new working day” because of the enormous investments into new industries that took place then. Tonstad Sandvik uses the phrase as a collective term for the economic progress during those two decades. Norway’s gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 30 % from 1905 to 1914. This growth rate was similar to that of the United States, and the growth escalated during World War I. Between 1905 and 1920, Norway’s GDP increased by approximately 60 %, which was more than that of any other Western European country.<sup>56</sup>

The Norwegian side of the Ofoten line had 1,500 Swedish, as well as a group of Finnish, workers employed in construction projects.<sup>57</sup> The Norwegian historian Edvard Bull has referred to this period with another label: the “liberating phase of capitalism” as a consequence of “the new working day”. People broke with the old system of adscription in the old farming communities. They had other opportunities to choose from in the new industries. This freed both men and women from the old paternalistic restraints and restrictions of former times, even though men were in the majority in the new, growing sector. The growing need for more workers resulted in more opportunities. All over Norway, emerging construction projects showed the same demand for workers. The simultaneous urbanization process contributed to this emancipation too. The new industries also supported the liberation of individuals from family ties and constraints that were part of the traditional system of land tenure. The substantial demand for more workers also made it possible for them to request higher salaries, and they could leave places where salaries or social conditions were poor for areas with booming economies if they were dissatisfied.<sup>58</sup>

Consequently, the period between 1870 and 1920 became a period dominated by high mobility within the lower classes in society. The result was a time during which wanderers influenced the society, politics and culture of Norway and Sweden. The workers walked from one construction site, plant or factory to the next that was under construction. The Swedish word *rallare* was usually used for these male workers, mostly of Swedish origin, who were typically engaged in infrastructural works, railroads, roads and hydro-power construction. In Norway, these unskilled workers were called *slusk* or *bus*, meaning “rowdy”, “vagrant”, “tramp” or “bum” in English.<sup>59</sup> In Sweden, the period was referred to as *Rallartiden* – the age of the *rallare*, which was characterized by labour migration and the emergence of a distinctive figure: the *rallare* (in English, “navvy”). He became a mythical figure and was later used as an icon for the emerging labour movement of Scandinavia. He symbolized the culture of workers as well as the spirit of radical politics. The figure of the *navvy* was of Swedish origin, but rooted in the Norwegian land, and was later strikingly used as the role model and founder of the labour movement in both countries. The labour movement became a strong force in Narvik. It was the backbone of the political establishment in the town, with

56 TONSTAD SANDVIK, *Nasjonens velstand*, 141.

57 ANDREASSEN, *Førr malm ska börja köras nittanhundratvå*, 38.

58 BULL, *Fra bøndernes og husmennesenes samfunn til den organiserte kapitalisme*, 12, 15–19.

59 “Ordnett.no”. Accessed 1 March 2018. <https://www.ordnett.no/search?language=en&phrase=slusk>. “Vinterfestuka”. Accessed 15 March 2018. <http://www.vinterfestuka.no/innhold/om-oss/historikk/det-begynte-i-1956.aspx>.

near continuous rule of the municipality from 1913 to the present day.<sup>60</sup> The “rallar culture” was present in Sweden and was especially conspicuous in the formation of Narvik’s identity, history and cultural sector. Narvik established a week-long annual festival – The Winter Fest – and Kiruna has a “Rallarfest” and an annual remembrance at the Rallar monument.<sup>61</sup> This was part of an intentional public policy on the part of the municipality, local organizations and individuals in Narvik. The reason for such a memory policy is to connect the history of the town with the period of the rallar, who is a symbol of urbanization, and to instil a collective understanding of how this process coincided with industrialization and how the making of Narvik was possible thanks to the rallar. The memorials to this common Swedish-Norwegian figure are a symbol of the modernization of the Arctic north. He became the symbol of the economic and social transformation of the north. The labour- and capital-intensive companies, especially in the mining industry, challenged the traditional primary industries of fishing and farming. In addition, other Arctic towns marked by industrial activities used the rallar as a symbol of their history. The mining towns of Kirkenes/Bjørnevatt, Sulitjelma, Kiruna and Gällivare all have memorials depicting the rallar.<sup>62</sup>

Even though the traditional industries of fishing and farming – the peasant-economy – showed resilience long after World War II, the transformation of peripheral Norway from a traditional, self-sufficient, agrarian society to a more modern industrialized society was underway. More urbanized areas in the border regions of Nordland, such as Narvik, Ballangen, Fauske, Rana and Vefsn, experienced the new division of labour, specialization, and the concomitant growth of the new labour movement.<sup>63</sup>

For Norwegian men in the labour movement, the rallar became an impressive figure, and a symbol for the strong, self-aware, steady, class conscious and confident worker. Due to increasing interest in the labour movement and workers’ culture in Norway during the 1950s and 1960s, historians and ethnologists collected much oral history of industrial workers of Norway. In one of these histories, a worker from the Sulitjelma mines shared his memories of the labour barracks for mineworkers:

We were sitting there quiet as mice listening to their stories and learnt how to swear: all in Swedish. However, we could not be proper rallar before we could handle a pinch of snuff.... It was rough like sawdust, and burnt like heat. We became sick, threw up, but it passed, and soon we could take a pinch of snuff properly, and spit like a rallar too.<sup>64</sup>

This memory from the barracks tells a story of how the new, local, working class paid respect to the idolized rallar, who, for many reasons, became a role model for the newcomer.

60 AAS, Narviks historie, 157–159.

61 “The Winter Festival of Narvik”, Vinterfestuka i Narvik. Accessed 12 March 2018. [http://www.vinterfestuka.no/sub\\_body.asp?meny\\_parent=596&side\\_id=303&divisjon=hovedsider&meny\\_id=596](http://www.vinterfestuka.no/sub_body.asp?meny_parent=596&side_id=303&divisjon=hovedsider&meny_id=596).

62 BENUM, Industrialiseringen i Nord-Norge ca. 1875 ca. 1920. DRIVENES – JERNSLETTE, Det gjenstridige Nord-Norge. LUNDESTAD, Fiskarbønder, arbeidere og arbeiderbevegelse i Nordland og Troms 1900–1940. SÖRLIN, Framtidlandet 1988.

63 BENUM, Industrialiseringen i Nord-Norge ca. 1875 ca. 1920. DRIVENES – JERNSLETTE, Det gjenstridige Nord-Norge. LUNDESTAD, Fiskarbønder, arbeidere og arbeiderbevegelse i Nordland og Troms 1900–1940. SÖRLIN, Framtidlandet 1988.

64 BULL, Renhåring slusk, 118.

Other cultural expressions were inspired by the rallar. The rallar songs were work songs from the construction sites along the railways, just as shanties became the sailors' work songs. The Swedish author Agge Theander has claimed that the "rhythm of the songs made work easier when the men had to hit the drilling steel in time with their sledgehammers".<sup>65</sup> Workers sang the rallar songs when performing a task together; later they were to include "work songs" that described the situation at work for the rallars. Most towns in Norway have a song which is a homage to their home town. In Narvik the song is a traditional rallar song, probably composed by a Swede named "Skara-Pelle" Persson from Västra Götaland County in southern Sweden, telling the story of a railway building. He was fired from the construction site on the Swedish side of the Ofoten Railway, likely because he had criticized the working and living conditions along the line.<sup>66</sup> Skara-Pelle heavily criticized the bosses who frequently came to observe the work along the railway line during the construction period. The "big shots" travelling by in "glad rags" should have tried to live with the rallars in their barracks during a long, cold winter. Then they would have experienced how bad the barracks placed at their disposal by the state really were. The politics of the labour movement is steeped in the origins of these songs. In this respect, one can clearly see the political implications of the songs, especially for the memory and identity of the people of Narvik.<sup>67</sup>

#### **Integrating the common memory culture with the triumph of the social democrats**

Majority governments of social democrats ruled both Sweden and Norway after World War II. In 1945, the Norwegian Labour prime minister Einar Gerhardsen (1897–1987) launched the "common programme". The basic idea of the programme was that the cooperation across party lines that had existed during the war should continue in the reconstruction period that followed the making of peace. National solidarity following the German occupation of Norway during World War II continued. Labour won the election in the following years and became the predominant party, with nearly 50 % of the votes. This gave the party political hegemony for years to come in what has been described as a "social democratic order", which showed relatively broad support for a mixed market economy with a high degree of state influence and intervention – just as in Sweden.<sup>68</sup>

In 1959, the newly anointed Norwegian king Olav (1903–1991) demonstrated the new common cause in Narvik. He unveiled a monument to the rallar and in his speech he paid homage to the "famous figure who had been a contributor to the development of railways, roads and hydroelectric power plants", as seen in Figure 7.<sup>69</sup> The memorial honours the memory of the pioneers in the formative years of the industrial municipalities. The rallar was "borderless" – sometimes in Sweden and sometimes in Norway. One local Labour Party spokesperson connected the present with the past in a speech that was broadcast live nationally. He made comparisons between the history of the town and this historical character. The monument pays tribute to

65 THEANDER, I rallarens spor, 76.

66 STENSTAD – THEANDER, Feiselklang og anleggssang, 17–18.

67 STENSTAD – THEANDER, Feiselklang og anleggssang.

68 FURRE, Vårt hundreår, 210, has described the Norwegian aspect of the matter, while TILTON, A Swedish Road to Socialism, 505–507, describes the ideological basis of the Swedish social democrats in similar terms.

69 *Fremover*, 18 July 1959.

a “strong and healthy group of people” as much as to an occupational category, and served as a reminder of good and important qualities of the townspeople in 1959. The brave construction workers founded both Narvik and the local Labour Party. The first board members of the first trade union in Narvik were all Swedish. The memorial service was a homage to them. In this sense, the character of the rallar came to represent the modern nation state of Norway as well as the majority rule of the Labour Party.<sup>70</sup>

The figure of the rallar shaped the future. The symbolism of both the king and the previously revolutionary Labour Party strategist Martin Tranmæl (1879–1967) giving speeches at the monument cemented the vision of the new national order. Tranmæl underlined this by stating that the rallar had unified Norway and developed the nation.<sup>71</sup> The memorial service showed the new closeness of the old radicals and the new monarch: King Olav as a member of the Norwegian monarchy and Tranmæl as a reformed revolutionary. Together they symbolized the formation of modern Norwegian society. Later Tranmæl published an article in the local Labour Party paper about the figure, stating that the rallar had been a pioneer for the labour movement. The monument reinforced the idea that socialist Norway was ruled by the workers.<sup>72</sup>

Since then, the rallar has become a familiar figure in the identity-building processes and branding of the industrialized societies of the Arctic. In Narvik, the labour movement and the town developed at the same time.<sup>73</sup> Paying tribute to the famous character was an homage to the toil of the working class, as well as to international class cooperation and class fraternity. After the rise of the modern women’s movement in the 1970s, and following the United Nation’s International Women’s Year in 1978, the masculine rallar figure acquired a feminine monumental counterpart in Narvik in 1986. On the opposite side of the road, the town erected a monument to the female cook from the construction workers’ shed. The new monument honoured the many hardworking women who had supported the construction work. Now, the heritage of both the female and the male working class were included in the memory- and identity-building processes of the town.

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70 *Fremover*, 18 July 1959. FUGLESTAD, Omkring arbeiderbevegelsens framvekst i Nord-Norge, 39. FORSELV, Arbeidere og arbeiderbevegelse i Narvik før 1920, 28–29.

71 *Fremover*, 24 July 1959.

72 *Fremover*, 24 July 1959

73 AAS, Ei byhistorie om Narvik 1902–1950, 81.

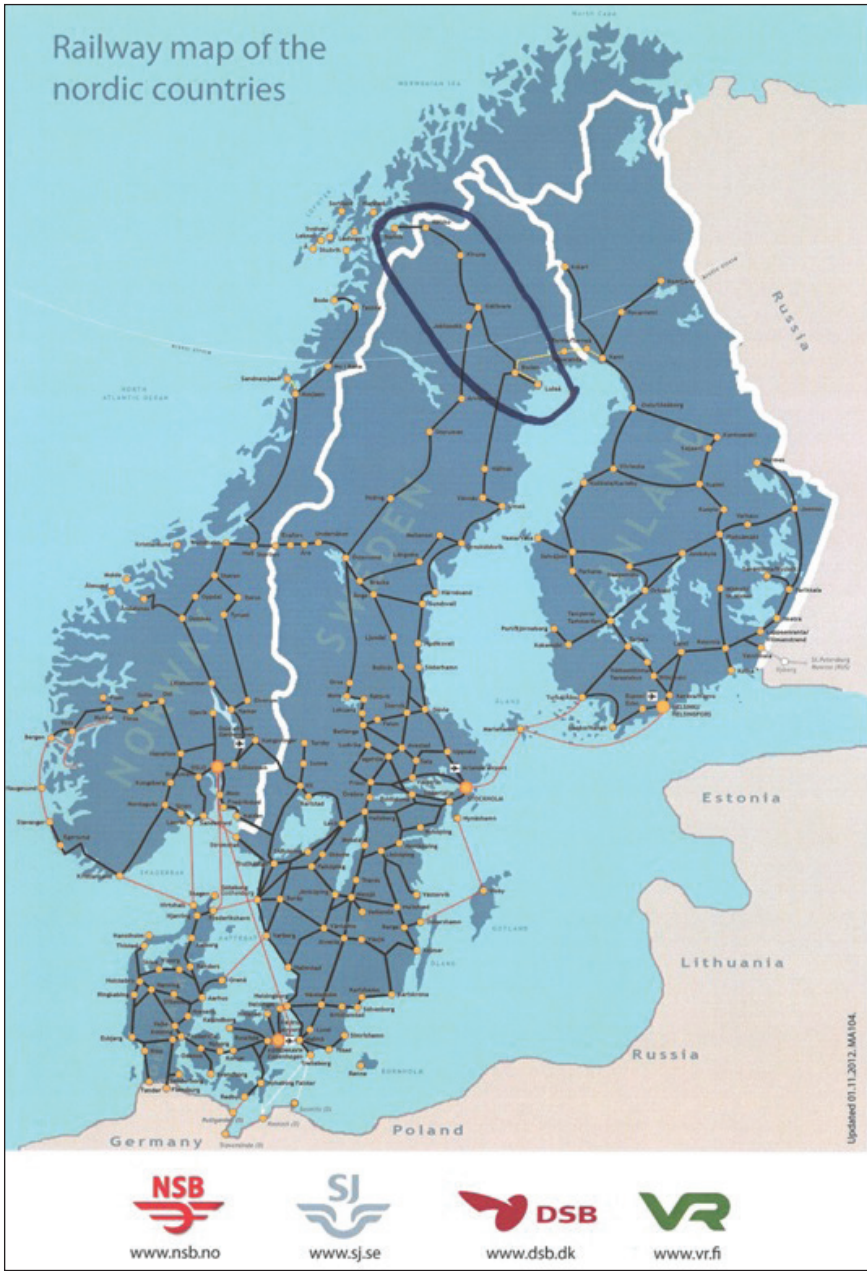


Figure 8: The railway between Luleå and Narvik (within the blue circle) was of great importance for the Swedish colonization of the northern areas. By connecting the Gulf of Bothnia and the Norwegian Sea with the iron ore mines in Kiruna and Gällivare it became vital in the modernization and growth of the Labour movement in the North as well.

### Summary

The Ofoten Railway between Narvik in Norway and Luleå in Sweden – the largest joint Swedish-Norwegian enterprise during the 1814–1905 period – created a bond between Swedish and Norwegian brothers.<sup>74</sup> One can see the railway line as a part of the railway network of Northern Norway in Figure 8. The line was of enormous economic importance to both Sweden and Norway, and resulted in economic growth and prosperity. Despite the dissolution of the united Norway and Sweden, Swedish workers populated towns of North Norway. They were assimilated into these towns and contributed to urbanization and to the formation of modern Norway. They introduced radical ideologies into traditional Norwegian liberal democratic society. In addition, with the utopian goal of a classless society based on equal rights, they sought the emancipation of the lower classes. They played an active part in the founding of the “Nordic model”, as participants in the founding of social and political movements, and by establishing the heritage and memory of the latter.<sup>75</sup> The cultivation of the rallar myth became an example of the merging of Swedish and Norwegian cultures. Consequently, the success of the use of the myth became part of the great myth of modernization through the ideas and efforts of the labour movement, in which the working class, with its quest for equality, became a driving force in the nation-building process.

Narvik was firmly rooted in the Swedish economy while simultaneously becoming a part of the newly established Norwegian nation state. The considerable majority of the population were Norwegians, spoke Norwegian, and reflected Norwegian culture, politics, administration and society. Nevertheless, memory agents, the producers of identity and local culture, connected the local identity with a common Swedish-Norwegian colouring, especially through the common labour culture. However, the evidence does not indicate that Narvik is a Swedish town.

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<sup>74</sup> *Fremover*, 15 November 1952. Special edition printed for the 50th anniversary of the building of the Ofoten railway: 29.

<sup>75</sup> BRANDAL – BRATBERG – THORSEN, *The Nordic Model of Social Democracy*. Described among others by EINHORN – LOGUE, *Can Welfare States Be Sustained in a Global Economy*.

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