



A girl, a dog & some boys

- Identity and sense of belonging among Greenlandic youth in Nuuk



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To Esther, Kristine and Avva

Forword

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Abstract

In classical anthropology and literature in general, the connection between nature and man was a way to perceive cultural adaptation, where nature and skills in the Arctic often have received the most attention. Up to a few decades ago, the Greenlanders lived close to nature in rural areas spread around the island. Today most of the population live in towns.

The main focus of this thesis looks into the relevance of nature in identity development in the capital Nuuk. The research started out focusing on identity management in relation to nature among youths in the capital of Greenland, Nuuk. By the method participatory video, one gets an understanding how boys perceive on what a good life for them means in Nuuk. The boys' stories continue with the researcher's relationship with a teenage girl, her aunt and a dog. We get insight in how they share reflections and knowledge about the natural and city environment. The thesis shows that nature plays an important role in the Greenlanders sense of belonging.

Through the researcher's reflexive approach, meetings and relations with various informants, where informants and the researcher work as each other's catalysts in the search for meaning, another topic came up. The Greenlandic – Danish relationship was a matter of importance that was impossible to overlook. The thesis reflects upon the Nuuk citizens' perception of the influences of the modernisation process; It gives insight in how this is expressed and experienced. Finally, this Master's thesis argues that it depends on the eyes of the person (seeing) how to interpret the city landscape and its surroundings.

Key words:

Nature, identity, youths, belonging, modernization, pollution.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Before I started at the Master Program in Visual Cultural studies, I had worked as a Social worker within various fields for a decade. My main interest was working with youth. Looking into Visual Cultural studies, where one of the main task is to make an ethnographic film, made me realize I could combine my previous background with something I have always wanted to try out; filmmaking. Besides making a film, doing fieldwork within anthropology appealed to me due to my previous travels around the world. Since I grew up close to nature and regard experiences in nature as an important part of my identity, I looked for a place where I assumed that nature and experiences in close relation to nature was of importance, when planning for my fieldwork. I therefore knew early on that I would like to go to a place I had never been before, to a country I had little knowledge about. However, I had seen parts of its natural beauty when flying to the US from Iceland. The weather had always been kind to me on these occasions. Bright sunshine reflected the blue skies against a backdrop of blinding white tall snowy mountains. I could see the large expanse of white below, which gave me a feel for how large the country was. I imagined it as pure and untouched by man. My driving thought was of doing fieldwork with a video camera in a country where I assumed the knowledge and respect for nature would be an important part of the people's identity. I imagined I would return home with not only stories about peoples spoken perception of nature, but capturing youths doing activities in beautiful scenery.

Jens Dahl writes that one of the reasons why Inuits are regarded as exotic people living in the Arctic, is linked to well written stories about and from the Danish –Greenlandic polar explorer Knud Rasmussen, and his many books from his expeditions travelling by sledge dogs in the north and the east of Greenland (Dahl 1999). Between 1912 to 1933 Knud Rasmussen and men of both Greenlandic and Danish origin went on in total seven expeditions around Greenland, where the intention was to study the Inuits history and ethnography (Maurie 2002: 256-265). Their stories from the Arctic where locals teach them that every hunt is a historical trip, a recall of events in the past where the toponym is original in an event. The hunter is discovering history in nature. For the European nature is wilderness, for the Greenlander it is a part of his own culture (Dahl 1999). These accounts fascinated me and I wanted to go and see it for myself.

In *”Grønland - en refleksiv udfordring”*, Høiris (2009) writes that the Greenlanders have been looked upon from different viewpoints through various eras. In the period of Christianity, the Greenlanders were regarded as pagan, while during the Enlightenment they were regarded as ”wild”. Later on in the period of Romanticism they were characterised as people connected to nature while in a modernistic approach they were looked upon as primitive. Finally, they decided that they would contribute to an understanding of themselves, on their own terms.. Before long term fieldwork was practiced by anthropologists and researchers elsewhere, it had been practiced in Greenland due to the islands location; meaning limited transport possibilities and dependence on Greenlandic tools and practises. The close relationship between researchers and Greenlanders, due to the dependence on the Greenlanders skills in the Arctic, resulted in them being looked upon as reflexive, vigorous humans and not pure products of nature or culture like most isolated indigenous groups often presented in the research of that time (Høiris 2009: 65-66).

Today 85 % of the Greenlanders live in cities (Krogh Andersen 2008).

In a film called *”Inuk Woman City Blues”*, about Greenlandic women with alcohol problems in Copenhagen, one woman sums up the modernisation process in Nuuk:

”I think it was, it was in the 1960s, when they counted 589 inhabitants in Nuuk. The fact that the population from 1960 to 2000 have risen to 15 000 people, is hard for me to imagine. The places, where we as children picked berries and caught trout have all disappeared – or more correct eliminated. It is sad to witness.

It was strange with the tap water. To take a bath whenever you felt like it. Not heat up the kitchen range before we could wash ourselves. Only push a few buttons. The first period was surprising. New bedroom. Us kids in separate rooms. I have often thought about, if it was then we started to split” (Inuk Woman City Blues, my translation).

Studies from Greenland show that even though the society is changing, and less people live from hunting, traditional food and nature is still an important part of the Greenlandic identity (Rybråten 2009: 44). In 2004 the Home Rule¹ made a cultural political statement where they recommended that, the specific Greenlandic identity based in Greenlandic cultural heritage was to be mapped; the hunting culture including kayak sailing, drum dance, story telling and

¹ Until Self Rule in 2009, the Greenlandic Home Rule was the political management at Greenland (www.snl.no).

traditional clothing was to be the main focus. A Greenlandic artist and an important public voice, Julie Hardenberg (2008) questions the concept of a united Greenlandic identity and calls for a broader discussion. She would rather focus on the diversity in today's Greenlandic society (Hardenberg 2008:14-15). Hardenberg further states that many artists disagree with her, both relying and relating their Inuit roots and the Greenlandic nature in their work (Hardenberg 2008:15).

In my project description, I wrote that the major focus would be the youths in the capital of Greenland, Nuuk, relation to nature and local belonging seen from the youth's own perspective. However, as this thesis will show, my fieldwork led me in a different direction. Through my interaction with Greenlandic people of all ages I learned that their sense of identity and belonging is influenced by a number of different factors, and that their perception and relationship to nature is one of them. I also discovered that Denmark and their relationship to the Danes play a very important role. In retrospect, I understand that this became evident at an early stage in my research phase. Though only through subtle hints and allusions from gatekeepers and people I talked to about Greenland and Greenlandic people. My presence and interaction with various people influenced this. In "*Making Sense of New Experience*" Ingrid Rudie discusses that knowledge production are not only created between members within a certain society, but also how the researcher's influence and experience, bringing in previous knowledge, impact in different ways the information that is given in the meeting with the researcher and the informants (Rudie 1994: 29). Therefore the development of the following research process must be looked upon in the light of my various meetings in Greenland, behind the camera filming while at the spot and interacting with different actors I met during my fieldwork. In the film making process, I continuously made new discoveries. While editing, I several times came across information I had overlooked while in the field.

While preparing for my project, I did not exclude that the relationship between Greenlanders and Danes would be of importance for my fieldwork. However, due to my background as a Social worker, I was highly encouraged to look into a youth project that was focusing on empowerment, and preferred not to necessarily look into matters dealing with suppression and post-colonization. The reason why I wanted to look into the importance of nature in relation to Greenlanders' perception of belonging is that traditionally, most Greenlanders lived their lives close to nature; hunting and fishing. As Knud Rasmussens writing, most anthropological literature from Greenland as Frank Sejersen and Jens Dahl focus on the Greenlanders

relationship to nature (Dahl 2000, Sejersen 2003 and 2004). Ethnographic films seem to focus on the same matter. A fellow Visual Cultural studies student, Sidse T. Larsen's film "Freedom is Here", made some years ago portrays Greenlandic fishermen and hunters in the Discobugten area. While preparing, and searching on Google, I discovered that material concerning youth in Nuuk, was mainly topics in relation to poverty. I thought it would be interesting to look into whether and how the urban youths of Nuuk made use of nature in their daily life activities. My starting point was therefore nature, in a city that looked like it was in a rapid development. My focus would change and in the following chapters, I will by empirical examples show the process through which I gradually discovered how the Greenlanders perceive the Danish and how the Danish perceive the Greenlanders and how important that relation is both to understand Nuuk and Greenlandic identity and relation to nature.

1.1.1 The shy Greenlanders

I found my gatekeeper through a Google search fall 2009. I read about a youth project based in the capital of Greenland, Nuuk run by a Danish NGO. The project was an ongoing peer-to-peer mentor project with the intention of helping pupils in the last year of a secondary school in Nuuk by raising their self-esteem, with the purpose of encouraging further education and discouraging dropouts from schools. The background for the project was a research report from 2006 produced by the Greenlandic Department for Culture, Education, Research and Church (KIIP), that showed that approximately half of the pupils leaving Secondary school² did not continue directly to Upper Secondary school³. Further they found that 59 % of the students that started Upper Secondary schools, completed their studies. Overall 40 % of the students applying for Upper Secondary School were not admitted to further education because they were not qualified. Another concern was that the report showed that children coming from rural areas in Greenland in general had a lower education level than the urban youths, probably due to the lack of educated teachers⁴. The project was inspired by a similar successful project⁵ in Denmark, where young people motivated and inspired pupils with ethnic minority background to continue with their education. Due to my previous work as a

² Secondary school meaning pupils at the age of 13-16 years

³ Upper secondary school meaning pupils at the age of 16-19 years

⁴ Statistics given to me from the NGO. They refer to: 2008: "Statistik om børn og unge i Grønland 2007-2008, MIPI – Videnscenter om Børn og Unge (www.mipi.gl) 2007. Niclasen et. Al. "Sundhed på toppen" HBSC 2006, Grønland Hjemmestyre

2007. Schnohr et. Al. "Børnefattigdom I Grønland" MIPI – Videnscenter om Børn og Unge

⁵ The inspiration project is called "Solskinnsunge" – www.urk.dk

Social worker, their focus appealed to me and after some e-mails back and forth with the Project Manager, I was invited to Copenhagen for a meeting. At the time being, I was a bit surprised that the organization I had found was located in Denmark, and asked why the NGO was not located in Greenland since its focus was work among Greenlandic children? But since they had a project in Greenland and I connected with the Project Manager through friendly and frequent e-mails between Tromsø and Copenhagen, I felt this was a good opportunity for me.

The NGO was situated in a lovely area outside Copenhagen, and on my first arrival the associate took me for a tour around the old, beautiful house. Among other things I noticed the house was decorated with old, large sculptures of Greenlandic faces. The woman told me with enthusiasm that the members and financial supporters mainly were elderly Danes. The woman spoke about her background from social work and I shared my background with her, and despite my effort of not planning to do a study in direct relation to social work in Nuuk, my professional background was something the woman and I had in common, and the role which gave me access and confidence. She nodded and smiled when I for example offered to bring a police record from Norway with me, something that is demanded for both social workers in Denmark and Norway.

In between ”*morgenmad*”⁶ and coffee-breaks, I was given detailed information about the background for the youth project and was told the project was run well in Nuuk. The peer-to-peer project was based on the principle that the mentors, being young themselves, could better relate to the youth, and function as role models. Their task was to encourage and motivate the pupils to start a higher education. This was going to happen through support and guidance, in direct contact with the youth. The mentor, I was told, is therefore a successful student who is supposed to share his or her knowledge to motivate the pupils to become just as successful as the mentor. Hence the mentor feels important due to his or her role, and the student inspired by a person he or she regards as equal.

The NGO was very curious about whom I wanted to follow, and suggested I should focus on the mentors, or the two Greenlandic Coordinators of the project. The Coordinators were running the project in Nuuk, and were in charge of recruitment and supporting the mentors.

⁶ Morgenmad means breakfast in Danish.

I politely and firmly told the woman I preferred to focus on the youths, and told her I thought it would be possible to get to know them by for example offering film workshops, and explained how I planned to bring cameras and hopefully make the youths participate in my project. My main reasons for choosing the method of participatory video, was that my peer group limits my participation. Being a grown up woman, I would not be able to relate to the youth. But most importantly, I said, I look at the youths as the experts of their own life and I explained that I see the video workshop as an important tool to establish contact and be able to create a good dialogue with the youths.

The woman then told me that the NGO had experienced that the Greenlandic youth was very shy, and that they in general were very difficult to get in touch with. I asked her if she could give an example of how she felt that they were shy. She told me that when she visited Nuuk, the youths would rarely look her in the eyes, and not say much before they were asked directly. *"At least this is my experience"* the woman continued. Looking back at my research process, I think it was here it all started, where I started to become aware of how the Greenlandic and the Danish talked about each other, and how I slowly started to pay attention to this fact.

1.1.2 The talkative Danes

Tromsø – Copenhagen is not a long trip in itself, but my 7 hours stay at Oslo airport waiting for my further flight, made me feel nervous with anticipation and my stomach was doing somersaults. It was not the first time my choice of destination had caused me a headache and tense shoulders. The dream of untouched nature, blue sea and white ice seemed far away when all my concerns for what could go wrong popped up. Language was one of my biggest concerns, because I only knew approximately four Greenlandic words at that time. Concerns like the fact that I did not know anyone in the country started also to feel a bit overwhelming, but something one of my Professors had said made me even more insecure, the fact that I was about to travel to Greenland with a Danish NGO as my gatekeeper.

In Denmark I meet the two Greenlandic project Coordinators who was visiting the NGO in Copenhagen at the time. I was not introduced to the mentors at this point since they were still in Greenland. After the first meeting with the Greenlandic Coordinators in Copenhagen, I wrote the following: *"What a warm hearted and cheerful meeting with the two Greenlandic*

Coordinators! I can no longer recall why I was so worried at Gardermoen airport yesterday. Those women made my day. They showed such warmth towards me, a stranger. Both their words of encouragement and body language gave me the confidence boost I needed. Perhaps it was the hugs they gave me (I counted 10) that I enjoyed so much? One of the women even offered to help me with translation, which has been one of my big worries. She said that if she could not translate, her mum would certainly love to do it”.

During our stay in Copenhagen, the Coordinators shared lots of information about the youth project and about their personal life with me. When they talked about the youth project, I heard the Coordinators repeated and both laughed about the fact that in their opinion the Danish NGO representatives had a difficult time understanding *how* they run the youth project in Nuuk. “For example” said the Coordinators, “the Danish representatives do not understand when and how we start our activities, or when we are done”. I smiled and told the Coordinators that I had heard that the project was run well.

In the evening the Coordinators asked me to join them for dinner and coffee. We combined dinner and shopping at a mall. After some shopping we had a late dinner. While eating, the Greenlandic Coordinators asked me what I felt about the fact that Danish people talk a lot? I was at loss for an answer and told them I have not really thought about it before. I further told them that in Norway foreigners often regard Norwegians as rather close and silent. One of the Coordinators continued that: “*Yes, that goes for us from Greenland as well, we do not have to talk all the time, and we often regard the Danish as someone who have to talk continuously. I think I notice it even more when I am here in Copenhagen, it is a lot of noise here. I do not understand how they can keep on like this, ... talking and talking”.*

At the time being, I did not reflect much about it, but looking back into my field notes and writing about it, I got early information on how the “two cultures” categorize each other and at the same time distinguish themselves from each other.

1.1.3 You’ll be okay because you’re a Norwegian

When preparing for my project, I came across literature concerning the Greenlandic people’s opposition and resistance to its previous colonizer, Denmark (Dahl 1986 and Rosing-Olsen 2005). While in Tromsø, I also met up with some Greenlandic people who thought it was

great that I was going to make a film in Nuuk. One evening I asked my Greenlandic associate about the language issue in Nuuk, weather she thought I would be able to understand and make people understand me when speaking Norwegian in Nuuk? I was told: *“You will be fine in Nuuk, most people would understand and speak Danish”*. She paused before continuing and looked me in the eyes without any special facial expression. *“You will be okay because you are a Norwegian”*. I looked at the person, did not say anything. She then continued, still holding my eyes: *“It is more difficult for Danish coming to Greenland to study us”*. I sensed something else in the answer I got, it was not just about whether I was able to understand a language or not. It felt like it was something with a touch of sadness, something that I felt the person who spoke to me was saying without really saying. What struck me from this meeting was not necessarily her words, it was more the way she looked at me, the kind of seriousness and firm tone in her voice that made me think about the episode later. And why did I hesitate to enquire any further? I started to realize that I probably would not be able to avoid the subject of the relationship between Greenland and Denmark. I was still set on keeping my original focus.

1.1.4 They know how to, but they just don't want to

On my way to Nuuk in the beginning of April, after waiting at the Greenlandic main airport in Kangerlussuaq, I got on my Dash 7 ride in bright sunshine. I was happy to finally be on my way to Nuuk. The woman next to me was a Danish health worker, who had decided to leave Denmark for a couple of years to work in Nuuk, she told me. As me, it was her first trip to Greenland. She seemed well prepared and shared her knowledge and spoke with a convincing tone of voice about artists, books, authors that had a relation to Greenland. At this point I have to admit I was only half listening since I had been travelling since the previous day. I was also occupied trying to get some nice photos of the landscape outside. She had the window seat in the Dash 7 and through the small, icy plane window I could spot clear blue water, white snow and ice in bright sunshine. I must also admit I did not know much about the artists she had mentioned or the authors she referred to, but tried to pay attention as she continued: *“I have thought about coming to Greenland for years, I know lots of people who have been here previously, working. I am not planning to go home while I am here, because it is very expensive to travel from Denmark to Greenland. I really wonder how it will be to work in Nuuk”*. *“Do you know Greenlandic?”* I asked her. *“No, she said, I have looked into it, but find it difficult to learn. At work though, I will have a translator with me all the time”*. She

looked over her shoulder, before she continued: *“the Greenlanders know how to speak and understand Danish, but they just do not want to”*.

I remember I got a bit surprised by her comment and was afraid someone had listened to us, because her comment was in my ears a bit prejudiced considering she was a professional Health worker. There was no doubt she looked at me as a person she could share this information with, a fellow Scandinavian and from her looking around her shoulder before talking, she was aware that people may listen, and that she had to be a bit careful with this comment. I looked at her with curiosity. To her, I appeared as a “cultural novice” (Rudie 1994: 30); a person who was new to the field and the activities in Greenland. I noticed her outfit was very different from mine. While seated, she wore a big, black winter coat from the extreme winter sport brand North Face, on her lap she kept her winter gloves and a hood, she wore black winter cover pants and on her feet she had proper winter boots. I could feel that she read my thoughts, because she immediately started to tell me about her outfit, while nodding her head, telling me how she newly had bought everything in Denmark because it was probably much more expensive to get the outfit in Nuuk. I had to smile looking at her outfit, sitting there with my dress, a regular coat I had taken off while in the plane and sneakers on my feet, not feeling particularly warm. She looked like she was prepared for an expedition – prepared for the extreme, a rough winter, I looked more like I was going on a visit during the mild summer. Despite our “differences” I enjoyed our conversation and thought my fellow traveller both seemed and sounded very prepared in many ways.

However, I could not stop feeling that there was something she had missed out on, something more important than proper clothes and knowledge about Greenlandic celebrations. Again I got the same unsettled presentiment I had experienced both twice in Copenhagen and before leaving Tromsø while chatting with the Danish NGO and my Greenlandic associate. There was something about her previous comment as the most natural thing in the world to her it seemed, but at the same time a looking over her shoulder when saying it, that drew my attention. It was the sentence about “the Greenlanders just not wanting to speak or understand Danish, even though they know how to”

Was it something I imagined or was this going to be a topic after all during my fieldwork? At this point I felt a hesitation inside. I wanted to study youths’ relation to nature to understand identities in transitions. Was it just something I noticed, or do the Greenlanders and the Danish easily start to compare each other? Also with the camera in my hand, I was about to

find out more about the matter.

1.1.5 Who is that behind the camera?

I was really looking forward to making an ethnographic film as part of my fieldwork. I early experienced though, that being allowed to use the video camera as freely as I wanted, was a challenge among the inhabitants of Nuuk and also among my protagonists. Repeatedly through my fieldwork various Greenlanders told me that they were tired of Danes coming to Greenland and portraying Greenlanders and their country in negative ways. One film mentioned by many was a Danish documentary called “The Escape from Greenland⁷”.

One May evening in Nuuk, I noticed the nice sunset light and wanted to film downtown. I figured I needed to film the blocks for my film, since they are an important land mark in the town skyline, and I thought it would be a good idea filming them in a nice lighting condition, since neither the blocks nor the surrounding area is especially pretty. A group of young boys were playing football at a school field located in the middle of the blocks 1-10 and the big block P⁸. The sunset light was a mix of pink, purple and blue. Out of nowhere, in the left corner of my eye, I saw a man bicycling, dressed in a white coat and with sunglasses on. Suddenly he yelled towards me while biking in my direction: “*Are you making a documentary? Are you filming here in the slum? Are you Danish?*” I stopped recording. Immediately. “*No, I just want to film the blocks in the sunset*”, I replied and continued: “*the light of the sunset make them look quite okay*”, and *I am from Norway, I am a student at the University of Tromsø. I am in Nuuk to follow a youth project, I have mostly been filming in Nussuaq, but I need images from down town Nuuk as well*”, I uttered while looking at him a bit scared. I noticed he had leftovers in the left corner of his mouth. He seemed pleased with my answer, because he smiled.

He introduces himself and tells me he works within media in Nuuk and apologizes somewhat for his harsh reaction towards me. “*I am just so tired of Danish people coming up here to portrait us Greenlandic in a negative manner, they normally come and take certain parts of our society that is not so good and then make it seem like that is the complete story*”. He shakes his head when talking about this. He tells young Greenlanders to look to Canada for

⁷ Original title is “Flukten fra Grønland”.

⁸ Block P is the largest residential building down town Nuuk, where 1 % of the Greenlandic population live. Build in 1965-66. The building is badly maintained (www.wikipedia.no).

education instead of Denmark, and tells me that in Canada they have a TV station for indigenous people. I tell him that I feel that the young people I have met are kind of optimistic concerning their future in Greenland, and give examples that the youths speak English and not Danish to me. He thinks it is good news that the younger generation has a positive view concerning their future. He continues that he thinks their parent generation were the "generation in-between". While educated in Denmark they were told their culture was worth nothing compared to the Danish one. "It is better today though, because youths can get an education in Greenland, it maintains the culture", he says.

He said one of the reasons why he had been sceptical towards me when he had seen me filming in the blocks area, was because of the film "The Escape from Greenland". Arntsen & Holtedahl refer to the audience in visual anthropology as "*the third man*". They believe it is necessary to include the awareness of the audience, because they also influences on the situation, not only the researcher or the protagonist (Arntsen and Holtedahl 2005: 67). In my example, the man who enters with his bike, is both curious and aware of a possible audience when looking at me filming in this part of town, what he refer to as "the slum".

Further Barbash and Taylor write in "Ethnographic filmmaking" that image making meaning filmic presentations often are perceived as the truth. Because you actually see it, it must be true (Barbash & Taylor 1997:49). Events captured on film seem to be locked in time, virtually repeating themselves at every screening. The documentary "The Escape from Greenland." is a film made by the biggest Danish TV channel DR1 in 2008 and claims to show how alcohol abuse, child neglect, forced removals, suicide and sexual abuse are part of the everyday life in Greenland (<http://www.dr.dk/gymnasium/emner/groenland/flugten/default.asp>), and was somewhat regarded as "the truth about Greenland". In 2008, the film was nominated for the Danish magazine Billed-Bladets television Oscar. As a protest Greenlanders gathered outside Hotel D'angleterre in Copenhagen and demonstrated. The woman behind the demonstration said the documentary reflects the journalist and filmmaker's lack of understanding of Greenlandic culture; the spots are manipulative and do not represent a picture of the real Greenland. (<http://sermitsiaq.ag/kultur/article33084.ece>).

As the introduction has showed, I wanted to go to Greenland because of its beautiful nature. Up to a few decades ago, the Greenlanders lived close to nature in rural areas spread around the Island. Today most of the population live in towns. I wished to study the relevance of

nature in the identity development in the capital. On the journey, in the beginning of the research, through my own meetings and relations with the different informants, I was taken by the fact that the “Danish” presence became so important. In the following I will explore the meaning of nature for identity management among the people I meet, but in this process the Danish – Greenlandic relationship is clearly of importance a topic that was impossible to overlook. And thus the focus and aim of my thesis changed to include this matter along with the youths’ perception of identity in relation to nature. During my discovery process and research, I gathered a lot of empirical data from various actors in different social situations showing that the relation between Greenland and Denmark is an aspect, which permeates, in all social situations.

1.2 Focus and aims

In the Arctic, nature and skills have received the most attention. In classical anthropology and literature in general the connection between nature and man was a way to perceive cultural adaption (Dahl 1999). Greenland is a country where nature and culture is intertwined both today and in the past. Because of my background as a Social worker I originally chose to work with youths and their belonging identity work linked to nature. However, in the process I discovered that I could not exclude the Greenlanders relationship to Denmark in this respect– and how the Greenlanders’ and the Danish perceive each other. As I discovered, the Greenlander’s sense of belonging and identity and their relationship to nature is linked to their relationship to Denmark and the Danes.

As my research will show, the relations between people and the circumstances they are in, play an important role in how people see themselves, their past, present and future.

In the thesis I will describe how the identity management of the people I met’ perceptions of nature is influenced by their relationship to Danish colonial history and Danish presence in Greenland. The Danish presence is obvious through extensive modernisation and urbanization. Through schools, language, institutions, food, money, among other things. What it represents will be investigated through my empirical material.

2 Greenlandic Past and Present

2.1 Land of the Greenlanders

Geography, location and post-colonial experiences are important matters in relation to how the Greenlandic people look upon themselves and in how Greenlandic culture developed. To make a foundation for understanding my empirical material, I will start by giving a historical, overview, before I will give information about Greenland and Nuuk.

Kalaallit Nunaat is Greenlandic for Greenland and directly translated it means “land of the Greenlanders”.

2.2 Historical facts

The first people migrated to Greenland across the Davis Strait from the American continent more than 4,000 years ago. When the Norse⁹ settled in Greenland in 985 AD the first connections to Europe were established. It lasted until the mid 15th century. In the 16th century, the European whaling industry made various nations go hunting around Greenland. Though the closer connection was not established until the settlement of the Danish-Norwegian priest Hans Egede in 1721 was sent out from Denmark to look for the Norse. Instead of the Norse, he met the Inuits. Denmark colonized Greenland, and this was the beginning of 258 years of Danish sovereignty. It started the trade monopoly the Royal Greenland Trade Department¹⁰ (<http://uk.nanoq.gl/Emner/About.aspx>).

From 1953, when Greenland officially became a county within the Danish Kingdom, the modernisation process really began. In “*I skyggen av kajakkene*”, Tupernaq Rosing Olsen writes that it meant a boost in the school system, in the healthcare system and in the business sector. This process of modernisation, which took 200 years in Denmark, happened in about twenty years in Greenland (Rosing Olsen 2005: 98). During colonization many Greenlanders developed a deep respect in authority. Living side by side, conflicts occurred between Greenlanders and Danes. The Danes held leadership positions; had better salaries, houses, and superior water and heating systems. Many Greenlanders’ felt discriminated against the way society was run by the Danes (Ibid. : 70). Since colonial times it was custom to pay the Greenlanders and the Danes different salaries (Ibid.: 70). The *birthplace criteria* was

⁹ <http://www.greenland-guide.gl/leif2000/history.htm>

¹⁰ KGH, *Kongelige Grønlandske Handel*

introduced in 1964 and it meant that only persons born outside of Greenland who got a job in Greenland while still living in Denmark, would receive higher salaries (Ibid.: 120). In other words it was beneficial to the Danes and not the Greenlanders. The Greenlanders were disappointed with this policy and, despite massive criticism that the criteria was racist, the arrangement lasted until 1990 (Ibid.: 128-130). Rosing Olsen further writes that along with modernisation came insecurity, inferiority complexes, alcohol abuse and criminality among many Greenlanders' (Ibid: 51). Problems that is still evident today. Rosing Olsen says it developed out of the Greenlandic people's separation from the modernization process. During this period the Greenlanders' were only witnessing these changes. They were not participating or had any influence in the decision-making' (Ibid: 59 & 79).

In the 1970s a political awakening arose where Greenland participated in indigenous gatherings and new political parties founded. As a result of this awakening, the Home Rule government was introduced in 1979 (www.nanoq.gl). Today Greenland is a self-governing autonomous country within the Danish realm. Self-Rule¹¹ marked a new milestone in Greenland's history, as the majority of the population thought that Self-Rule was a good idea and voted yes. In the Self-Rule law, it is stated that Greenlandic is the official language in Greenland¹². Self-Rule meant that Greenland took over a number of administrative tasks such as handling criminal courts, border controls, raw material extraction regulations (www.nanoq.gl). However, the Danish constitution is still in force in Greenland and every Greenlander continues to be a Danish citizen. Despite Self-Rule Greenland does not control foreign affairs (treaties), fiscal policy, military defence, criminal law and principles concerning law of succession, family and property law (Selvstyre 2008: 5). One of the most heated debates in the negotiations of the latest commission was how to divide raw materials extraction. This is still debated. Recent Wikileaks uncover that Denmark's previous foreign minister during a meeting with the US in August 2009, refer to the Greenlanders as suffering from "victim –mentality", in connection to a question from the US embassy about whether a report on radioactivity in Greenland would create problems. Greenland's political party Siumut¹³ replies that this statements from Denmark, proves that Greenland once and for

¹¹ Self-Rule started on June 21 2009, a date that became Greenland's national day.

¹² Greenlandic is the official language in Greenland (Self Rule Law, § 20.)

¹³ Siumut is a Greenlandic political party founded in 1977. Their main focus is on extraction of fish and hunt resources. They claim that it is the Greenlandic population who should have preferential in labor. They also claim that it is the Greenlandic population that own "vort lands rigdomme". (<http://www.siumut.gl>).

all should decide for themselves concerning their resources
(<http://sermitsiaq.ag/node/100993>).

2.3 Inuit and *Kalaallit*

Inuit is what today is referred to as the Indigenous population inhabiting the circumpolar areas. Inuit societies across the Arctic from Greenland, Canada, Alaska and East Siberia are connected in both past and present in terms of culture and language (colonial and pre-colonial), migrations, climate and ecology and the today's political situation (Larsen 2007:13). The designation Inuit is not much used in everyday life in Greenland. Dahl (1999) writes that it still frames into a regional community in which can be seen in various arctic organizations like for example the Inuit Circumpolar Conference.

During my fieldwork I never heard anyone in Greenland refer to themselves as Inuits, except from my host Kristine one time when she and her youngest brother were discussing the word "Eskimo". We drove by the Inuit Circumpolar Council¹⁴, ICC building, downtown. She pointed it out to me and told me about the organization while saying "we are Inuits". Her brother's reaction to this was that "or you can call us Eskimos". Kristine replied: "No, that is not nice to say anymore, we are Inuits". She also told me that when she visited her family members living in Denmark, their friends would refer to her as "their little Eskimo" while in Greenland, certain parts of her family would refer to her as "The Danish" due to her mixed family background. "They can say what they want", she continued "*I look upon myself as Greenlandic,*" she said.

2.4 The biggest island in the world

Greenland is the biggest island in the world. It is located on the northern hemisphere, between the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans. From Uummannarsuaq, the southern most area in Greenland to Kap Morris Jesup in the north, it is approximately the distance from London till the mid of Sahara. The coastline, which consists of cliffs and tall mountains with deep fjords that cuts into the wasteland, is the only habitable area in Greenland. The inner part of the Island, 5/6 of the total surface area, is all covered by ice which can be up to 3 500 m thick. (Nielsen 2009).

¹⁴ For further information about ICC, please go to: <http://www.inuit.org>



Source: www.lonelyplanet.com

In January 2008, the total population of Greenland was 56 642, where 88% are Inuit (and Inuit - Danish mixed) and 12 % Europeans, mostly Danish. There are 18.563 persons with Greenlandic background living in Denmark, where about 9.410 are born in Greenland (<http://www.dnag.dk/Default.aspx?pageid=11280>). Fish and seafood are the main income for the Greenlandic economy. Annual catches are approximately 2-3 ton of shrimp and fish per inhabitant and 85 – 90 % of the export is fish and fish products (Nielsen 2009).

2.5 A capital city developing rapidly

The capital Nuuk has 15,469¹⁵ inhabitants and is the biggest town in Greenland. Nuuk means headland in Greenlandic. The Danish-Norwegian priest Hans Egede founded it in 1728 (Nielsen 2009). 25 % of the Greenlandic population and 50 % of the foreigners in Greenland live in Nuuk. By comparison, the second largest town located further north, Sisimiut, has approximately 6 000 inhabitants. Nuuk is Greenland's administrative and political headquarters, and the government is located in the town. The town is also the industrial and educational midpoint. This means most of the Upper Secondary schools are located in Nuuk, and Greenland's only University along with other University colleges who provide education for teachers, journalists and nurses among others are situated here. If people want to study medicine, one must go abroad to study. Most Greenlanders who study abroad, study in Denmark¹⁶.

¹⁵ Source: www.stat.gl. The towns population has increased from 13 719 in 2000 till 15 46 2010

¹⁶ There are approximately 800 Greenlandic students in Denmark.

(<http://www.udsattegroenlaendere.dk/?side=23>).

Despite its surroundings among tall mountains and fjords Nuuk is an urban town with cafes, supermarkets, shops, tall buildings and a rich culture life. The town is located at the shoreline of the Godthab fjord, with houses painted in bright colours. I was told this was to make sure the boats at sea would be able to discover the town, since the ocean can be rough. The town's most famous landmark is the 1210 meters high mountain Sermitsiaq (Nielsen 2009). When asking Greenlanders what they think differs Nuuk from other Greenlandic towns, a typical answer I got was: *"In Nuuk you do not necessarily meet anyone you know while running your errands downtown, while other places you most certainly would meet up your with neighbours and friends when shopping"*. On a weekday, I noticed that Nuuk downtown could be rather empty of people, but if the sun were shining the Greenlanders would walk the streets frequently. What I recognized the most when walking downtown, were boys in all ages biking, doing tricks on a MBX dirt bike, a special bike, a global cultural trend, without breaks and gears.

Besides Greenlanders and Danish residents, Thai, Russian, Icelandic, Norwegian, Somali and French among many nationalities live in Nuuk. According to Andersen (2008:47) the local newspaper Sermitsiaq counted 38 different nationalities some years ago. The urban town life has some negative connotations: while someone is wondering where to go on a holiday, others are more concerned about where to stay for the night. The town is characterized by large economic differences, which is a fairly new phenomenon in Greenland, a country that traditionally has been an egalitarian society (Andersen 2008). The town is rapidly changing and developing, and during my fieldwork, high-rise buildings were continuously developed. One day a local man in his late 30s took me for a drive up to a viewpoint to get an overview of the city centre. He said: *"I cannot remember Nuuk without construction workers and buildings – it has always been a big part of the city image since I was a child"*. The town has three suburbs; Nussuaq, Eqalugalinnuit and Qinngorput. During my fieldwork my host Kristine, a Greenlandic woman, kept repeating: *"You have to come back to Greenland, Tove, not to Nuuk, but you have to go to the north, in the Discobugten area or even further north"*. She had lived many years in the north of Greenland and would always talk about it with a sweet tone. Even though she was born in Nuuk she often referred to the capital as *"Nuuk is not proper Greenlandic – it used to be, but it has changed so much since I was a child in the 70s, for example the blocks were nice to grow up in back then, and everyone knew and looked after each other. Nowadays I can walk downtown without meeting a familiar face"*. Nuuk, whether a proper Greenlandic town or not, is increasingly drawing in new residents (Andersen

2008: 38).

As I have shown, Nuuk is a town in rapid development. The Greenlandic population have since 1960 moved into the capital in large numbers meaning less inhabitants are living a traditional way, hunting and fishing in the rural areas.

3 Analytical framework

In my struggle to understand my empirical material on identity management among young boys and girls in Nuuk, have I found the theoretical work of Anthony Cohen on belonging to a community and how people experience and express their difference to others (Cohen 1982). Being conscious of my own presences in the field, I have been inspired by Ingrid Rudies reflection in how the informants and the researcher work as each other catalysts, understanding the process as a matter of “synchronic contextualization” between my informants and me as researcher (Rudie 1994: 28).

3.1 What do they feel belonging to?

Nuuk is a fast growing town. I wanted to find out how community is built. How do people build community? Cohen says we must study how belonging is build and maintained to understand integration in a society. How is belonging build? In peripheral communities Cohen suggests, the awareness of commitment and the sense of belonging to a culture is a feature, which is ubiquitous. This stems from the consciousness and the fact that differences are recognized and valued (Cohen 1982:6). Those who feel that they are different from the others would probably belong to the same group. What is it that can help to define why people belong to one particular group and how do they become aware of this?

The ethnography of locality is an account of how people experience and express their difference from others, and how their sense of difference becomes incorporated into and informs the nature of their social organization and process (Cohen 1982). The question then is how do the youths I met during my fieldwork see themselves in their milieu? Cohen refers to the sense of belonging, of what it means to belong, as something that “*it is constantly evoked by whatever means come to hand: the use of language, the shared knowledge of genealogy or ecology, joking, the solidarity of sect, the aesthetics of subsistence skills* (Cohen 1982:6). Belonging is therefore a feeling of being a part of a “we – group”, where one differentiates

and categorize oneself from “the group of the others”. I understand Cohen’s term ecology as nature, and will in my thesis refer to hunting as one of the subsistence skills of importance for young boys in Nuuk. What all my informants shared was that they expressed a sense of belonging to nature.

When it comes to what Cohen refer to as subsistence skills, I found for example that one of the boys I followed spoke about the Danes need to put on special shoes and clothes to be able to run. According to him the Danes are not able to run in the Greenlandic rocky landscape. While on a hike with the boys, to the tallest mountain surrounding the city, Store Malene, the same boy said loud during the hike that: “I can tell that Tove has been walking in the mountains before”. Cohen gives a concrete discovery technique where I am able to recognize different aspects concerning the youths’ sense of belonging. The shared knowledge of walking without special shoes emphasize something shared among the Greenlander’s in contrast to the Danes, therefore it adds to their sense of belonging. This experience in how the nature influence is an important element in the sense of belonging. But as I will show, it was not only nature that played a role when it comes to belonging, there was also many other aspects like computer games, songs, sailing, food, pollution, housings etc that defined the “we-group” among my informants.

Another important aspect of sense of belonging is how one defines oneself in relation to nationality. When writing this thesis, using the term “Danes” and “Greenlanders”, it may look like I regard them as two completely different nationalities. Although I am using these terms, which are convenient categories that insiders’ use, I am writing the thesis with an understanding that identity is a complex issue, that national identity is not as simplistic. But the way I am using this reflects the national discourse. National identity negotiations is a process, it is not fixed. However, people I met would categorise themselves as either Greenlandic or Danish. Dahl (1999) writes that the Inuits in Canada may refer to themselves as Canadian (and not Inuit). But at the same time he describes that people in Greenland are *either* Danish or Greenlandic. However I will claim that it is not as simple as that. As a result of colonization, post-colonization and today’s Danish presence in Greenland, and Greenlandic presence in Denmark, there are many people who have a foot in each camp. A film by Ivalo Frank; “Faith, Hope and Greenland”, touches upon this theme among Greenlanders with different background in Nuuk. Due to the length of this thesis, I will not come further into the matter.

3.2 A Reflexive approach

Coming to Greenland I thought I mostly would be doing observation and interpretation in the field, but early I understood that it was through my personal experiences and meetings I got the important knowledge and understanding.

Ingrid Rudie writes that all our material is to some extent influenced by the researcher. Rudie writes;

“Anthropologists and informant act as catalysts to each other’s efforts to make sense. The anthropologist’s keen interest in what, to the informants, may be only everyday trivia has the potential of speeding up the informants’ own reflection, which, in their turn, become subject to the anthropologist’s analysis. In other words, anthropological analysis is not only concerned with acts and representations in their “pure” form, it also follows and partly triggers, the informants self-interpretative processes” (Rudie 1994:29).

Rudie points out that both the informant and the researcher are facing much the same challenges in everyday life situations. In the field I was constantly facing new situations and challenges, which I interpreted and acted on with my own experience. In the research process I compared new situations with the knowledge I had achieved in my various meetings. This is the technique I made use of to uncover my informants’ sense of belonging.

Through participation in various situations, where I compared reactions; their to mine, I got a dialogue on how the situations could be understood. By being reflexive, the significance and meaning are negotiated in collaboration between the informants and me as a researcher (Rudie 1994). This theoretical framework provides me with useful perspectives in understanding the negotiation of identity, nature and belonging and also how I got information in the field by constantly interpreting and acting on my own experience.

The category “Danish” is probably the most important “Other” in Greenland, incredibly important for creating a “Greenlandic we”. I will claim that the way the Greenlanders and the Danish referred to each other is what Bateson’s refer to as “hard programmed ideas” According to Bateson, a “hard programmed idea” is an idea that is confirmed so often, and through so many different social situations that it after a while will be taken for granted and becomes a reference point for other ideas (Bateson 1972 in Rudie 1984: 16).

4 Methods and Analyzes

4.1 From NGO, film workshop to kaffemik & dog walking, discovering Nuuk

4.1.1 Structuring my empirical data

The empirical material in this thesis is mainly collected from a three months fieldwork in Nuuk, spring 2010. My point of departure was the intention of grasping the Greenlandic youth's perception of identity in relation to nature. It was an ambitious project. I am aware of that I am not doing a local situation study, but I am studying different relations in various fields of interactions. Empirically I started from a Danish NGO. By following their youth project, I hoped to get to know other informants that would introduce me to further informants who would be of relevance for my fieldwork, either as individuals or other kinds of sources. This method is called the *snowball-effect* method (Biniam 2008: 16). I am also going to illuminate, in various ways, inspired by Ingrid Rudie, that I was looking for experience–near knowledge, and by using my own discoveries and assumptions in the meeting with my various informants, meaning working as a catalysts in the various social arenas I got into, with the intentions of using a reflexive approach as a method, it would help me to get an understanding of how identity is negotiated and how belonging is expressed.

I also thought that by bringing a video camera, the participatory video method of Visual Cultural studies it would help me to be situated in suitable positions to be able to get a rich material for my research. In the article “Making sense of new experiences”, Ingrid Rudie writes that (...) *it is important to get at what people do because there is so much cultural practice that is never verbalized*” (Rudie 1994:28). Since we do not necessarily verbalize our own most self-evident practises, as Rudie says, an easier way to contribute to anthropological knowledge is through film. Instead of penetrating the self-evident understanding, filming lets the audience see for themselves. With my own camera, I planned to hold film workshops because I wanted to develop some strategies in being able to communicate despite possible language barriers and the fact that I am not in the same age group as the youth I intended to follow. Participatory video can be used as such a strategy. Besides my own video camera, I brought along smaller cameras to offer film workshops for youth. By doing this, I hoped to inspire youths to make films about themselves and that these films would open up for a communication between me and the youths, and further helping me in understanding what life is for youths in Nuuk and how their identity is negotiated through their relations to nature.

The rich material that I have got, will help me to understand and say something about belonging, and referring to Cohen, point out how the identity in the youth group is made and maintained. By using Rudies approach to get thick descriptions (Geertz 1973) through positioning myself and interpret the social situations, it gave me a potential of revealing meaning. However, my material is not mainly focusing on youths' identity negotiations. Through the NGO I followed some activities, but the activity level was not as expected. What gave me the most access and information was the film workshop I initiated myself with a group of boys. When the film workshop ended, the main project disappeared. The reason why the project ended was because the local Coordinators started to cancel the project meetings. They did not involve the mentors and stopped sharing information. This led to that the youths and the mentors lost their interest in the project, and very little activities.

As the text will show, I did not leave the field. The reason why I continued, was that while in the field I felt that I did not have enough material for neither my film nor my research. I wanted to go deeper and further, and continued with informants I got to know on my own while in Nuuk. I was soon to find out that my fieldwork would not only be about youth in a youth project, but that I would gain information from different social situations on other arenas. The family I lived with, the dog I walked daily, various celebrations and my own interpretations during communication with my informants, would all be part of my journey in understanding the Greenlandic society.

In the appendix of the book "Street Corner Society" by William Foote Whyte (1993), he writes that: "...the researcher, like his informants, is a social animal. He has a role to play and he has his own personality needs that must be met in some degree if he is to function successfully." Whyte writes that if you live within the society you are studying, your personal life is bound to be influenced by your research and he claims that to explain how the research was done, you need to share a personal version of how you lived (Whyte 1993: 279). Now I will share my story.

4.1.2 Anonymity

I have chosen not to anonymize the persons who have contributed in this thesis. The youths in the film have already exposed themselves in a way that makes the question of anonymity in the written text became somewhat irrelevant. The fact that I have made a film, where both people and places are exposed, has been the main factor for not keeping my informants

anonymous. Anonymity is not as taken for granted as it used to be. Now one is debating the usefulness of anonymity (Vike 2001) in relation to safeguarding the informant's well-being and in relation to the value of a debate in society. Empirical material where both persons, events and places have been rewritten dramatically for the sake of anonymity can be highly relevant and valid. Vike (2001) also says that the efforts of anonymity is often half-hearted and therefore do not guarantee complete anonymity. To choose not to anonymize is an ethical responsibility's and you must ensure that when you make a film and a text where everyone exposed can live with the result. This is my intention.

4.2 The youth project

The youth project had been running since 2008. On my arrival I was told that the project had approximately 15 active youths participating, depending on the activity. The Coordinators' task was to recruit and follow up the mentors, the role models in the project, plan weekly activities and report to the NGO representatives in Denmark. The NGO also encouraged the Coordinators and the mentors to involve the youths' parents in the process of finding a suitable education. Further the Coordinators would keep a dialogue with the teachers at the school and finally introduce the youths to various professions by inviting persons outside the project to share information about carrier building. The Coordinators were paid by the NGO. On arrival I was told it was approximately 12 mentors in the project. In Copenhagen I had been informed that the project met up several times a week; along with the weekly activity, the mentors would also help out the youths with homework and there would be "staff-meetings" between the Coordinators and the mentors. The NGO had an office down town where they met up. To ensure that the office was a place where the youths would relax and enjoy themselves, the youths had been participating in decorating the interiors.

In addition to working towards motivating the youth to attend further education and to better build rapport between the mentors, the Coordinators and the youths, the project was doing various activities in Nuuk. The goal for the activities was according to the NGO, that they should develop the students' social qualifications and to prevent possible social isolation. The social activities would also make the youths responsible for the project, themselves and also responsible for each other. For example, I was told that some of the activities the project had done was rock climbing, pool kayaking, a boat trip in the Godt Haab fjord, and team-building activities in the football field and watch movies in the office.

I was looking forward to follow the project with a video camera and hoped that some of the youths in the project would want to participate in the film workshop I planned to arrange.

4.2.1 Camera as a tool

There are things more suitable for the visual medium, while others are more beautiful as a written text. By using of a camera you have the possibility to catch things you would miss through writing only. In the film, I think this is visible in a scene where one of my informants is gently playing with sand in her hands. This beautiful and simple gesture would have been difficult to convey in a text. MacDougall (2006) and others see visual anthropology as a different kind of anthropology, not a replacement for anthropological writing itself, but a research tool for understanding and learning about human beings – to reach another kind of knowledge. Art, science and our daily practises of seeing help us understand the being of others in the world, and the things we take in create meanings. This again guides our seeing. MacDougall reflect on how meanings categorize the world we see: *“Images reflect thought, and them may lead thought, but they are much more than thought”* (MacDougall 2006:1). We are taught to think of thoughts as language and within this translation we get lost, because visual images demand more from us than the given language (MacDougall). During my fieldwork in Nuuk, the video camera gave me access to non-verbal communication, embodied knowledge, my informants’ behaviour and gestures in various situations, the nature and myself.

4.2.2 Off to a confusing start

The day I arrived in Nuuk, I was to be introduced to the youth project I had planned to follow. I had not heard from the Coordinators since our meeting in Copenhagen, and I was a bit anxious how to find the project that evening, and thought it was a bit strange that the Coordinator had not replied to my e-mails. I tried not to worry too much and thought I would find the NGO office since I had the address. While waiting for my plane to Nuuk, the Danish representative did send me a welcome-to-Nuuk text messages and the Coordinator’s phone numbers. I sent a text message and the Coordinator wrote that she would pick me up. The same evening an activity was to take place in a sports-hall, she said. On the spot though, we were about to have an outdoor activity, in a large field between the block areas down town. I was definitely not dressed for outdoor activities. My thoughts went back to the Danish Health worker I had met some hours earlier. I really wish I had had her foresight when it came to

dressing up. The youths seemed to be a group of talkative and joyful young people, I noticed they talked and laughed together. The activity was team building, and a man running a local team building business was leading the activity. He divided the youths into two groups, where the main task was to work together as a group, and to win the various challenges he had put up. As far as I could understand, I was not introduced to the youth, but greeted by two mentors that were present. Their functions on the particular evening seemed to be to keep up the youths' motivation to participate in the activity. I did not film this evening, since I wanted to introduce my fieldwork and myself properly before shooting. After the activity, I did not really understand that the activities were over before one of the Coordinators told me. I was just like the Danish' the Coordinators had told me about during our dinner in Copenhagen. I was cold, and I found myself, and probably appeared to be, eager to meet up with the Coordinators and make a plan for our next meeting. When they told me they could meet me on Saturday, when they were preparing for the Danish NGO to visit the following week, I put on a fake smile and tried to hide my disappointment. Saturday? What would I do the whole week? I am sure one of the Coordinators saw my facial expressions and she cheered me up by inviting me to her boyfriend's parents' house.

The next meeting was a "staff-meeting" where I hoped to get to know the mentors and the Coordinators better, and to introduce myself. I was also curious to see how many mentors that would show up, since I had only met two of them during the first activity. Beforehand, I pictured the mentors being gathered in their office, and that one of the Coordinators would introduce me properly, and that I might be able to explain my project. I was disappointed. The second time with the project felt even more challenging than the first one because everyone spoke only Greenlandic. I felt like I was invisible, politely drinking my cup of tea while listening to the two Coordinators and the two mentors, the same two that I had met at the first activity. I heard my name being mentioned, but I felt a bit lost since I really did not understand what was being said, and no one translated. In the car home, one of the Coordinators translated some parts of the former conversations. She seemed a bit stressed out and told me she was up to her neck in work before the Danish NGO arrived. "*When they are around, that's all what matters,*" she said". I did not ask her what she meant, but was soon about to understand more the following week. Myself, a bit impatient of nature when it comes to my own projects, I was starting to worry, and questioned how on earth I would be able to get material if it would proceed in this direction throughout my fieldwork. My main concern was that it seemed to be less project meetings than I had been told in advance, and

the language issue was another worry, because everyone spoke only Greenlandic. Would I manage to understand if I did not meet them on a regular basis' and how would I manage without taking an intensive course in Greenlandic?

As I also was about to discover as the fieldwork proceeded, even though I planned to be a participant observer, I had so far merely been a passive observer (Spradley 1980:59). I was present, but without any specific interaction with the participants. It was difficult to communicate and get access, I did not get access to neither arenas nor relations. I was happy I had decided to keep film workshop as a method, together with filming material for my exam film. I was eager to get started, and thought the film workshop maybe would make it easier to interact and get access. I just needed to find a way to introduce myself. But before I was able to do so, we were about to have visitors from Denmark.

4.2.3 Am I in Nuuk or still in Copenhagen?

During my second week in Nuuk, the Danish representatives came to visit. Remembering the Coordinators expression about “when the Danish arrive, that’s all what matters” I was slowly starting to notice there was a tension between the Danish representatives and the Coordinators. From my point of view, I felt it was very beneficial to have the Danish representatives in town. Since they were in town, both the mentors and the Coordinators were frequently at the office, and the Danish representatives introduced me to more mentors. This was important to me, because in anthropological research it is of importance that the informants are aware of the researchers intentions in the field and to safeguard that people are deciding for themselves if they want to participate in a social research project or not (Davies (2008: 58). At the project meeting, I was for the first time able to present myself “properly” to the youths; that means to give information about my fieldwork, myself, and to give information about the film workshop I had planned. There might have been openings for me to introduce myself on the first meetings as well, but I did not understand how too. This evening one of the mentors translated what I said into Greenlandic. I noticed that several youths were putting their name on the film workshop list I had made, and I was curious to get to know them. After the information were given, the youths got a snack and something to drink before we all played “Cannonball” for an hour or so. Due to the Danish representatives’ presence, I noticed there was a change in the Greenlandic Coordinators way of working; from being all relaxed and small-chatting with the youths and the mentors on the first meetings I attended, they now seemed silent and let the Danish representatives’ run the evening despite

them being the ones who knew the youths. They seemed to just follow the orders given by the Danish representatives, and had no comments on what was done during the meeting. I also noticed that everyone except the youths and me, spoke Danish.

As I have written in the introduction, I went to Greenland with the intention of studying youths' belonging in relation to nature. I was soon about to discover that a nature phenomena helped me to get a broader understanding of how the Greenlanders and the Danish perceive each other, how they categorize and focus on their distinctiveness. The outburst of the Icelandic volcano, which literally stopped all the flight traffic for a couple of weeks in Europe and the US, also influenced Greenland in such a way that people could not leave Greenland and fly to Copenhagen. Due to the volcano outburst I was participating in more informal activities with the Danish representatives from the NGO and their Danish associates, and I therefore got a first hand experience of how the Danes perceived the Greenlanders. The Danish representative from the NGO met me one day at the youths' school, where I was about to hand out written information to the youths and to introduce myself to their class mates and teachers. The intention of this was also to recruit more students to both the project and my film workshop, since there were many students not participating in the project. After we left the school, walking towards the city centre, the Danish representative looked at me and said *"Do you see how shy and neglected they seemed, the youths? They are so much more different here in Greenland than what we were in my own high school. We would be louder"*. I answered that I had not really thought about that. I said I thought they looked like any Upper secondary class. The NGO continued: *"And they do not speak English"*. She shook her head. Did not speak English? What had caught my attention was the girl who translated everything I had said from English to Greenlandic to her class, at arm's length, when her teacher seemed to forget to. I questioned myself, was it something I did not see that the Danish person saw, this poverty and neglect among those youths we had just met? I was wondering when and to what extent it would be suitable to let my gatekeeper know I disagreed with her. Would I understand better if I just listened to her? One part of me wanted to tell her I felt she was wrong, but I told myself to be patience, and my late mums words in my upbringing was useful to hold on to: *"Tove, there is a reason why we have two ears and one mouth"*. I kept listening and we walked back to the city centre. Among the Danish representatives my position as Social worker was successful due to our experience background; we had almost the same professional background. I was also not a Greenlandic, but a common Scandinavian in Nuuk, we spoke the "same language and understood each other". Therefore we belonged to the same

“we –group”. However, I started to get mixed feelings about this position, and started to feel embarrassed on the Danes behalf.

The more the departure of the Danish representatives was delayed, the more negative feelings seemed to arise, in both the phrases and the body language of both the Greenlandic and the Danish side. This was expressed in various ways. The Greenlandic Coordinators would start to say that they had to go home to take care of children or other family members, and they also tried to cancel some meetings in the evenings, by explaining they had other plans. They did not succeed with this strategy, since the Danish representative seemed to be a determined woman, who firmly told them that she expected them to come. The Coordinators would show up to some extent, but would for example no longer take a seat or drink a cup of coffee while in the office. In the beginning of the Danish visit, they had done this. On top of these meetings, one of the Coordinators were helping me out in translating my first letter into Greenlandic to the youths’ and their parents. I met her at her College. She told me she was a bit stressed out due to a meeting with the Danish representatives later on and that we had to hurry a bit. She told me she really hoped the Volcano outburst would set, because she was so tired of all the tasks she was given by the Danish NGO representatives. She sighed and said: ” *I think she is sweet, but she does not understand that I have other things to do as well! I do only get paid for a couple of hours per week. I really hope the volcano will stop very soon, and life can get back to normal*”. While being regarded as a common Social worker among the Danish women, I also gained trust from the Greenlandic woman. She looked upon me as someone she could trust. I listened to her when she shared her frustrations. Unlike the Danish representatives, who was work–visiting for three days, I was doing a three months fieldwork and was kind of “*an enthusiastic listener*”¹⁷. The different aspects of my role repertoires communicated both with the Greenlandic and the Danish. Both the Greenlanders and the Danish regarded me as part of their “we- group”, they both seemed to trust me and shared information.

One evening I was invited to a dinner party to a Greenlandic woman who worked at the NGO with a different project. The Danish representatives were coming as well, while the Coordinators had different plans. I noticed the Greenlandic woman lived in a very nice area, it was surrounded by big wooden-houses and the ocean view was spectacular. On arrival at the

¹⁷ “Du var påtrengende lyttende” - My supervisor Trond Waage’s comment during supervision in May 2011.

house, there was another woman present as well. She was a Danish researcher and knew the NGO very well it seemed, and apparently she had written many articles were some was available at the office. The hostess made a filling meal consisting of halibut and spinach for a starter, salmon with pasta, corn and cheese, vegetables and meatballs as the main dish. After dinner, we had coffee and cake in the living room with a nice view facing the sea. While sipping our coffee from China porcelain, the researcher told us stories about her research among children in Denmark. She had found that the most well functioning children in Denmark were children where both parents were Danish, second best were the ones coming from homes where one parent was Danish and one Greenlandic, and the worst was the children coming from a family with Greenlandic parents. Again I had this same feeling I had felt a few times before the same week. We were sitting in a Greenlandic home, after having had a lovely meal and what was this Danish researcher doing? She was as a guest in Greenlandic home, talking about the “worst-situated” Greenlanders in contrast to the successful Danes. It did not even strike her that this was impolite. After having listened to her for a while I asked her “What kind of questions do you ask the families, I am just curious since you find that the Greenlandic families are the worst situated families out of the categories you have mentioned? Have you had someone from Greenland check your questions – can it be that some of the questions are more known for the Danish families?” The researcher looked at me and I felt that there was a tension between us. The woman who hosted us, supported me after some seconds of silence and repeated my last question – yes, what kind of questions is it, do the Greenlanders interpret them like the Danes?” When writing this in my thesis, I am aware of the fact that this is my interpretation. By now I was gradually understanding that this was important for my fieldwork, because not only did I get more information about how the Danish looked upon the Greenlanders, but also that my position as a “neutral Visual Cultural studies student” started to fade a bit, and I would find myself in a position where I would take side so to speak. It felt for a second as if it was the Greenlanders and I “against” the Danes. Since the researcher did not like my question, I did not ask her any more questions, but kept listening to her stories.

A couple of days later, when the volcano outburst had dropped and the Danish NGO representatives and the researcher had gone home, I went by the office where the Greenlandic host of that evening worked with a project for children. She was a Greenlandic Health worker who had been working in Nuuk for more than 20 years before she started to work for the NGO. She offered me a cup of coffee. While drinking our coffee she said to me that she

thought it was clever and daring of me to ask the researcher the questions I did. She had reacted to them as well, and had tried to support me, she said. She said she also understood from the reaction I got on my questions that I left it there and stopped asking. Cohen writes that identity is constructed in relation to others, and is made relevant in social relations. The relations are not static, but a dynamic and variable phenomena. According to Barth, some cultural elements work as border markers, how groups border to another group, while at the same time express belonging to a certain one (Barth in Cohen 1982). It was obvious that the Danish and the Greenlandic participants categorized each other emphasising on their differences. With the help of Rudie (1994), I also understand that it was my interaction, which helped me to make the process continue.

4.3 Who is in Control?

Ulriksen, a Master student in Social Anthropology from the University of Tromsø 2009 writes that while he was doing field work in Nuuk he experienced that his gatekeepers gave him full freedom (Ulriksen 2010:26). Unlike Ulriksen I experienced that my gatekeeper wanted to control me. As mentioned in my introduction, the NGO recommended that I tried to follow the mentors in the project, and not the youth. Before arrival in Nuuk, I had written an information letter about my project and me. On arrival I understood that the letter was not shared with the youth in the project, but only with the mentors. Barbash-Taylor writes that it is not uncommon that gatekeeper's try to influence and control what one is capturing on tape (Barbash & Taylor 1997). My film material was "looked into" from the NGO. Early in the process I was told that the youth in the project would be speaking only Greenlandic in my film, and not Danish. When I asked the reason for this, and what would happen if some of the youths spoke Danish, my NGO contact person told me it was because they was concerned for negative reactions in Greenland if the Greenlandic youth spoke Danish in a film they supported.

My informants would in general describe themselves as *Kalaallit* – meaning Greenlanders in Greenlandic. The youths I am soon about to present, referred to themselves as "*Nuummioq* ", meaning I am coming from Nuuk, or *Nuumminngaanniit* – plural". *Nuummiut* means we are coming from Nuuk".

During the film workshop I discovered that living in Nuuk and coming from Nuuk was two different things. One evening in the NGO office, while looking at their soon to be finished

film “A good day in Nuuk” I noticed over the boys shoulders that there was one of the boys who found the other boy’s presentation very amusing. They showed it by repeatedly run the mouse over the shot where he introduces himself. I wondered what this was all about, and thought to myself that they were making fun of him. If so, I felt like I had to both prevent and react on it. The boy in question was also present. He was laying on a sofa in the office, mostly listening to music on his iPod. I pulled my self together and asked the boys behind the computer a bit firmly why they repeatedly kept looking at this particular shot. One of the boys looked up and said *“He is from another part of Greenland, from the north – he speaks differently from us, and it is really cool to listen to”*. *I am from Nuuk, in Greenlandic we says Nummioq, did you know that?”* The boy at the sofa made a small grin. On the wall behind the computer, there was a big map of Greenland and my comment that evening made the boys gather around the map. The same evening they continued to use the map to show me where family members lived and where they might be travelling to attend further education.

4.4 A good day in Nuuk

When planning my fieldwork I was inspired by a film made by a previous student at Visual Cultural studies, using participatory video as a method to get to know her informants. I thought this could be a good way of gaining access to my informants and to build trust. The Lunch brothers define participatory video as *“a set of techniques to involve a group or community in shaping their own film. The idea behind this is (...) to explore issues, voice concerns or simply to be creative and tell stories”* (Lunch 2006:10). I was also lucky to borrow material and get inspiration from my professors at Visual Cultural studies concerning the method film workshop, since they had both knowledge and experience within the field. I was hoping this would help me to provide thick descriptions and experience near knowledge together with my informants. Waage (2007: 176) writes that thick descriptions is helpful in cross-cultural communication, and he defines thick description as *“A description of an (or series of) action/event with its actors and arenas, described in its context in such a way that the action itself is understood cross-culturally”*. From an ethical point of view, I also thought it would give my informants an opportunity to present themselves in front of and behind the camera, instead of only being presented by me. I also felt it would be reciprocal, that I could give something back to the youths participating, by giving them advices in how to film and edit a movie.

10 youths from the project signed up for the film workshop. I kept the workshop in the NGO office. As an introduction, I invited the youths to watch films made by Norwegian youths. I thought this was a good idea, so the youths could see films made by persons that belong to their own peer group, and also to get some ideas how to make a film. 5 girls and 5 boys arrived almost on time, and a mentor was present to help with translation. In advance, I had noticed that the mentor and the Coordinators spoke about one boy in particular, when they had looked at my list. Apparently he spoke very well English and was a very clever student. This information made me rely on him and he would help out with translation throughout the workshop. During the screening, I felt optimistic, as the youths seemed to enjoy both the bakery I had made and the short films I screened. The youths gave me feedback that they enjoyed the films, except from one made by a Norwegian girl. “We cannot see her, a couple of the boys said.” “It looks like a music video” one of the girls said. A couple of the boys also asked about the other language besides Norwegian they had noticed in one of the films, and expressed “Ah-ha” when I told them the boy spoke Sami. Some other youths commented that they thought the nature in northern Norway looked kind of similar to the Greenlandic landscape. The youths divided into a boy and a girl group for their film workshop, and the boys started the following weekend. This is how I got to know the boys seen in my film.

Due to the length of my thesis I have decided to leave out the story about the girl’s workshop and film “Our first movie” in my thesis. The reason for this is that the situations and the social relations I met them in was of little relevance concerning the topic nature and identity.

While the Master student I have referred to earlier, Ulriksen (2010) spoke Norwegian with a Danish accent without any problem, that did not work for me among the youths. In the beginning I tried to speak Norwegian with some Danish words. They did not seem to understand me, and when the boys spoke English to me, I decided to speak English as well. To say that the boys *spoke English* is a bit exaggerated. Heikki and Kuluk spoke some English, Heikki spoke well and became my translator. He early referred to me as someone who taught them English. He would say to me and to the Coordinators in the youth project: “Tove, she teaches us English”. Heikki and Kuluk would also say: “We learn more English from you than we do in school”.

I experienced though, that older people, approximately people at the age of 30 or so, would question why I spoke English and not Norwegian to them. They seemed surprised and said I

could speak Norwegian, and they would speak Danish to me. I also experienced that Norwegian without any Danish accent worked fine with a girl I will present later on. While speaking with people at different ages, I found that among the youths that the Greenlandic language is an important marker of identity for looking at oneself as Greenlandic. The reason I noticed this, was because, like Rudie (1994) claims, I was a catalyst when speaking English in the meetings with the Greenlandic people. In the film it is also present that the Kuluk uses the language as a way of differentiating himself from the Danes. “I just pretend I do not know how to speak Danish”. Being asked, he says he prefer to speak English.

4.4.1 From Nintendo to hunting

During the making of the film “A good day in Nuuk”, the boys shared lots of information concerning Greenland with me, and by keeping the workshop I was introduced to their daily activities. The making of the film took approximately 3-½ week from the beginning till the film was done. We met up at the NGO’s office. As seen in the film, I have included some scenes from the workshop and two minutes of their film “A good day in Nuuk” in my exam film. The reason why I have done this is to show how the boys interpret how a good day in Nuuk appears from their point of view. The most time consuming process during the workshop was editing their film. I had 4 cameras and one computer with me. Trying out editing, the boys alternated in front of the computer. Most of the time though, as seen in the film, the boys were all sitting or standing together in front of the computer, drinking coffee, discussing how to edit and trying things out. While they were in front of the computer, I was often behind the camera filming or I would help them out with Imovie, the editing program we used. In the film, in the preparation, one can see that there are some of the boys that taking on a more active role than the others. Heikki, who is the most outspoken in the scene in general, took a very active part in the making of the film, from the beginning till the end. The other boys also relied on him when they had doubts how to do things. If he did not know, he would ask me. When planning what to film, the boys’ first choice of activity was to go sailing. “*So the Norwegians can se how good sailors we are*”, Kuluk said. It shows that with reference to Cohen (1982), activities like sailing can be seen as a subsistence skill of importance when it comes to the boys’ sense of belonging. It is also important for the boys, because they are proud of their skills and want to show others that they are good at it. The boys called around to ask if they could find someone with a boat who could join them. I asked if they normally went sailing with their dads. “Since it is mid April and still rough sea and ice left in the fjord we need help from and adult to sail”, the boys said. I was later going to learn

that from June or mid June, depending on the ice, Peter and Kuluk would go sailing on a daily basis if the weather allowed it, with friends and family members. Since the boys did not find anyone who could help them with a boat this day, their second activity was to go to Hans and play a videogame called JUON on Nintendo Wii. “It is a scary game”, they told me. This can also be seen in the film, where Peter first emphasize the fact that they are not old enough to play the game. While playing he claps his hands to scare the other ones with success. The boys were very entertained by this scene, they laughed every time they looked at it. I learned that Peter, who did not speak English, and who with me would be more silent, in his own language he is outspoken and humorous. He would be very playful and come up with lots of jokes. He was also a good photographer, experimenting with photos. When I was filming them on the mountain “Store Malene” he took a photo of me, the very same photo that is included in the film.

In the film the boys are playing the aforementioned Nintendo game that youth all over the world is playing. It can seem far from the activities the boy’s grandparents were doing, hunting and fishing. Through our breaks from the film, when we for example had something to eat, and sat around the table in the office, small-talking about what the boys had done lately, the boys started to tell me what they did in their spare time. I learned that Peter, Kuluk and Heikki were active hunters, both at land and sea. They mostly hunted for *tutu* (reindeer) and *puiseq* (seal). They all preferred hunting for *tutu*, and told me that it is more difficult to hunt for *puiseq*. The boys told me that the area south of Nuuk is a great territory for hunting *tutu*. Kuluk and Heikki said that Peter had shot his first *tutu* at a very early age. Peter smiled when they translated what they had said. They told me about hunting, together with their dads. Kuluk said his father could spot a *tutu* on a very long distance in the rocky areas. “*It is not easy to spot a tutu, it hides well in the rocky environment*” He continued and said his father shot better than him, laughed and said: “*but I run faster than him, and can easier follow the tutu*”. “*I have 15 guns at home*”, Kuluk said with a smile. From here they showed me websites with guns, explaining what gun you needed to shoot what animal. I asked if they hunted for musk as well? “No, they said. To hunt for musk’, one have to go further north, to Kangerlussuaq”, and showed me the area on the map. It was an area about 1 hour by plane from Nuuk. Around the same table, Heikki told me that Peter was planning to move to the north of Greenland, to attend a “*Fanger*”¹⁸ school. Kuluk commented that Peter would earn

¹⁸ A “*Fanger*” means a person that hunts both at sea, ice and land (www.iceberg.dk)

quite a lot of money being a “*Fanger*”. “He will get 300 kroner for a *poise* skin”, Kuluk said. Both Heikki and Kuluk seemed to be impressed by Peters plan, looking at him with admiration. Heikki said: “My father was a “*Fanger*” in the north, in Sisimiut, before he got married. He had his own sledge dogs”, Heikki said, “he used to be a good “*Fanger*”, my dad”. During the film workshop with the boys, Kuluk told me about a trip they had had with the youth project, staying over night in a cabin. He asked Heikki to continue to tell the story, he could not find the English words. Heikki said the youth wanted to bring their rifles, because that is a normal thing for Greenlanders when they go for a boat trip. Heikki said the Danish representatives in the NGO had not allowed them to bring guns on this particular trip. The boys laughed a little after Heikki said that. I later on heard the same story from a mentor in the youth project. She told me she was very surprised that they were not allowed to bring guns, and said it was part of the Greenlandic culture to do so when going for a trip in the nature. She followed up by saying to me that it was a fellow Greenlandic who had given the final refusal to bring guns. Then she said: “This is someone who has become very Danish and has not been home for a while”. Later, back in Tromsø I asked a Greenlandic friend concerning the issue of “being Greenlandic–becoming Danish”. Her reaction to this was that it is very common among Greenlanders to refer to fellow Greenlanders’ as “that person is more Danish, if for example someone has lived abroad for a long time”.

By the help of Mary Douglas (1997), who claims that in every society, there is a differentiation between categories regarded as “inside” and attached to, and what is “outside” and unfamiliar, I will look into the episode with the guns. Douglas differentiate between the “clean” and “the polluted”. The “clean” is what is inside ones own category, while the “polluted” on the other hand flows across borders. The polluted is what does not fit in the cultural pattern, and needs to be reshaped or eliminated (Douglas 1997: 137). What is polluted is referred to as “matter out of place”. The guns can be seen as a symbol of something dangerous and violent from the Danish NGO point of view, it is regarded as “pollution”, and therefore it cannot be allowed on a trip with youths. In the eyes of the Danish NGO it is “matter out of place” when their youth project is heading out in the nature. On the other hand, for the Greenlanders a gun is referred to as “clean” when they enter nature. From their point of view guns are handy and a tool for gathering food. The prohibition from the Danish NGO becomes therefore a “matter out of place”.

The empirical examples shows how nature is an important part of the Greenlandic boys identity, but it also show that the Danish presence is of importance in how they regard themselves as Greenlandic.



Hans had different interests than the other boys. He was more into videogames and making small films. While the other boys said they were into hunting and other out-door activities, he was very interested in ghosts; stories, films and looking at pages on the Internet related to ghosts. “There are many ghosts here in Greenland, he said, while showing me a photo of a fellow classmate on his cell phone. Behind the classmate’s right shoulder, I could see the face of a child. “I shot it at our school”, Hans continued. Hans was one of many Greenlanders I met during my fieldwork that believed in ghosts.

Relation to nature, combined with global trends are important factors in the ways the boys negotiate their identity. Through the film workshop I learned that bikes, clothes, Nintendo are all important marker of identity. In the film this is also visible through Kuluk’s way of presenting himself while jumping down from the basketball roof: “*My name is Johnny Knoxville, welcome to Jackass¹⁹*”. During the film workshop, the boys would also introduce me to Greenlandic myths. Kuluk and Heikki were in particular interested in myths in relation to *nature*. This shows how nature is an important part of shaping their identity, yet another example how Cohen refers to subsistence skills and ecology.

¹⁹ *Jackass* is an American stunt and prank show, originally shown on MTV from 2000 to 2002, featuring people performing various dangerous, crude, ridiculous, and self-injuring stunts and pranks. Johnny Knoxville is the front figure in the show. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackass_%28TV_series%29)

4.4.2 A *Qivittoq*²⁰

At the very first evening in the film workshop, Kuluk asked me: “Have you heard about *Qivittoq*?”. I said no, I haven’t. *Qivittoq* was the first Greenlandic word Kuluk taught me. I still looked at him, probably looked like a big question mark. He explained: “A *Qivittoq* is a man who walks off to nature and choose to disappear from the community he lives in. There can be many reasons why he decides to leave his society, some also disappears to commit suicide”, Kuluk told me. He continued: “A *Qivittoq* is stronger than any man and faster than a “*tutu*”. He is considered dangerous, and if the police catch him, he will be sent to “Riget”, Rikshospitalet in Copenhagen – and hospitalised for psychiatric difficulties. If this happens, he is never allowed to return to Greenland”. Heikki continued: “One of the last *Qivittoqs* that was sent away from Greenland to Denmark, told the media that: “There are more *Qivittoqs* than men in Greenland”. Kuluk continued: “this means that it is more than 57 000 *Qivittoq* walking around in the nature here”. The boys did not say anything for some minutes before Heikki broke the silence: “I have seen a *Qivittoq*, I saw him when I was out hunting with my father some years ago”. I asked him: ”How do you know it was a *Qivittoq*, could it not just have been a regular man you saw?” Heikki just looked at me and said: “I saw it on his clothes – he had very old, ripped out clothes. And he moved very fast when he saw us. I saw him on Norrlandet²¹”. Norrlandet is a long island in the Godt Haab fjord that surround Nuuk city from the ocean on the northwest side (<http://sermitsiaq.ag/node/70664>).

Through the work with the boys, I gained a good understanding of how nature plays an important part in everyday life. For Kuluk, Heikki and Peter, doing activities outdoor, like hunting and sailing, seem to be an important part of how the boys express belonging. But also stories like above, about men leaving the society to live in the nature, seemed of importance for the boys. For Hans it was more about games, ghosts and Internet. During the film workshop and the youth project I would also understand that part of their identity negotiation was about the boys categorizing themselves being different from the Danish, and about a resistance against old presumptions about Greenlanders. The boys would also use skills in relation to nature to differentiate themselves from the Danes.

²⁰ *Qivittoq* means “a mountain walker”. According to the legends you can become a *qivittoq* if you out of shame, anger or jealousy leave the society you belong to and walk off and leave for the mountains to live on your own (www.wikipedia.com).

²¹ Summer 2009 there was an article in Greenland’s biggest newspaper ”Sermitsiaq” about a woman who was assaulted and attempted abducted by someone thought to be a *qivittoq* (<http://sermitsiaq.gl/kriminal/article95403.ece>).

4.5 Different ways of seeing

In the film, there is a scene from a youth project meeting, where the activity is to learn self-presentation to prepare for the coming oral exams. A Danish woman is holding the course and I am filming. I noticed that especially one of the boys was laughing and smiling a lot during this event, while listening to the woman. I noticed he was looking in the direction of the other youths and making faces, but I did not know what he said because he spoke Greenlandic. I was curious about what he talked about. While in Nuuk, a woman was translating some of my tapes, and when I read through it, I realized that the boys spoke about how they looked upon themselves different to the Danish. The boy was talking about how he “does not understand why the woman presents it the way she does, and continues to say that: “the Danish are a bit old-fashioned and far out”. He continues: “*The funny thing is that they cannot even run without special shoes, while the Greenlander’s we can run without any fancy equipment and we run much faster*”. The boys referring to their skills and ideas in relation to nature signalizes belonging to Greenland, but is also a way of categorizing themselves as different from the Danes. Like Batesons “hard programmed ideas” (Bateson in Rudie 1984: 16). The boys way of talking about the Danes in Nuuk’ outfit and lack of skills while walking and running in rocks, is often expressed and become a stereotypical way to look upon the Danes skills in the nature among the Greenlandic I met.

4.5.1 Different eyes see things differently

The exam-presentation scene has been highly discussed with my translators. In the scene, the Danish woman is lecturing in how the youths should present themselves in various ways and uses two of the boys as clay figures to show how a “proper” body language is supposed to be during a presentation. In addition to the one translator I met in Nuuk, three Greenlanders helped me to translate while in Tromsø. Especially one of my translators reacted to and interpreted the scene very strongly. “Tove, I get a physical reaction when I look at this scene, I feel sick, it is so typical the Danish, this is a strong scene”. I looked at the same material and told her I did not see what she saw, and asked her to explain it to me. She told me it reminded her of her upbringing in Greenland and her period as a student in Denmark. She went to a Danish taught-class, with Danish teachers’. Remembering that her fellow Greenlandic classmates and she would be categorised as shy, while the Danish pupils was more outspoken and referred to as the “exemplary” pupil. While studying in Copenhagen, she was on a daily basis confronted by various Danes that they were surprised that “she, as a Greenlandic person,

could study at the University”. People would tell her that “Are you not just supposed to be a drunk Greenlander – Do you want a beer?” As my historic chapter has shown, this can be a perception held by the Danes. This is pointed out by Rosing Olsen (2005) as an effect of the modernisation process in Greenland. To my translator, she feels the scene in the classroom shows how the Danes look upon the Greenlanders; “as shy, not so outspoken and open-minded”, and that compared to the Danish they are more “stupid and simple people”. I had no idea the scene would awaken such emotional reactions. Film is so to speak a strong medium, and can be interpreted in various ways’. It all depends on the person who is looking. After finishing my exam film in late March I sent it off to Denmark to the Danish NGO. Their feedback was that the film was okay and that the scene they liked the most was this particular scene. When I asked the reason why, they said “the youths’ are learning something important in this scene, something they can make use of in school”. Going through my tapes and translation though, I found that the boys did not seem to learn anything in particular from this scene, “to use in school” as the Danish NGO put it. What they seem to “learn”, by participating in the activity, was by referring to Cohen, that they become more certain of their “We group” and that they regard the Danes as “the Other”. The scene also shows how films can bring up new understandings, and understanding and interpretation that would have been difficult to convey by a written text.

In Denmark, there is an expression called “*grønlænder stiv*”. The expression refers to a very drunk person. There is also a game on the Internet with the name “Stiv groenlaender²²” portraying a Greenlandic person with a bottle in his hand. Referring to Bateson (in Rudie 1984: 16), I see this expression “*grønlænder stiv*” as an idea that has been confirmed so many times, in various situations, even in an Internet game, that it becomes a “hard programmed idea”, and a point of reference for the Danes when it comes to looking upon the Greenlanders as someone who drinks heavily.

What my film professor found most interesting with this particular scene, when discussing the various interpretations I got from Greenlanders, classmates and professors, was something I did not notice at first. The Danish woman had picked the boy who looked the most Greenlandic to play the shy boy, while the open boy, looked more Danish.

²²http://www.netspil.dk/spil_270.html

In general, the presentation the woman gave functions as a catalysts, the scene has provoked a number of comments and interpretations depending on the various viewers.

4.5.2 The Danes drink more than us

One evening, while editing, Kuluk told me he looked forward to a party the boys and their classmates would attend in the beginning of June, when they had finished all their written exams, before starting on the oral ones. “*We will stay up all night*”, smiling his usual wide and satisfied smile, “*We will knock on the teachers houses and wake them up*” “*...And we will drink some beer*”. I was very curious about this matter. Did they drink alcohol and how often did they drink? “It is fun for New Years Eve and special parties” he said when I asked. Kuluk was a boy who oftentimes illustrated with his whole body when talking. Now he showed with his body language that he was at a party, raising his hands and pretending he had a bottle of beer in his hand and drank it, before he laughed. Peter would come up with the same stories, all in Greenlandic, so I did not understand. I dared to ask them how old they had been when tasting alcohol for the first time. Peter told me his age and seemed a bit proud of the fact that he had tasted alcohol at an early age. Heikki told me he did not drink. “I am serious with Judo, I do not want to mess up my body”. He told me his father told him to go and party with his friends, but that he had not felt like drinking yet. He assumed he would drink one day, but had no hurry starting. After Heikki had said this, Kuluk said: “I do not drink too often”, focusing on the word too,” mostly for big parties”. I believed what the boys told me concerning their views about alcohol.

Kuluk told me that in a free magazine for youths in Greenland, called *Inuk*, the spring 2010 issue, there was published a research about alcohol and European youth. The research²³ showed that at the age of 15 the Danish youth have been drunk more times than the Greenlandic youths. One way of understanding this, is that Kuluk seem to be aware of the fact that compared to Danes, the hard programmed idea is that the Greenlandic people drink more. It was therefore important to him to refer to a new study, that shows that Danish youths’ have been drunk more times than Greenlandic youth. It could have been a way of communicating that his own drinking is not a big deal, but something that is normal for young people at his age.

²³ In *Inuk*, Inuusuttunut Atuagassiaq – Ungdomsmagasinet Spring 2010, www.ung-bladet.dk

4.5.3 *Tupilak*²⁴ Old songs still relevant today

When talking about what song to use in their film “A good day in Nuuk” the boys early on mentioned that they wanted to bring in a song called “*Tupilak*” by a Greenlandic band called Mariina. Peter had it on his player, and the boys played it out loud to me while looking at me, as in “what do you think of the song” where I replied that: “I really like the song, it sounds very powerful”. Heikki said it was an old song, and tried to translate to me: “*When the foreigners came to Greenland in the old days, they were met in a friendly way by the Greenlanders. But the newcomers soon started to exploit the Greenlanders in different ways. The Greenlanders reaction to the exploitation, was by the use of a tupilak put a spell on the foreigners, with the intention of harming them*”. 8 seconds of the song can be heard in the scene where the boys enter the bus and the bus drive away towards Hans’ house. One evening when editing, I asked Heikki and Kuluk about their opinion on still being dependent of Denmark despite Self Rule. It was only Heikki, Kuluk and Peter present. Heikki translated to the others. Two of the boys said they wanted Denmark to leave Greenland, while Kuluk said he did not know really. “My mum says it is good like it is.” On behalf of Peter Heikki translated Peter’s opinion: “*We are better without the Danish*”.

Greenlandic anthropologist Aviâja Egede Lyngé writes in “*The Best Colony in the World*”, that Greenlanders are brought up to believe, both through stories and from Danish literature, that Greenland was the “best colony in the world”, meaning the relationship between Greenlanders and Danes were characterised by friendliness and that the Danish first of all wanted to help the “needy” Greenlanders (www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org/files/pdf/ACT2/.../Lyngé.pdf).

To illuminate the way the Greenlanders and the Danish I met look upon each other, I find Anthony Cohen’s concept of community useful. Cohen does not understand “community” in the way one traditionally thinks about this concept. It can also be looked upon as a symbolic community, which is not necessarily related to a physical location – a place.

²⁴ *Tupilak*: "The history of the tupilak goes back 5,000 years. The tupilak proper was a magically created troll animal, which the Greenlanders manufactured out of the bones of children or various animals. The tupilak was made at a lonely well-concealed spot, the individual bones being put in place by the thumb and little finger only. If other fingers were used, the attempt would be a failure. Earth or seaweed was used for the musculature. The whole thing was wrapped in a piece of old skin and life was given to it by the singing of a magic song. The creator had no need to be a shaman, as tupilak magic came more under witchcraft and consequently anyone skilled in the latter could make a tupilak provided he adhered to the proper procedure. The purpose of the tupilak was to be rid of an enemy, and the tupilak attacked in the form of the animal it represented. If it was a seal, it would drag down the hunter and drown him. As a polar bear, it would eat the enemy (<http://www.inuitartzone.com/en/gallery/c21/tupilak.html>).

According to Cohen, influenced by Barth, the important thing is to highlight the *border* (Cohen 1989:12). Sejersen (in Dahl 1999: 126-131) writes that when the Greenlandic revitalization process arose, and the Greenlanders wanted to be looked upon as one nation and one people, instead of being regarded as a minority and a population in Denmark, many Danish regarded the suggestion as irresponsible. According to Sejersen (1999) most Danish shared the common view that the more interaction between the two groups, the more similar they would become. Like other indigenous people, the countries colonial history made the Greenlandic people aware of their background and rights, meaning a revitalization process arose (Sejersen in Dahl 1999: 126-131). One of Barth's main points is that interaction between different ethnic groups does not necessarily mean that the differences disappear, or that one of the groups is assimilated into the other.

“By definition, the boundary marks the beginning and the end of a community. But why is such marking necessary? The simple answer is that the boundary encapsulates the identity of the community and, like the identity of an individual, is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction. Boundaries, are marked because communities interact in some way or other with entities from which they are, or wish to be, distinguished (see Barth, 1969)” (Barth in Cohen 1989:12).

In the period from 1953 to Home Rule in 1979 the Greenlanders followed Danish laws and rules and was a county within Denmark. The period is recognised as an assimilation process (Rosing Olsen 2005) but the cultural differences did not disappear. As I have shown in my examples, the way the Greenlanders perceive the Danish “Other”, is an important aspect in how they strengthen their Greenlandic “We”. There are many ways of marking these boundaries between them and us, for the Greenlanders belonging to nature seem to be one of them, but as my empirical examples show, it is also expressed in music, outfits etc.

4.5.4 The new houses of Greenland

Besides Hans, the boys were born in Nuuk and have lived there their entire life. In the workshop, one of the questions the boys asked me was where I lived in Nuuk. Kuluk told me that he lived in one of the newest and tallest apartment building in town with his siblings and parents. *“We have two floors’ and my dad has his office in the first floor of the apartment building”*, he continued. Peter did not speak any English, but would often ask the other boys to translate for him. He said he lived in one of the old apartment buildings down town, known

as the “*blocker*” in Nuuk, with his parents and older brothers. Heikki and Hans lived in the suburbs of town.

During my fieldwork, the boys were about to finish 10th grade and had therefore many final exams, both written and oral ones. I learned that for Kuluk and Heikki in particular, it was important to do well in school. After we had finished the workshop they would come by the office for a coffee and some nuts, and told me about their subjects and exam results. Peter would come by as well, and as seen in the film, often a couple of other boys, but they would never talk about their grades if I did not ask them specifically. Oftentimes I did not have to ask, because both Kuluk and Heikki were happily sharing the other boys’ result with me. On one occasion Kuluk was smiling even more than usual, happy to share his grade in nature science, because he had beat Heikki, who in general get good grades in all subjects. Kuluk and Heikki told me they had the same dream for their future educational plan. They planned to become architects and build the future houses of Greenland. Kuluk said he had no wish to go to Denmark to learn Danish better, like many Greenlandic students do after 10th grade. “*My grades are good enough*” – he told me. Towards the end of my stay, he told me he had got into the Gymnasium in Nuuk.

From this information I learned that many 10th graders in Greenland go to Denmark to “Efterschool”²⁵ for a year, to learn enough Danish to be able to continue higher education, because the books in Upper Secondary are still mainly in Danish. Heikki and Kuluk said they could study to become architects in Greenland, in Sisimuit. Kuluk’s father was a crafts man. “We need new houses in Nuuk all the time” Kuluk said, “ That’s why I want to become an architect”. I was curious to know whether the youth project had any influences on the boys’ choice in relation to their future education, since that was the main goal of the youth project. I asked the boys about the youth project and if they had spoken to the mentors about education. Since the boys seemed to not understand my question, I asked again. The boys then answered that the youth project was about doing activities like trips and rock climbing. They were not familiar with homework help from the mentors. Both Kuluk, Heikki and Peter were very clear about the fact that their future plan was to stay and live in Greenland, and repeatedly

²⁵ Efterskole is a school offer for teenagers between the age for 14-18. The aim is to strengthen children’s knowledge in Danish language and to get an insight in Danish culture. It is supported financially and political by the Greenlandic Self Rule. From 2008 there is also four Efterskole’ in Greenland (<http://efterskole.dk/Om%20efterskolen/Gr%C3%B8nlandske%20elever%20p%C3%A5%20efterskole.aspx>).

expressed that: “Greenland is the best country in the world”. The “*fanger*” education Peter hoped to attend is a fairly new education, through which the Greenlandic government has arranged to secure continuity and revitalize Greenland’s traditional way of living by teaching students old, traditional skills. By becoming architects, we can say that Kuluk and Heikki want to be part of transforming and create the landscape, while Peter, determined to become a “*fanger*”, wants to manage and maintain the landscape by being skilled in a traditional Greenlandic way of living.

4.6 From warm hugs to a cold shoulder

In “Kapluna’s Daughter”, Jean Briggs writes how her relation to her informants was in a constant development while she was in the field. Among Inuits in Alaska, she reflects upon being accepted or not, and the mistakes you do as a researcher. She writes that: “One may be differently accepted in different situations and by different people” (Briggs 1970: 24). She herself did not understand that due to her “wrong” behaviour in the field, for example showing her informants that she was openly angry, it made her loose the position she had in the beginning of her field work (Briggs 1970). Davies also points out that as a researcher, the position in the field is not a constant but a dynamic process (Davies 2008). Similarly, I experienced that the relationship to my informants developed and changed. When finishing the film the access to follow the boys was reduced drastically, it was a limited project. At the same time I saw that the youth project was about to fall apart because the Coordinators cancelled the meetings many weeks in a row. They stopped informing the mentors, the youths’ and me what was going on and when, where and if we were going to meet. The fact that they did not return my phone calls or answer my text messages made me feel like a failed field worker. Many evenings I asked myself what I had done wrong? I thought we had communicated well, and I felt it was fun to be with the Coordinators; not only did I learn a lot about Greenland, I also enjoyed our conversations over a cup of coffee. They seemed to have enjoyed my company as well, for example did they notice I had taken lots of photos in Nuuk and they asked me for copies. Did they avoid me because I was a constant reminder of the fact that they did not do their job – knowing they got paid from the Danish NGO? I found myself in a new position, again. From warm hugs and lovely coffee “dates” I was ignored and got a cold shoulder and I had no clue why. The reason why I was frustrated was that the project I followed did not work’ and while in Nuuk I felt at this point that I did not have enough empirical data for my research.

I noticed after some weeks that I was not the only one who was disappointed and frustrated about the project. I would occasionally run into a couple of the mentors while on my way to the library or while shopping downtown. When I saw them, I would ask if they knew when we were going to meet in the project. The mentors said they did not know and that I had to ask the Coordinators. I guess they could look at my facial reaction that I was not happy with their answer, and they expressed that they were not happy about the situation either. While following the youth project I had only seen in total four mentors, and did not understand how they functioned as role models in relation to education. When I asked the mentors if it was correct that they helped the youths with homework, they said no. Like the boys, the mentors talked about the activities they had done, the trips and the rock climbing. I had thought the project was suitable for the purpose; A mentor, a role model could carry on his or her success, by sharing the competence to help the youths. To support them and make it easier for them, to actively choose their future education. It had looked nice on paper, when I had read about it. But I did not see it working in praxis.

In relation to the boys, I was also frustrated and tore my hair. I had thought the film workshop would help me getting to know the youths well. I made new plans every evening for how to get them interested in letting me follow them in their daily activities on a regular basis. I would invite them to the office to borrow the cameras to make more films, but they were not interested. I would even send the boys text messages asking if I could meet them somewhere, suggesting places I could join in, on where I knew they would hang out. For a while, I asked myself what had I been thinking of, when preparing for my project. How on earth could a woman at the age of forty believe that she would get to know teenage-boys and be able to follow them close with a video camera? As aforementioned the boys would come by the office and talk to me about school. On these occasions I asked them if we could meet up and if I could film them in their activities? The boys said yes while in the office, but they did not seem to mean it. For example I would meet up outside a sports club a few times, only to find out that there was no one there but me. I also asked the mentors I met if they thought I had done something wrong. “No”, they said, “you have not done anything wrong. They are just probably shy or have other things they want to do more”. Shy? I disagreed, I never looked upon the boys as particularly shy, because they had already shared a lot of information with me while we were working with their film. What should I do? Should I go home?

What I did not realize at the time was that the boys wanted to be in charge in what activities and where the camera and I was allowed to join in. I was not the one to set the agenda, they were. They did not want me to film them or me interacting in general when hanging out with friends at for example Chili Take Away²⁶ downtown or letting me visit them at their homes, but they could invite me to join them on hikes and boat trips, activities they initiated. They invited me to join in on activities in the nature, where they controlled the situation. I see this as an indicator of how secure they felt in nature – secure enough to invite in a “stranger” to film them. Although I did not fully realize at first, the boys had conveyed a lot of information to me through our interaction. They had confirmed my initial idea that nature was an important part of their identity. The workshop also opened up my mind to the role of Danish influence and relations, sometimes very subtle and sometimes very articulate. This pointed me in another direction, where this element became even more clear.

4.7 Part 2: New opportunities

Before I went to Greenland I was told that it would be difficult to get a place to live in Nuuk. I was lucky and got to stay with a local woman, a widow, who lived alone with her dog, Avva²⁷. Her name was Kristine. Through our daily activities cooking, walks etc I would discover that she had strong opinions concerning Greenland’s relationship to Denmark. During dinnertime she would everyday listen to the radio in Greenlandic, and comment on the political situation. Early in my fieldwork she claimed that every Dane living in Greenland need to learn Greenlandic. *“After all Tove”, she said, “This is what Denmark expects from their immigrants”. “It should not be any different here”.*

I would tell her that the boys I met at the film workshop enjoyed hunting and sailing. She would then tell me stories about her husband, what a great *“tutu”* – hunter he had been, and how bad he had been at hunting *“puiseq”*. I actively used comparison as a method. Various pieces of information that was given to me from the boys or others, I would ask Kristine about it. She would talk to me about how important sailing is for the Greenlanders. *“One thing with sailing is to get away from the city, Tove”, “and another important thing is that we have to go sailing to pick berries”.* Sailing means both fresh air and collecting food in the nature. I also learned that man and woman have various roles in those activities; She had no idea how to sail the boat they owned, and could not hunt, she had never shot a reindeer, she

²⁶ Chili Take away is a fast food restaurant downtown Nuuk

²⁷ Avva means vov-vov, (childrens language), in Greenlandic

had not parted the deer. Her responsibility was to prepare the food, stating that without her husband she would not have been able to get reindeer and fresh fish in the freezer, or to harvest crowberries and blueberries for the winter.

She was a person I felt a close connection to during my fieldwork. She would look at me with empathy and express anger and despair on my behalf when she saw me coming home from many appointments where she by looking at my face understood that no one or almost no one turned up at the youth project activities. One evening, when I came home and she asked me how many had showed up, and I would say no one – she told me that she thought it was awful that people said yes to participate in something they did not follow up. She knew the Coordinators in the youth project, and told me that a family member of one of them used to be a politician in the political party *Siamut*. “They are only concerned with Greenland and do not think we need the Danish or foreigners here, if they get what they want, I will have to move to Denmark, we need help from Denmark here in Greenland”.

Kristine would occasionally go out for a party with friends at the bars in Nuuk. She would invite me along, but I felt very hesitant about going out. I was afraid that the youth would spot me, since Nuuk is a fairly small town. One Sunday after Kristine had been out with her friends the previous night, she told me she had met a Danish man who had been rude towards her and her friends. All in all, she felt that he was critical because they were Greenlandic. “I told him to go home – “ Kristine said with a smile. “If he is not happy about staying here, he can leave. I am not interested in listening to Danes criticising us Greenlanders”.

Compared to the boys, who were concerned with informing me about all the great things with Greenland and the Greenlandic people, Kristine would pay attention to both positive and negative perspectives in the Greenlandic society. Like the boys, she would express the importance of being in the nature and the resistance towards the Danish presence. At the same time, she stressed the importance of the fact that the Greenlandic society is dependent on Denmark financially. Through my conversations and activities with Kristine, she continuously helped me with interpreting the empirical material I gathered.

4.7.1 As one door closes another opens

Living with a Greenlandic opened up many doors in my fieldwork. Information I learned at “home” by knowing a local with family and a social network in Nuuk, took me further into understanding how nature and the Greenlanders perception of the Danish is of importance. Not only did it help me to understand the Greenlandic society, it also helped me to keep up the work when I was about to loose faith in my fieldwork due to no one allowing or wanting me to participate in their activities. In my home, both using informal conversations and participating in daily activities was a way I got information. The role as an extra member of the family was probably the role that in general gave me most access and this is also how I met Marie’s niece, Esther who is, my main protagonist, and, as one can see, the youth I got the closest relationship to.

Esther is a teenager who lives together with her parents and siblings in a flat in Nuuk. During my stay, she would alternate sleeping at her parent’s house and her aunt’s house.



In various scenes with Esther and me, whether it is the scene where she walks in the nature and talks about how the area has changed due to new roads and pollution, or the scene where she is invited up stage to give the singer Julie Berthelsen a prize when she returns to Nuuk to thank the citizens voting for her during the competition, Esther is the teacher in the social situations and I become the pupil. At the same time, my presence influences Esther and the topics she talks about. While I am filming a duck I have discovered in the fjord, Esther comes up to me and says that “It grows crowberries on this plant”, while showing the crowberry plant to the camera. The scene develops with me following up on her concern for nature, and Esther, when aware of me focusing on the matter, continues to talk about it while she walks

away with the microphone fly on, fully aware that since I wear the earphones I am listening to everything she says while she walks up and down the rocky hill, chatting along about school trips and berries' as seen in the scene.

Throughout the film it becomes clear that Esther and I worked as catalyst's for each other and for what was happening and being said in various scenes. Like Whyte's main character in "Street Corner Society", Doc (Whyte 1993: 301), Esther also became a collaborator in my fieldwork.

4.7.2 You look like a Dane – you look like a Norwegian

One category I was happy to be placed in was "Norwegian". The first question people in Greenland would ask me was: "Are you Danish?" and when I told them I was from Norway, they would smile and some told me they had been to the north of Norway, "I visited a friend in Kautokeino – have you been there?". Others would tell me they had family members living in Norway, and asked me: "Do you know where Gjøvik is? My cousin lives there with his family". Both when I had the camera and not, Greenlandic people would come up to me and start talking, but more frequently when I had the camera with me or was recording. For some reason, I never saw people coming while I was filming, and was both amazed and surprised when people came from "nowhere" up the rocky hills where I was focused on filming beautiful sunsets and asked me "*who are you – what are you filming?*". I also experienced that people would start to chat with me while at the bus stop, children and old. In general I found that Greenlandic people would start a conversation more easily than what I am used to from Norway (even though I have not done fieldwork like this in Norway). People I just meet in the city, in a shop for example, would also comment that they had noticed my face in town.

In Greenland I was referred to as a *qaalluanaaq* – meaning "white" in Greenlandic. It took me a while to understand that that was how the boys referred to foreigners, but I had heard them use the word. I asked Esther about it, and she told me what it means: "It means you are not Greenlandic". Esther would repeatedly say: "Tove, you look like a Norwegian", followed by a small laughter.

In general, my experience was that the Greenlandic people easily opened up and approached me. I did not find them shy, as referred to from the Danish representatives in the NGO.

4.7.3 Yes, please, I would like to have some *mattak*²⁸

Through people I met in the NGO and through Kristine, I got invited to many *kaffimik*²⁹ while in Nuuk. Thanks to Kristine, I was introduced to and learned how to appreciate Greenlandic food at her home. In the *kaffimiks* it seemed that I got credits for both living with a local and enjoying local food. At the *kaffimiks* people told me I was lucky to live with a local so I would be able to taste *mattak* –highly appreciated by Greenlanders I met, and *mattak* was always served at the *kaffimik* before cakes followed by many cups of coffee. When I said I liked *mattak*, people’s first reaction was a bit “Oh – have you tasted it?”, they seemed a bit surprised and asked me again if I really liked it? I experienced in general that Greenlanders would appreciate me tasting their food, and that trying out and eating Greenlandic food helped me to be accepted.

Ulriksen writes that he found it very easy to position himself in the field, and that it was unproblematic (Ulriksen 2010:33). He writes that he explained that he was a student from Norway and that he was in Greenland to learn from the Greenlandic people. I also presented myself as a student who was in Greenland to learn from them, but as I have tried to show in this chapter, I found it more complicated, felt myself negotiating between many positions during my fieldwork. I had some in relation to the NGO and the youth project, another at the film workshop, a different one at my home living with Marie, Avva and Esther, when filming in the city and around, when dog walking and when attending *kaffimiks*. Age was also a matter of concern. Like Ulriksen, I also introduced myself as a student from Norway, but at the same time older or at the same age as the youths’ parents. Both the boys and Esther concluded out loud when they asked about my age and got my answer; “Oh, then you are older than my mum”.

²⁸ *Mattak* is skin from narwhale, a Greenlandic delicatessen.

²⁹ *Kaffimik* is a Greenlandic term for a celebration, often used when inviting to birthdays.



4. 8 A dirty dog

"Giv mig hunde, giv mig sne. Så må I godt beholde resten" (Knud Rasmussen³⁰)

When far away from home in a country where your main informants are at school or at work most of the day, the hours waiting for them can seem long. Therefore it was nice to get to know on arrival that my host Kristine had a dog. While carrying my suitcase up the many stairs to her flat, a black dog ran down the stairs to check me out. Kristine said she had forgot to tell me about Avva in the e-mails and on phone before my arrival in Nuuk. She looked at me with a facial look like: "Will it be a problem?". I ensured her that I care for dogs and dog sit for friends on a regular basis. Avva though, he ignored me and did not look in my direction for the first two days. Luckily, from day three we became friends and joined each other for long walks. Avva was always patient if I spent hours capturing on tape the beautiful nature in my surroundings. It seemed that he appreciated my company as well; he was always waiting at my doorstep in the mornings and putting his paw towards my door a number of times if I slept in. He surely did that to get his second breakfast and a walk about.

Not only became Avva a comfort at home and while walking, but together with the youths and the adults I got to know, he as well helped me to get a better understanding of the Greenlandic society. When walking with him, I noticed for instance the high number of families who kept a dog outside their house. It made me curious about the importance of dogs in Nuuk. Avva was always walking loose but knew whom dogs to avoid. On our walks, various Greenlandic people would come up to me and ask about Avva, both people with a dog themselves and people without. A couple of times, I experienced that men started to tell me

³⁰ <http://www.b.dk/boeger/giv-mig-vinter-og-hunde>

about their past as “*fanger*” with dog sledges in the northern parts of Greenland. One said: “I miss the freedom, but it was hard work and little money. There is more money here in Nuuk”. Through Avva I would also understand the close relationship Esther had to him and to dogs in general, as can be seen in the film.

Dogs play and played an important role in the Greenlandic society. I also see it connected to Greenlandic identity and the Greenlandic people’s sense of belonging. I want to analyze this in the light of a outdoor scene with Esther and Avva in the film. In the scene, we are at a nice area outside Nuuk. It is close to the sea and has an overview over the newest city suburb, Qinngorput. Esther and me are eating ice cream, and, among many topics, we are talking about the weather. It is an unusually warm day, about 15 degrees Celsius. Esther is therefore very concerned about making sure that Avva gets to drink enough water since she assumes that he is very warm on this particularly hot and sunny day. While lying in the sand, she then starts to talk about, as seen in the film, how she had to give away her dog, named Lady, due to moving into the blocks downtown with her parents. In Greenland, dogs have been a medium of importance when mastering the Greenlandic nature (Fredriksen 2009).

When Avva one day lost his name tag, and I was lucky to find it far away from the house, Kristine was very happy because “I saved her a lot of money and hassle to get a new one” she said. I asked her what she meant, and she told me that every dog in Nuuk had to have a name-tag on, and that the city was very strict if they found unregistered “illegal” dogs. Kristine said that “to keep a dog, you had to fill in lots of papers and apply to Nuuk city, and each household are only allowed to keep one dog³¹”

Greenland has their own breed referred to as “the Greenlandic dogs”. It is famous and is supposedly closely related to wolves, and therefore regarded as somewhat wild (<http://uk.nanoq.gl/Emner/About/The%20Greenlandic%20Slegdedog.aspx>). The Greenlandic dog is only allowed in the north of Greenland, starting in Sisimiut and further north. The Greenlandic dog is mainly used as a sledge dog. The reason why the breed is not allowed further south of this town is to prevent the breed to intermingle with imported breeds from Europe and the rest of the world. Avva for example, is a dog referred to as a “bastard” in Nuuk, a mixture of various breeds, often referred to as a “*Nuuk- dog*”.

³¹ Field notes June 2010 and http://www.sermersooq.gl/da/borger/-vedtaegter_og_tilladelser/hunde_og_katte/hunde_og_kattevedtaegt.aspx.

Dogs are of importance for the Greenlanders. Through interaction with Avva, Esther and Marie, I learned that not only are the fish and the food in Nuuk city polluted. The local dogs are also polluted in the sense that they are mixed breed, with imported breeds. Imported breeds that the colonizers and foreigners brought with them. The dog becomes a symbol of modernisation and pollution. To find an authentic Greenlandic dog, you have to go to the north. In the north the Danish presence is less visible than in Nuuk and the image of a pure Greenland stronger. The dog can be understood as a metaphor for Greenland, it needs to be protected, to prevent it from being polluted from the outside.

Douglas describes different ways in relating to what matters can be “out of place”. One can also define the matter out of place as “dangerous”, and if it gets deadlocked, it is not more to discuss. When something is regarded as dangerous and uncontrolled, it provides an excuse to suppress them (Douglas 1997: 111). The dirty dog’s in Nuuk is looked upon as “polluted”, and to control the “clean” breed, Greenland has made a geographically distinction to keep the Greenlandic dog clean.

This is also obvious through the dog as a symbol, dogs in Nuuk are “polluted” and “matter out of place” regarding the perception the Greenlandic have concerning the authentic, “clean” Greenlandic dog.

4.9 Nature and pollution

Kristine became a widow in January 2010. She talked often and fondly about her husband. Esther would tell me a story about how she one time had seen a *tutu* before her uncle, and had tried to warn him without scaring the deer away. Kristine constantly repeated one big worry for her, when I lived with her. She had to sell her boat when I was in Nuuk, because “It is too big for me to manoeuvre”, she said. “*How am I going to get to pick black berries and blue berries when my husband is not here to take me out sailing?*” I would ask her if she could pick it in the surroundings around Nuuk, and she would then answer, “*No, it is not clean here – we have to go sailing to get it*”. A foreigner I ran into occasionally during my stay in Nuuk, was a man that was very into fishing. I would notice him walking downtown and about with his fishing rod. I told him I had seen him with a fishing rod a couple of times’ and asked him if he was into fishing. He nodded, and told me he had asked around in town, both in the fishing equipment shops and at the tourist office, about places to go for fishing in Nuuk and about. He told me he had got the same answer as me, “*the surroundings around the city is not*

clean, you have to go out sailing to fish.” In the eyes of this man and in my eyes, Nuuk looked perfectly clean and nice. We noticed that there were many cars, but paid more attention to the clear blue ocean, the many rocky hills and the tall mountains.

One day I was at a boat trip into the inland to see the thick ice that covers most of Greenland. On the trip I witnessed how one of the tour guides and the one boatman picked a Greenlandic plant called “*kvan*³²”. We stopped at a very steep mountain wall, where the plant was growing out of cracks in the stone. The boatman had to climb up to get it. *Kvan* is a plant Greenlanders eat with sugar, use as a spice or as I noticed in the *Kaffimik* I attended, they used it in their water for a nice look and taste. To me the plant looked like rhubarb, but tasted more like celery. While on the boat trip, I remember that Esther on one of our trips in Nuuk, had showed me where *kvan* is growing, in Myggedalen – an old part of Nuuk. The plant was growing very close to the fjord. When I suggested we should go and get it for her mother and for Marie, Esther told me “*we should not pick it because it is not clean here - we have to go sailing to find some*”.

One evening Esther and me went for a walk, far out where there are no houses, we met a man biking with a fishing rod. I asked Esther where she thought he had been fishing. Esther said that he should not fish in the area, but get someone to go sailing with him and then fish in the fjord outside the town. On suggesting that he might fish in this area, since I think it looked very clean, Esther kept saying what she had suggested before: “He has to go sailing”. In the scene I have referred to where Esther takes a plant towards the camera and tells me “It grows crowberries on this one”, she talks about how nature has changed due to new roads and pollution from the cars. She reflects about a school trip not many years ago, where they had picked berries at the same spot, from morning till evening, and now she does not think one can do that any longer. She sees that her town is changing – a result of Nuuk becoming more urban; more people are moving into Nuuk and old houses are torn down, meaning the town needs to find new areas to build the new houses for the newcomers. The nature must stand aside for the urbanisation. Esther says at the end of the scene, after I ask her how to find crowberries and blueberries nowadays: “then you have to sail far, far out to get something”. Meaning, to find the pure, clean Greenland, you have to go to nature, far away from where the

³² The plant *kvan* is known in Norway as *kvenn* (<http://leksikon.arla.dk/Kategorier/Krydderier-og-urter/K/Kvan/>).

urbanisation takes place. The city is polluted, the nature you approach when you sail far, far away is clean. Like with the dogs, the town is polluted.

When I asked Kuluk, Heikki and Peter where they usually went for fishing, they told me they always went sailing, oftentimes into the fjord. When I asked them if they went fishing in Nuuk or the suburbs Nussuaq and Qingorput, they said they would not do that because it was dirty around the town. What did the Greenlanders see or know that I did not see?

By the use of Rudies (1994) reflexive approach in the field, I became aware of that my informants saw the town different than I did. Okely (2001) differentiates a local and global understanding of the world, by separating between looking and seeing. She argues that there are more forms of visualisation, what it depends on are the *actual person* who is looking. “It is crucial to distinguish looking from seeing” (Okely 2001:103). Okely regards looking as the detached, distant overview, in which often characterizes the viewer’s way of looking. Seeing, on the other hand, represents the participating, experience-based visualisation, where the whole body and all the senses are included. The people who live in and use a landscape will look upon the environment in a different way than the humans without this experience-based relationship present. To find the pure Greenland, the Greenlanders I met told me and others we had to go sailing, because that is what they are doing.

To me, looking from an outsider’s perspective, walking the streets and in the surroundings of Nuuk, I never looked upon Nuuk as a polluted place. In my eyes when I was looking and when I was watching my tapes while at my fieldwork, both my visual material and the nature I saw and walked in, both looked and appeared clean in my eyes. I also noticed that when I hung my clothes to dry outside, they would get a very nice smell, an unfamiliar smell to me, a smell I imagine can be compared to the smell of ice and frost, a very fresh one. Okely separates clearly between being a bystander, to look upon the landscape from “outside”, and to look upon a landscape one self is a part of. However, simultaneously every humans perception of the landscape depend on a personal background and special relations to the landscape, in addition to also stories and memories influences (Okely 2001:101-108).. However, the Greenlanders I met, they do not just “look”, they “see” and what they “see” is based on their identity and experience and participation in the Greenlandic society and culture.



In “*The Anthropology of landscape*” by Hirsch & O’Hanlon (2003: 9), Hirsch refers to Gow and illustrates that when studying the Piro of Amazonian Peru, it is difficult for non-indigenous people to understand the meaning of the cultural shaping that has been shaped in the Amazonas:

“and that it is only when trees are cut down and roads are built, that a relationship between place and distant space can be discerned by those unaccustomed to such surrounding”
(Hirsch & O’Hanlon 2003: 9).

Gow found that when for example the Piro in the Amazon see the nature surrounding their village, they see kinship as well, meaning that kinship and the land are mutually implicated (Munn 1986, Cronon 1983 in Hirsch 2003:9). In Greenland, the Greenlanders I met pointed out and referred to Nuuk as polluted, and that the only way of experiencing the pure and real Greenland is by sailing. While others, including myself, saw Nuuk as clean. When referring to Nuuk as polluted, the Greenlanders looked upon the influence and presence of Denmark as a factor that has polluted their city. For an outsider, a stranger, Nuuk and its vast surroundings seemed clean and pure in many ways.

Using Hirsch’ term *foreground actuality* (Hirsch 2003:), I would say that for me and for others’ newcomers to Nuuk, like the man I met in town and the man I saw biking with a fishing rod in his backpack, our foreground actuality was coloured by what we saw with our eyes – the blue green oceans, tall mountains and the smell of fresh air. But for Esther, the boys and the local shopkeepers in the outdoor equipment stores, they looked at Nuuk and the environment in the city from a different perspective. They had a *background actuality*, a feeling of perceiving Nuuk as polluted. They had different ways of categorizing the landscape; To explore the pure Greenland, the only way to explore is by sailing away from the town.

4.10 Urbanisation

Krogh Andersen (2008) writes that for about less than half a century years ago, most of the Greenlandic population lived in small secluded and peripheral villages spread out on the vast coastline of Greenland. Because of the countries' wild nature, wide extension and location, they are still living fairly isolated. Even though the Greenlander lives a modern life within the Nordic welfare system, the social differences in Greenland are enormous. According to Krogh Andersen there is a bigger gap between rich and poor in Greenland than in the US (2008:14). She says there is a huge difference between the East-Greenlandic hunter living in a non-insulated wooden house or the Master Craftsman in the villa areas of Nuuk. The rich has money to travel and explore the world outside, while the poor on the other hand, rarely manages to save enough money to travel outside their village/town more than once in their lifetime (<http://viden.jp.dk/videnbank/-landeportraetter/default.asp?cid=11134>).

As seen in the film, the first years of Esther's life, she lived in the far north of Greenland, in a town called Qaanaaq. Qaanaaq is the hunting culture's town, and the settlement at *Siorapaluk* is one the world's northern-most settlements. It is in the Qaanaaq area that one can get closest to what many people, both within Greenland and outside, regard as the "original" Greenlandic hunting culture. Kristine would for example tell me to go north to explore *the real* Greenland. Esther's grandfather is a "*fanger*" in this town. Even though Qaanaaq in many ways is regarded as a modern society with shops, a hotel and a post office (www.turistqaanaaq.gl), it is neither easy nor cheap for Esther and her family to visit her mothers' family. Esther's mother would often mention the huge travel expenses the family would have if they travelled to see her parents, or the expenses for her family if they would visit Nuuk. The travel expenses for Esther's family would today exceed more than 60 000 DKK for return flight tickets from Nuuk to Qaanaaq with Greenland Air. There are no other air companies, and there is only one flight per week to Qaanaaq. Due to the vast inland ice there are no roads in Greenland, so travelling by car is not an option. Due to the travel expenses, Esther has not been back to visit her grandparents in the town where she grew up. In my film material, although not in the film itself, Esther talks about her life in Qaanaaq. When I asked her about the differences to Nuuk she said: "*In the winter you can just walk out the door – and there is no sound. At least most of the time it is silent. It is really great – Then you can walk on the ice at the ocean. But in the summer it is melted.*" "*I used to catch snow sparrows when I lived there*".

During my stay in Nuuk, Esther's family were about to move from one place to another. They moved into a vacant flat since it was difficult to get a new place to live. As I have mentioned throughout the thesis, I learned that Nuuk is in rapid development and change. Down town Nuuk there are apartment buildings from the 1960s and 1970s. In the same period the Greenlanders moved into the capital to work and to attend further education, but also because the Danish government closed down villages as part of their modernisation process. A man I met at a *kaffimik* told me about his mother's village in the north of Greenland. "One day, he said – everyone in the village just had to move, because the Danes closed down the mine and then decided that the village was closed as well".

One big challenge in Nuuk, a challenge that has lasted for years, are the lack of housing or the difficulties in finding a place to live in Nuuk. The local free weekly newspaper "Nuuk ugeavis" has many advertisements from people looking for a place to live in Nuuk. The many blocks and buildings downtown Nuuk were made by the Danish authorities in the 1960's as part of the modernisation process. Different people I met told me there is an approximately 10 years waiting list for a place to live in Nuuk. The Nuuk district recommends people outside the capital not to move in before they have a place to live. To own a flat is not for everyone, and there are not enough public apartment buildings.

As Kristines's daughter told me when I visited her and her boy-friend in their flat down town: "*You have to know someone to get a place to live, we got this thanks to my boy-friend's father, he runs CafeMik³³*". According to her, they only got their flat due to her boy-friend's father's having a restaurant in town' and therefore having a huge network was handy when they needed a place to live. Esther told me that the flat her family moved into was a place they had got because of her father's work within a school in Nuuk.

In the centre of Nuuk, there is a big block called *Block P*. It is visible in the beginning of the film when the car drives by, down town Nuuk. Block P is a heavily discussed matter in Greenland. Apparently 1 % of the Greenlandic population lives in Block P, built by the Danish government in the 1965 to secure proper housing for the Greenlanders, with the intention of offering the same standard as houses in Denmark (Krogh Andersen 2008). With running water as the woman in I referred to in the introduction, stated.

³³ CafeMik – a popular and cheap café known for its catering and take away services.

When Greenland got Self Rule in 2009, the first thing the Greenlandic politicians decided, was that Block P will be taken down (<http://sermitsiaq.ag/node/71463>). The challenge though is to finance how to build new flats for a large number of the population. From outside, it can be looked upon as a paradox; they want the block gone, despite the pressure on the towns housing market.



Block P April 2011

In Lien's article from Tasmania, in "Norsk Antropologisk tidsskrift" (2009, nr. 1-2), she writes about landscape intervention and the feeling identity to a place. She refers to how removing plants cultivated by Europeans is used as a way of going back to *the authentic nature*. She found that in Tasmania, it is more important to remove new plants who are categorised as *invading* (invasive) and to maintain the authentic once, the *original* (native) original fauna (Lien 2009:16-17). In Greenland they do not go so far, but they have a strong awareness about invading plants, which results in belonging.

Block P is a sign of the assimilation process in Nuuk – and also a sign of closed down villages and a reminder of how rapid the modernisation process went in Greenland. It is also a reminder of the way the Danish looked upon the Greenlanders, someone they needed to help by building modern houses. The Danish wanted, like the colonizers in Tasmania, to transform the Greenlandic "landscape" into being more like theirs, by bringing in their own way of living, - their houses, language, food, with intentions of helping the Greenlandic people. But they did not ask for the Greenlanders opinion in this matter. The Block is also a cultural reproduction of how the Danish looked upon the Greenlanders when they started their modernisation process in the beginning of the 50s.

To understand the decision of tearing down Block P, I refer to Mary Douglas. In *"Purity and Danger"* (1997), Douglas suggests that societies are likely to see things as "taboo" when they are anomalous, when they don't fit into a society's classification of the world. When the Danish started their modernisation process in Nuuk, they regarded the Greenlandic way of living as "polluted", and started to build houses etc to make the town "clean". Today Block P is looked upon as dirt. And referring to Douglas "dirt is matter out of place" (Douglas 1997: 10-11).

So for the Greenlandic people, Block P is a symbol of the Danish colonisation, it pollutes Nuuk and must be torn down. Keeping Block P in the heart of Nuuk will therefore be a reminder, it is a daily threat to the Greenlanders self-representation, and the Greenlandic society in Nuuk. The only pure and authentic experience on Greenland today, is by sailing. For the city to be "clean", the blocks must be taken down. Referring to Douglas, I claim that the Danes looked upon the Greenlandic society as polluted and dirty, compared to the Danish society who was modern and "clean". Therefore they had to build houses with running water like the woman in the film I referred to in my introduction, and to bring in their school system, to "clean" up the Greenlandic society. But Block P is not only a reminder of the past, the area is a constant reminder in the city image that not everyone in Nuuk is as fortunate, and it is visible for everyone walking downtown Nuuk. Everyone can see the poverty, or the slum as the man I met when I was filming in the area referred it to. Today the Blocks are a reminder of the Danish pollution, and needs to be taken down. They are a threat to today's Greenlandic order. Douglas interprets this to mean that things are not considered dirty in and of themselves, but because of where they stand in a *system* of categories, which can include people as well as non-human classes of animate or inanimate objects (Douglas 1997). Since Block P is a reproduction of the Danish modernisation process, today regarded as the slum area in Nuuk – they need to be torn down.

Lien writes that even though one planned to take down the pine trees in Tasmania, it was not easy and many protested, because people had become accustomed to them, and wanted to keep them, despite the history about how they came to the island. In Nuuk, everyone I spoke to about Block P informed me that: "the Block is going to be torn down". Block P can be looked upon as a cultural reproduction of how the Danish presence has influenced the Greenlandic society. Today Block P is still standing and has not been taken down.

At the moment, there is a city renewal project going on, initiated from the Greenlandic Self Rule, with a Norwegian architect company involved, with the intention of finding new solutions for the city and make Nuuk down town a more attractive area. The project also carries the idea that people should own their apartments (<http://tuujuk.blogspot.com>). In 2010 young people in Nuuk was invited to come up with ideas for the area, as a part of the renewal of Nuuk project³⁴. Referring to Douglas one can also respond positively to what creates “matter out of place” and try to create a new reality pattern which includes it (Douglas 1997: 53-54). One of the youths in the renewal project suggested that: “we could sell the pieces of Block P in the tourist shop –because every citizens of Nuuk has a relationship to it” (tuujuk.blogspot.com).

Nuuk was the first city where the early colonizers settled down, and where the modernisation process started when Greenland became a county within Denmark in 1953. In this respect, the Greenlanders may feel that the area and its environment are besmirched and polluted by the previous colonizers.

5. Conclusion

I went to Greenland with the intention to study youths’ identity in relation to nature. I wanted to do this, because from reading anthropological studies, literature and watching films I sensed that nature would play an important role in Greenland and to the Greenlandic people’s identity, even today.

The first part of my fieldwork, working with the boys and the filmmaking, confirmed that nature is indeed an integral part of a Greenlander’s life, how they see themselves and how their identity is negotiated. Through a youth project I uncovered what it means to be a young boy, a *Nummioq*, in Nuuk. Through participating in daily activities I have shown that activities in nature is something that gives the youth a feeling of prestige and dignity, where people pay attention to them and admire their knowledge. To the boys, it is of importance to brag and tell stories from activities carried out in nature. This is an important aspect in a young boy’s life and feeling of sense of belonging. By mastering the activities, it is part of what makes the boys able to define their “we-group”.

³⁴ The project is called “midt i verden / midt i Nuuk // nunarsuup qeqqani / Nuup qeqqani”

However, it became clear to me that there was another factor in this that was too influential to be overlooked and that forced its way to the surface, to my surprise. This realisation was, as I see it, partly triggered by my own acquired knowledge, my background as a Social worker, my training to see other people and what I had learnt during my stay and the continued interaction with the various Greenlandic people I met. Like Rudie says, the informants and I worked as catalysts for each other's interpretation in the meetings. It became apparent to me that the Danish influence and the relationship between Greenlanders' and the Danes and how they perceive each other, is an important part of how Greenlandic people see themselves and their identity. Thus, I had to go deeper into this subject as my project developed.

The Danish-Greenlandic relations were quite evident in the first part of my fieldwork in the various social settings I attended, from my first visits to Copenhagen, on the flight to Nuuk, downtown filming in the "slum", in the youth project, the *kaffimiks* and other social settings. In the second part of my project this was more refined due to my own role as a catalyst and learning participant. Here, studying Esther helped me bring out these perspectives more clearly. I learned through the close and open relationship I was able to achieve. As with the boys, through interaction with Esther and her aunt, I also experienced that nature and activities in relation to nature is central to their sense of belonging.

My relationship to Kristine and Esther turned out to be one of my most important sources of data, although while in the field I was spending a lot of my time struggling to get access to informants in relation to the project, and did not clearly see the importance of Kristine, Esther and Avva in the first period of my fieldwork. My focus when I came to Greenland was to systematically gather information and to access the youths by using the camera as a tool.

A reason why the boys strongly expressed their belonging to Greenland in my presence may also be explained in the different relationship I respectively built to Esther and the boys. Since Esther and I got a relationship more similar to that of a friendship, it was not so important to her (or me) what nationality I had – Danish, Greenlandic or Norwegian. With the boys on the other hand, part of their identity negotiation was to express their Greenlandic identity to me; in various ways pointing out that they are Greenlandic through activities in the nature like hunting at land and sea, by preferring not to speak Danish or to compare themselves to Danes either if it is your manner of dress or how many times you have been drunk. As an outsider they approached me as someone who needed to be educated about Greenland, about the

Greenlandic nature, food, language, and be taught that they were not similar to the Danes. Since I was an outsider, a *qaalluanaaq* – a white, not being Greenlandic – I could not understand how the society works without them showing and educating me.

The boys, Esther and her aunt were all concerned with pollution and trash, and had similar ideas about where to search for the clean, authentic Greenland. What surprised me though, were findings that were forced upon me, despite my efforts not to focus on it on beforehand; that is, the Greenlandic peoples relationship to Denmark and the Danish presence in Nuuk. Step by step I uncovered the relationship between the respectively national identities, through myself being a Norwegian and through participation in a series of arenas and social contexts in Nuuk

We have seen in this work that trash, pollution, in Nuuk are linked to what Cohen refer to how people experience and express their difference from others, by different aspects which help to build as sense of belonging. This must also be understood with Okelys ideas about the fact that this depends on the person who is looking. You must be a local *Nummioq* to see that the town is polluted. Foreigners do not see this. To foreigners in Nuuk, the town and its location in one of the biggest fjords in the world, appears as clean. When Avva and I were walking our daily trips, I would notice the cars, but in my eyes Nuuk both smelled and looked fresh. To the Greenlanders I met, they see the town from a different perspective. Pollution is not about cars, but due to the modernisation process brought upon the Greenlandic people, they see a town that refers to what Douglas calls “matter out of place”. When they are looking, to refer to Okely, they see the Danish presence in the landscape. To find the authentic Greenland, you have either to go north or to sail far out in the sea.

The Greenlandic people I met also perceive the living condition and run-down housing, the Blocks as a reproduction of the Danish post-colonial history. It becomes a symbol of meaning, a chain where the modernisation process started something that made the Greenlandic people forced into a Danish way of living – and various negative connotations is still reproduced due to the Danish presence in the town. The Danish presence is everywhere it is visible in the language, the Blocks, money, food etc. These are all cultural constructions, where symbols are made into categories. This adds to the “hard programmed ideas” that seem to exist in the Danish – Greenlandic relation. Here they link the Danish to alcohol, while for example Greenlandic youth do not drink as much as the Danish youth.

My travel through the field has been a source of surprise. The border between the others and us are continuously reproduced and strengthened. While the Danes I met in various meetings look upon the Greenlanders as somewhat diffident and unable to function as expected of them in social situations, the Greenlandic people I met perception of the Danes as someone who talks to much, is unable to survive in nature and finally, they regard the Danish as someone who has colonized their land and to an extent forced upon the Greenlanders a way of living.

For the youths in Nuuk, the relationship to nature is a common way to construct a successful identity as a modern Greenlandic. The Greenlandic take the “hard programmed idea” from the Danes playing on the concept of a real Greenland, so that these hard programmed ideas between Danish and Greenlandic become conversation about identity.

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