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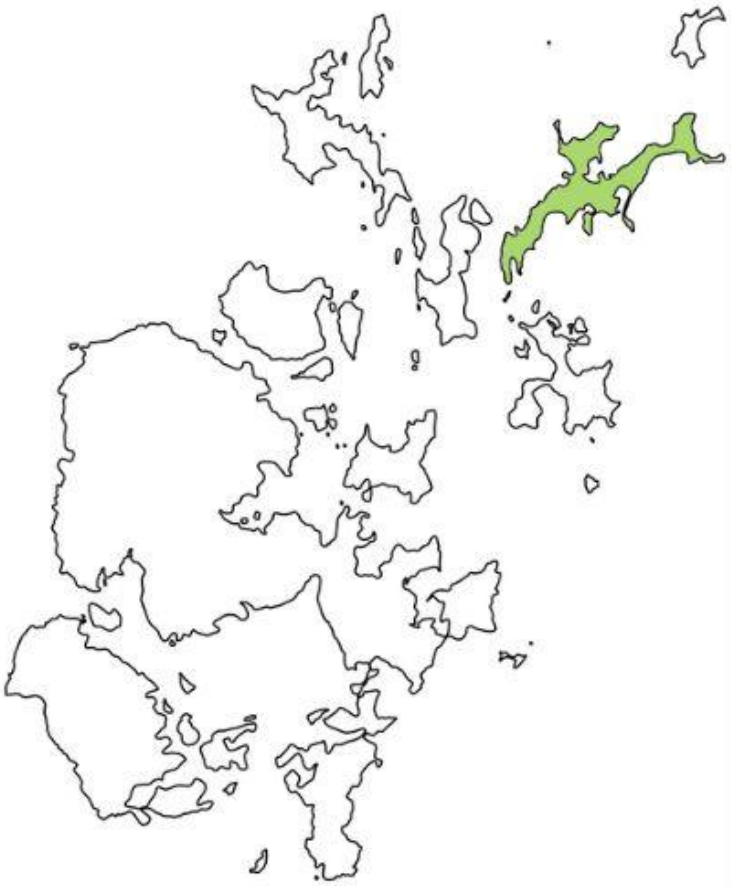

# *The Wireless Set:*

*Navigating Vulnerability and Resilience in environments of globalisation.*

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## *Abstract*

*Both islands and the ageing experience are often understood in relation to globalisation processes. This project acknowledges ageing islanders as having an acute embodied experience of the - often-disembodied - way in which environment is dominantly conceptualised under globalisation. It thus seeks to understand Scotland's non-linked isles' experience of care provision under a national service, based on dynamics surrounding the perceptions of environment. Recentring the experience of elderly islanders also promises to offer reflection on the very nature of globalised environments.*

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# *Introduction*

Globalisation questions and sculpts space in many ways. Technological developments in the internet and travel, for example, have created opportunities for global networks of connectivity, and thus often a sense of transcending or shrinking space. However, such processes which suggest a human capacity to defy physical space also reveal tensions between lived experiences of environments. For example, centralisation expands the experience of an urban-rural divide, standardisation reveals difference and assumptions around accessibility beg questions of mobility. This thesis then, will understand globalisation not as world-wide connectedness but as a set of processes which carry changes in dominant perceptions of environment and new dynamics between communities who experience and conceptualise their environments differently. Just off the northernmost tip of the Scottish mainland lies Orkney – an archipelago of seventy islands, of which twenty are inhabited.

From my own family home on the island of South Ronaldsay – on a clear day – I can see mainland Scotland as its only around eight miles south as the crow flies. Twenty miles north is Kirkwall, Orkney's small capital city and luckily there are four low lying barriers to connect me to the Orkney Mainland so I can drive to Kirkwall in thirty minutes – that is when the barriers are not closed due to high tides and rough seas. Although most island parishes have their own small villages with a primary school and a shop, all residents of Orkney rely on access to Kirkwall to various degrees as it is the central hub for most goods and services: a hospital, supermarkets, a high school, and an airport and ferry terminals for onward travel. During my days of attending high school in Kirkwall, after school activities meant negotiating public busses, which journey on the hour to my nearest village of St. Margaret's Hope, turning around seven miles before reaching my home. Twenty miles as the crow flies often became a harrowing logistic negotiation or simply unfeasible if transport, weather, and other people's timings didn't work in my favour.

Expanding my horizons now, it is a six-hour ferry journey from Kirkwall to Aberdeen, where I attended University, and where many locals take occasional weekend trips - shopping lists and to-do lists in hand. For those island-dwellers not linked to Kirkwall, the journey has extra legs. Residents of Orkney's north-isle of Sanday for example, must take an hour-and-a-half ferry journey before arriving in Kirkwall. Cancellations due to poor weather frequently disrupt travel plans and fragment the archipelago. The financial cost of taking the journey, as well as the travel time, planning, and energy spent can make the trip a significant commitment. Islands, as this thesis will explore, have a magnified experience and nuanced understanding of the ways in

which globalisation processes challenge and reconceptualise notions of environment. Island living in Orkney is often felt as a relationship with centralisation at various spatial scales and a negotiation with movement from rural to urban spaces.

Just as I consider Islands as having a revealing relationship with global reconfigurations of space, so too do elders. An ageing population is a symptom of global developments in health care which allow for increased longevity, as much as other globalisation processes create acute challenges for elders and elder care. Experiences of ageing vary across cultural, social and geographical space and as Peace writes, the UK has much larger and faster growing ageing populations in its rural and island communities (2022: 54). There are thus many global shifts which bring challenges to population ageing. This thesis is especially interested in how the elderly experience of negotiating island environments reveals insights about the way globalisation shapes notions and experiences of space. Ingold's understanding of environment as it is conceptualised under the image of a 'globe' as well as his differentiation between space and landscape will help to define this project's understanding of space (2000: 209-217).

The provision of health care to the non-linked Orkney Islands as provided by a standardised national service acts as a strong indicator of the way experiences of space play out under globalisation. Thus, on one hand, my choice to spend a summer on the north isle of Sanday, regularly visiting residents over eighty was motivated by complaints about the health care service to the isles. Usually these are grounded in feelings of being subject to an urban system without means to have impact in urban settings in the same way. For example, many islanders feel their experience of mobility and accessibility is ignored or misunderstood when they receive early appointments in Kirkwall's hospital which do not coordinate with the ferry timetable. There is a lack of an image of island living among many healthcare decision-makers in Scotland. Globalisation's conceptualisation of environment which centralises services does not just raise issues for local's physical experience of landscape, but carries some social dynamics too, whereby islanders feel neglected or misunderstood and struggle to feedback. I set out with the aim to explore how health care services in Orkney might better respond to the contextual needs of its island residents or 'end-users'. Particularly given the increased emphasis on person-centred care in the UK, which aims to appreciate the individual context around care needs (Lonergan, 2002; Fazio et al., 2018; Brooker, 2007) I considered the strength of anthropology to understand the local experience of vulnerability in an ageing body on a wind-beaten island. In this light, the project is one of applied anthropology, dedicated to Scotland and Orkney's healthcare services, advocating for David with his sore feet and his dismay over the withdrawal of the chiropodist service and Jean with her prayers for perseverance as she walks the dog on the beach, fatigued from a trip to Kirkwall the day before. However, as this project considers

healthcare disparity in Scotland to be rooted in an ever-dominant perception of environment which leads to the centralisation and standardisation of services and expectations around accessibility - this project grows to understand that David and Jean Sinclair, Maurice and Jean Soord and Mary Seagrief are in a unique position to share insights about the very nature of physical and social environments of globalisation and how they are to move in.

The first chapter will contextualise the experience of living on Sanday based on its acute experiences of globalisation processes, including an outline of island studies (Campbell, 2009; Godfrey, 2006; Kohn, 2006) and of global shifts in population ageing (Peace, 2022). Having established the importance of situating Sanday's experience within a discussion on globalisation, the thesis will call upon the short story of an Orkney author, George Mackay Brown (1921-1996). *The Wireless Set* expresses the dynamics around a centralised authoritative voice claiming to describe rural and island environments from a disembodied stance (Mackay Brown, 1969). Beginning here, to tune into the voices of elders on the island, will express the way in which standardised description of space seeks to transcend and flatten landscapes which are navigated by some around every incline and pebble and gust of wind. This chapter will introduce the five participants and offer an opportunity to relate understandings from *The Wireless Set* to their experience of the island.

The following chapter will explore what the thesis will come to coin *The Wireless Set Dynamic* in light of anthropological discussions around perceptions of the environment. This will consider the dynamic as a tension between those notions of environment dominant in globalisation processes and the lived experience of landscape for those struggling to negotiate physical and social distance.

Understanding the relationality of landscape will lead onto an introduction of the formal health care system in the UK and its organisation for Scotland, for Orkney and for Sanday. Based on *The Wireless Set Dynamic,* the chapter will explore the way in which notions of space intrinsic to the UK's National Health Service (NHS) come to impact care for those most sensitive to the experience of negotiating landscape. This will involve a very brief rundown of the structure of the NHS before outlining some key complaints coming from the island community. A recent news article will exemplify some of the challenges the island faces in negotiating the care service.

This will make way for a chapter on vulnerability and resilience narratives which often describe the capacity of communities to negotiate wider influence. This pattern is similarly conceptualised in the topic of elder care as *frailty.* The final chapter, then will give space to

reflection about *the Wireless Set Dynamic* as a conceptual framework which encourages an embodied empathy of personal lifeworlds of vulnerability and resilience as holding powerful insights about the spaces which challenge them.

## *Research Questions*

1. To what extent can the issues for health care provision to Orkney's non-linked Isles be explained by globalisation?

2. How do globalisation and the associated dominant perceptions of environment impact the experience of vulnerability?

3. What can the experience of elders on islanders of a standardised, centralised care service tell us about the nature of globalisation?

## *Methodological Reflections*

The following chapter describes this project's methodological approach with reflections about the researchers position and the use of film as they relate to the key values of the project. For example, the core values of this project to understand distance and the experience of space and the body will mean reflecting upon my position as having grown up in Orkney and on a linked isle, my youth and able body, and ease in traveling regularly between urban and rural spaces. This project has an applied element, calling for reflections around the use of film and the filmic approach. Here I will discuss the importance of film to communicate a sense of being on the island and to help transcend communicative distance – we will soon be reminded that technology can offer such a feeling. I employ a patient observational approach, following my participants and matching their pace.

I spent three months on Sanday regularly visiting five locals over eighty, across three different households. Having grown up on the Orkney Island of South Ronaldsay, it didn't take long to make connections and meet participants. I understood what local perceptions of a researcher may be and felt having a somewhat local accent and experience of isles sociality meant I was trusted and seen as a local rather than 'othered' as an academic from elsewhere may have been.

The camera was my key to placing my body in experiences I otherwise wouldn't have. When the project compelled me to film a still of the steep stairs on the ferry, I found myself at the bottom looking up, imagining how most ninety-year-olds would manage in this position. What about when I was parked at the pier and thought to capture on film some particularly stormy seas for a July afternoon? I made the mistake of parking at ninety degrees to a gale force wind and wondered how most ninety-year-olds might stand let alone pry open a car door in that weather. The camera then, made research a corporeal physical act which supported the project's attention to the corporeal experience.

On top of this, and in some ways counter to this, the camera was a bridge to social situations I may otherwise have avoided. In this way, the camera provided a reason to be in certain situations as well as opportunity to hide sometimes, e.g., I was joining in with Sunday service 'to film'. It occupied my hands, and I didn't need to know when to sit and stand or sing. I filmed prayer and was able to become invisible in what could have felt like an intrusion into a personal moment. Tensions such as this, as well as of filming moments of vulnerability (e.g., someone struggling to clamber up a set of stairs) call forward the importance of the camera style. Filming can be an act of care and attentiveness. Filming Jeans feet as she prepared to take on the steps

up from the beach, drew my eye and my attention to the details of her process – where might she put her foot next and what is she considering in this moment? I was reminded of the camera as an opportunity for attentiveness while talking to David too. I felt more tuned into his stories because knowing that the camera was recording somehow encouraged me to take the same intentional attentiveness.

It is not only worth reflecting upon the act of filming and the filmic method, but also about the use of the camera as research method and film as an impactful product of research as opposed to written reports or essays. As I will expand on later, many complaints around Orkneys provision of care to the isles is that those dictating it often don't have an image of the lived experience. To capture the tone in someone's voice as they reflect on the feeling of ageing, to see the way the participants move and compare their mobility and frailty to the island landscape. To have a sense of the experience and a feeling of connection to persons in something a filmic approach could add to the conversation and justified this method.

The relationship this project coins '*the Wireless Set Dynamic*' is one whereby the island becomes an object of contemplation as perceived from a detached disembodied view. In relation to the theory and ethnography explored in this paper, the use of the camera becomes a tool to recentre the stance from which space is conceptualised, from a global perspective to one fuelled with empathy for the sensorial corporeal lifeworld of negotiating a landscape of vulnerability and resilience.

# *Islands and the world*

## *Sanday*

Islands have, throughout history, been popular sites of anthropological study, sometimes due to the impression that despite global changes, they remain bounded sites of cultural distinctiveness (Firth,1936; 3). More recently, they have been considered in terms of their response to or relationship with global impacts, 'frontline zones where many of the main problems of environment and development are unfolding' (UN, 1999 as cited by Godfrey, 2006:1). Godfrey's introduction to the journal outlines many key concepts under which islands tend to be assessed, citing Stratford:

> Islands …absolute entities … territories, territorial; relational spaces – archipelagos, (inter)dependent, identifiable; relative spaces – bounded but not porous; isolates, connected […] vulnerable to linguistic, cultural, environmental change; robust and able to absorb and modify…
>
> (2003: 495)

Godfrey's introduction outlines some of island literature's dominant conceptualisations of island spaces and communities. In such descriptions designed to outline key concepts emerging from island studies though, it is important to note the risk of developing dichotomising notions of the island/mainland or island/world relationship. I instead understand the experience of living on an island in the archipelago of Orkney as a complex dynamic emerging under contested experiences and assertions of environment. Kohn (2006: 81) supports further discussion on the nuance of this relationship when she refers to the historical objectification of islands. She writes islands were 'historically addressed by anthropologists as often insular and assumed to be sites of culture condensed or "untouched."' She cites Firth and his interpretation of Tikopia in the Solomon Islands as 'almost untouched', describing really his own feeling of disconnect and preconceptions of centrality: untouched by whom? (1936: 3). Kohn expresses an awareness of the way notions of connectedness or disconnect are more telling of subjective preconceptions about rural and urban or mainland and island spaces and structures dictating the flow of information and values. The North Sea in no way symbolises a steady or explicit border between the islands of Orkney or between the archipelago and the Scottish mainland so rather than viewing this project's 'field site' as an isolated hub in which local ways offer solutions to global problems, I will understand the people in Sanday as living a particular – revealing - experience

of vulnerability in a globalising world and among various and often conflicting experiences and conceptualisations of environment.

Sanday is one of the northernmost islands in Orkney and has a population of around 550. It has a primary school, but teenagers attending high school must travel to Kirkwall, usually travelling at the beginning of the week, staying in the school's hostel, and then travelling home for the weekend. Many teenagers and young adults prefer to live somewhere with easier access to social events or onward travel. This leaves Sanday with a low young or working age population. Many new families have been moving to the island from other parts of the country, often with a vision of a different pace of life. On one of my visits to Afternoon Club, the weekly get-together for islanders over fifty, one member pointed out that he was the notable exception in the group, being the only one born in Orkney. While Sanday is a very open community, the rise in newcomers to the isles often reveals local impressions of outsiders as uppity or problematic in comparison to the trope of the pragmatic Orcadian farmer or fisherman.

*Orkney Ferries* runs all the inter-island transport within Orkney. From Sanday there is a ferry link to Kirkwall which takes up to two hours and is often cancelled or delayed due to poor weather or technical issues. There is also a short ten-minute flight from Kirkwall airport to Sanday, often stopping off on other islands along the way. There is room for eight people so often gets booked up quickly. Most of the island infrastructure depends on these so-called lifeline services. So, while the island is structurally connected in many ways to 'greater Orkney' (to use the words of one of this project's participants) these connections are sometimes frayed, and many features of island life exemplify this. For example, the lack of police presence means many people drive around without taxed or insured cars. The somewhat self-contained nature of the island also comes through as a realistic, practical community spirit where neighbours usually help one another in a non-transactional way. Borrowing and lending and caring for neighbours is in many ways rooted in the inconsistent access to goods and services from off-island. Overall, the experience of living on Sanday is largely contextualised by the community's relationship with centralised services and amenities. Despite the many tensions in the islands capacity to access their nearest town regularly and effortlessly, they live in an era of globalisation whereby advancements in transport and communication technology and notions of a collective globalised humanity can undermine their subjective lived experience of moving in the landscape. Community responses to local issues employ a rich understanding of negotiating space within and betwixt the islands while, on the other hand, this experience is often misinterpreted and misunderstood by centralised authorities who make decisions which can be ignorant to the physical negotiation of space. No two island communities are the same yet this

project takes Sanday as a 'case study', to explore a framework under which many of Scotland's rural and island communities can be better understood.

### *Global Ageing*

Contextualising Sanday as, like many islands, having an acute experience of the global challenge of an ageing population will allow for further understandings around island sensitivities to global shifts. Just as an ageing population is a symptom of globalisation, so the dominant perception of environment under globalisation raises acute challenges for elders on islands.

National Health Care provision is a strong indicator of the way globalisation's dominant perception of environment relates to island communities – being a standardised and centralised service which also directly plays out at the corporeal domestic scale. It will thus allow us to consider *The Wireless Set Dynamic* as one of care and belonging too. Sanday's experience of the global challenge of an ageing population can be put down to global health care developments leading to a higher life expectancy. However other symptoms of globalisation mean that rural and island communities experience this change acutely as well as a magnification of the challenges of caring for this ageing population.

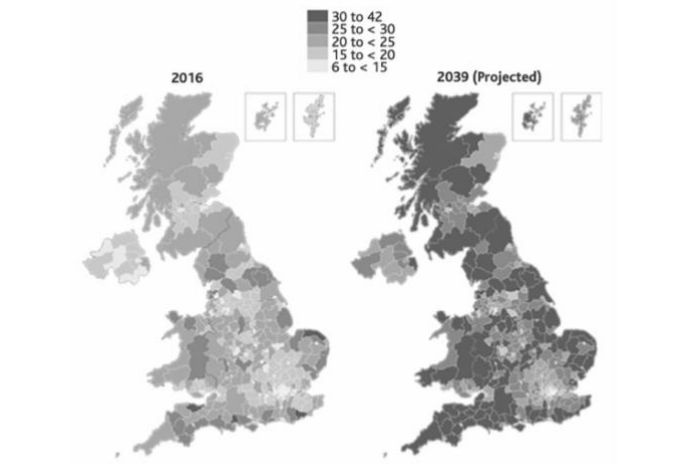
> .. by 2050, one in six people in the world will be over age 65 (16%), up from one in 11 in 2019 (9%). By 2050, one in four persons living in Europe and Northern America could be aged 65 or over. In 2018, for the first time in history, persons aged 65 or above outnumbered children under five years of age globally. The number of persons aged 80 years or over is projected to triple, from 143 million in 2019 to 426 million in 2050.
>
> (UN, 2020)

As Peace (2002: 54) vitally acknowledges, political, social and cultural factors impact on the characteristics of any national population and define environments of ageing. Peace deeply explored several 'key global challenges' to population aging, which are experienced differently across different contexts. Kinsella and Velkoff (2001) write, 'Despite the increasingly urban nature of today's elderly populations, rural areas remain disproportionately elderly in a majority of countries (50). Figure 1 indicates that the UK's rural and island communities are expected to gain a higher percentage of older people due to ageing in place and post-retirement migration.

Further, globalisation impacts which are strongly intertwined with the capacity to care for ageing populations tend to resonate more acutely on islands. More specifically, global shifts in perceptions of environment are revealed in island health care as the relationship between urban and rural is negotiated within the context of urbanisation, centralisation, standardisation, and

increased expectation over the capacity of people to move around and beyond these various spaces.

The capacity of islands to negotiate the impacts of wider globalisation processes is often discussed in terms of their *vulnerability* or *resilience* – terms used in a recent newspaper article outlined later. These terms are rarely rooted in an island's experiences of wider processes but are outside impressions of their reactions to adverse circumstances. Tuning into the voices of elderly islanders as they struggle to access health care will centre the voice largely representative of this sensitive experience. This thesis will now explore the way the imposition of and dependence on systems of ill-fitting perceptions of environment can be felt on islands.




Source: ONS (2018a), licensed under the Open Government Licence. v.3.0
Source for Figure – 2016 mid-year population estimates for UK, Office for National Statistics, 2014-based subnational population projections for UK, Office for National Statistics, Welsh Government, National Records Scotland and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Authority, contains OS data © Crown copyright 2018, London: ONS

**FIGURE 1 UK POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY PERCENTAGE AGED 65 AND OVER, 2016 AND 2039 (PROJECTED).**

## *The Wireless Set*

> If I wanted you, the reader, to begin to understand about landscape, I would not start with the work of anthropologists, or geographers, or academics of any sort. I would begin with novelists and poets because long before reflexivity or multivocality or any other aspects of postmodern conceptualization were invoked by academics, writers were subsuming them, incorporating them, taking them more or less from granted.
>
> (Bender 2006: 2)

Alongside theoretical reflections about the conceptualisation of space under globalisation, this project centres the voices of the project participants. Returning to their experience of negotiating space on several scales, from their experience of a centralised and standardised health care service to their corporeal experience of navigating the island landscapes. This will give rise to final reflections on how one's experience of space is what largely shapes it. We will hear from five Sanday residents all over the age of eighty: two married couples and one single woman living with her daughter. Some are born on Sanday or have lived there all their working lives. Some moved just after retirement, and one moved there just before this project began, at the age of ninety-nine. Their experience of the distance between Sanday and Orkney's capital of Kirkwall, as well as that between Sanday and other British cities will help express the ways in which centralisation is felt acutely within island sociality. This will pave the way to later understand how personal physical mobility shapes the experience of distance too. Before tuning into the resident's voices though, we will hear from an Orkney author who conceptualised the island experience of globalisation through a short story whereby a radio transmits the voice of centralised authority.

> 'It's a wireless set,' said Howie proudly. 'Listen.' He turned a little black knob and a posh voice came out of the box saying that it would be a fine day tomorrow over England, and over Scotland south of the Forth-Clyde valley, but that in the Highlands and in Orkney and Shetland there would be rain and moderate westerly winds. 'If it's a man that's speaking,' said old Hugh doubtfully, 'Where is he standing just now?'
>
> (Mackay Brown, 1969: 102)

Many islanders recognise a tension between the urban values inherent in the systems that come to envelop them and their own experience of themselves, one another, and their landscapes. *The Wireless Set* expresses the way in which the rural Orcadian experience interacts with urban values in globalisation processes when the son of a local family returns home after having been whaling in the Antarctic all winter. He carries the first wireless radio the community has ever seen – along with a medley of internalised and complicated implications about the value of urban knowledge systems in relation to rural ones.

> 'Everybody in the big cities has a wireless,' said Howie. 'Even in Kirkwall and Hamnavoe every house has one. But now Tronvik has a wireless as well, and maybe we're not such clodhoppers as they think.'
>
> (1969: 102)

The radio represents a standardised means of sharing knowledge and asserts a dominant knowledge system so although it was supposed to bridge disconnect it ultimately brought a different type of isolation whereby a one-way dialogue was asserted, and local ways were undermined and deemed 'backward'. In this story, the locals are used to predicting and understanding the island's weather, a necessity of a fishing and farming livelihood completely centred around the tides and the spells of rain, wind and sun. This experience justifies their pull to understand the speaker's embodied experience too. By asking, 'Where is he standing just now?' they express an unfamiliarity with the concept of centralised power and doubt his suitability to speak for the environment in which they themselves are grounded.

> 'The wireless speaks the truth,' said Howie. Old Hugh shook his head. 'Indeed,' he said, 'it doesn't do that. For the man said there would be rain here and a westerly wind. But I assure you it'll be a fine day, and a southerly wind, and if the Lord spares me, I'll get to the lobsters.' Old Hugh was right. Next day was fine, and he and Howie took twenty lobsters from the creels he had under the Gray Head.
>
> (1969: 102)

Thus, while this standardised and wide-ranging piece of technology is a signifier of the geographical scope of such developments, it also expresses and magnifies a social divide between urban and rural spaces. Particularly given that trusting the 'disembodied voice' (1969: 104) would be a hindrance on the family's livelihood, the voice appears out of touch and ignorant. The privilege exuded by its geographical scope, its social capacity to speak to (and its apparent claim to speak accurately for) the island means the islanders are not represented and thus are made separate, where previously there had been little sense of engagement with such outside voices. They could, however, raise an eyebrow and go about their business. That is until the voice came to misrepresent and dictate their experience of more weighted issues. The story is set in 1939 so when WWII breaks out, Howie and others are soon deployed, firmly enmeshing the community collectively and personally in every bit of news that might now affect them.

> That winter the wireless standing on Betsy's table became the centre of Tronvik. Every evening folk came from the crofts to listen to the nine o'clock news. Hitherto the wireless had been a plaything which discoursed Scottish reels and constipation advertisements and unreliable weather forecasts. But now the whole world was embattled and Tronvik listened appreciatively to enthusiastic commentators…
>
> (1969: 103)

The community came to have a complicated relationship with the radio. Lord Haw-Haw, William Joyce had a 'bestial joviality about him that at once repelled and fascinated them'. While most had an intuitive understanding of their immediate surroundings and a wise scepticism about the world that allowed them to listen with a pinch of salt, the community now felt dependent on the wireless in many ways. The role of the war in the story is to represent the way in which a disembodied description of space undermines the community's local-level physical experience of a serious political reality. Communities' misunderstandings around one another's experience of landscape creates a dynamic that becomes clearer and more weighted in the context of events and practices concerning the country as a whole.

> One morning they saw a huge gray shape looming along the horizon, making for Scapa Flow. 'Do you ken the name of that warship?' said Mansie of the Hill. 'She's the Ark Royal, an aircraft carrier.'
>
> That same evening, Betsy twiddled the knob of the wireless and suddenly an impudent voice came drawling out. The voice was saying that German dive bombers had sunk the Ark Royal in the Mediterranean. 'Where is the Ark Royal?' went the voice in an evil refrain.
>
> […]
>
> 'That man,' said Betsy, 'must be the father of lies.' Wasn't the Ark Royal safely anchored in the calm water on the other side of the hill?
>
> (1969: 103)

This is no longer a bemused community who switch on the nonsense of a strangely placed outside voice as evening entertainment. The story reminds us that this voice is a representation of a centralised institutional authority that umbrellas the island with a singular country-wide narrative without any resemblance of a physical presence there. By speaking for the country in such a way that doesn't speak to the islander's personal experience of it, it carries further notions about their belonging or social centrality in the country. The island space is made peripheral by a dominant narrative which does not recognise those rooted there. Here space and personhood intertwine as their belonging becomes contested in this way.

When the 'disembodied voice paused' and 'turned casually' to the topic of Britain's food shortage, some embodied sensory elements of *the Wireless Set Dynamic* come to be explored. Firstly, the sentence, 'Nothing was getting through, nothing, nor a cornstalk from Saskatchewan nor a tin of pork from Chicago. Britain was starving' points to the unrelatability for the islanders of depending on food they couldn't have farmed or fished at home, and thus also a sensory

unfamiliarity with such wide-spanning economic networks (104). As they feast round the dinner table, they are juxtaposed with the – to them unbelievable - image of a country starving. While the institutional voice described the country as it related politically to a global network, the islanders experience of the country seems to trust and value the corporeal more – their sustenance and survival being more rooted in a physical negotiation with their immediate natural landscape.

> At this point, Betsy, who enjoyed her own ale more than anyone else, thrust the hissing frying pan under the nose – so to speak – of the wireless, so that its gleam was dimmed for a moment or two by a rich blue tangle of bloody pudding fumes. 'Smell that, you brute,' cried Betsy fiercely, 'smell that!' The voice went on, calm and vindictive. 'Do you ken', said Hugh, 'He canna hear a word you're saying.' 'Can he not?' said Sandy Omand, turning his taurine head from one to the other. 'He canna hear?' Sandy was a bit simple. 'No' said Hugh, 'nor smell either.'
>
> After that they switched off the wireless, and ate the bloody-puddings along with the buttered Bannocks, and drank more ale, and told stories that had nothing to do with war, till two o'clock in the morning.
>
> (Mackay Brown, 1969: 104-105)

Descriptions of food and smells and local cooking place us on the island, starkly and sensorially separating us from the unspecific location of the voice. We are reminded that the voice authoritatively claiming to describe their experience cannot hear nor smell nor sensorially embody any aspect of their experience or lifeworld. By bringing in the senses, we start to understand this assertion of an outside experience as a personal imposition, describing and devaluing their lived experience without embodying it or acknowledging it's sensoriality.

The voice becomes a strange guest around the dinner table. As a self-sufficient and face to face social affair, this dinner together also comes to represent the community's culture around one-to-one dialogue. When Sandy Omand realises the voice on the radio would never respond, the story exposes the lack of their opportunity to negotiate with urban knowledge and values. Under the expectation of a natural dialogue, the voice comes to take on a persona of cold disconnected superiority, someone who just refuses to engage: 'the voice went on, calm and vindictive.' (Mackay Brown, 1969: 105). Why would or should they be passively listening to this unfamiliar voice?

Sandy Omand's ignorance also highlights the historic reality of Orkney crofters' complete unfamiliarity with such communication technologies long after they became a standard source of public information in Britain's main cities. Thus, we are encouraged to reflect on Orkney's non-linked isles being rural in relation to urban settings at several scales: in relation to the towns on the Orkney mainland: Kirkwall and 'Hamnavoe' (now called Stromness), to the cities of the British mainland. We are therefore also reminded of the relative absence of such technologies in the composition of the community's culture. The very notion of communicating with no element of a corporeal journey across landscape is far from being etched into islands cultural history. It is therefore less likely that islanders who are elderly today would be comfortable expressing themselves within these social parameters compared with younger people, or those rooted in cities.

Also notable from the stories juxtaposition of starvation and feasting is that Mackay-Brown is not afraid to paint the rural community as ignorant to many experiences beyond their own too. Vitally, he avoids any firm dichotomies of the heroic underdog or overruling perpetrator. Instead, we understand this as a dynamic underpinned by contested embodied experiences of and thus narratives around space and the way they interact in an ever-globalised world.

Young et al (2006) identify some key analytical dimensions of globalisation as rising connectedness and 'spatial stretching' and sought to demonstrate how these phenomena can impact both the resilience and the vulnerability of socio-ecological systems (305). *The Wireless Set* demonstrated the way in which centralised, urban experiences and notions of space sweep across rural and island communities in the standardisation of tools and practices and tie islands to their respective mainlands or centres. The story thus supports Young et al.'s idea with a nuanced image of how this can look for islands, increasing resilience through the potential for implementing urban developments, knowledge and services yet also revealing differences between communities with different experiences of landscape. We get to understand that the misunderstandings that can come from a one-way, spaceless transmission of values is a form of connectedness that creates island vulnerability too – since the story is sceptical of the capacity of the system to facilitate the same transcendence of physical space in order for islanders to communicate to those in urban settings. Mackay Brown thus helps to describe the island experience as largely defined by a corporeal relationship to their landscape and the way it is contested under globalisation. Moving forward, we will meet the participants of this project and start to notice connections between George Mackay Brown's interpretation of the island experience, and the Sanday resident's experience. The thesis will then make a case for understanding issues around elderly islander's experience of health care in terms of *the Wireless*

*Set Dynamic* and further, that health care in the isles can provide a lens through which to learn about globalisation processes.

## *Gruelly Belkies*

This chapter will introduce the five participants and gather an impression of their social experience of the island, including as it is influenced and defined by dominant detached notions of its environment.

### *David Sinclair*

'Gruelly Belkies', David stated after a few seconds silence, 'porridge eaters…' That's what those from Sanday are known as among the north isles while those from Stronsay were historically nicknames Limpets, Shapinsay: sheep, North-Ronaldsay: Selkies, Westray: Auks, and so on. David was born on Sanday but moved with his family to Aberdeen at the age of six, where he went to school and later got married before returning home when he inherited his uncles farm, Howe. He's now ninety-one and his son, Malcolm has a new build on the land and farms mostly alone due to the lack of young workers on the island. As a boy under six, David can remember going to Kirkwall only for 'high days and holidays' and to Edinburgh for special family holidays or the highland show. He told me he'd always wanted to go to Ireland - Guinness on the windowsill - but *this* was as close as he'd ever come. He recalled memories of working the farm: neighbouring children lining up to collect milk in the evening or disputes around the informal exchange of labour and pay. Some houses were renowned for their homebrew. Many would cycle to the beach, pales on handlebars, to harvest spoots (razor-shells). He enriched my perception of the isle with childhood memories of his grandparent's salted pork, of full summer days spent at the bay down the road. He could remember the island being livelier and reminisced about the atmosphere on the ferry when all the young ones would return home from south for 'show week', the week of agricultural shows around Orkney's different parishes.

He'd ask me, 'How are things in greater Orkney' and then reflect on those local characters who had stuck in his mind: sometimes for carving themselves an eclectic persona, apart from typical Orcadian practicality. He'd list their titles and chant key quotes. David would understand Mackay Brown's description of the 'posh' detached voice. Being a farmer and an islander until his eighties, David's day-to-day was always directly impacted by the elements and the potential to negotiate them. Westerly winds might mean the ferry couldn't come in and he couldn't get off the island. A wet winter might mean keeping the cattle in and feeding them for a longer period. On almost every visit to see David, he would repeat and expand on his memories of people he

thought were posh, as though similarly 'fascinated and repelled' by them as those in the *Wireless Set* were by Lord Haw-Haw. Besides switching off the telly and tutting that Boris Johnston was a 'buffoon', he shared his impressions of local characters or politicians, each visit adding details about their eating habits, fashion sense and idiolect. I felt as though I had come to know those people and their long, apparently invented, titles and pondered over why they had stuck in his mind some forty years after his last interactions with them. Mackay Brown captures well, the strange emotional impact of a voice that comes across out of touch or who employs an eclectic worldliness to somehow speak across and despite people's embodied experience. Just as the community in the Wireless Set express an unfamiliarity with the concept of centralised power and doubt its suitability to speak for the environment in which they themselves are grounded by asking, 'Where is he standing just now?', so David too was getting to grips with the way in which these characters came to assert power but misrepresent the locals, thus making them feel separate. David mocked their air of superiority as though still befuddled.

*The Wireless Set* also expressed the community's more complicated feeling towards this disembodied voice as they came to realise it was ignorant to and thus misrepresenting their lived environmental experience of serious national processes. Similarly, I came to understand David's deeper-seated feelings towards those posh or professional characters he fixated on when I realised they included past elected local counsellors who had come from elsewhere with a different perspective of the island space and made decisions which affected his embodied experience of such. For example, David repeated on several occasions his frustration with the counsellor who had the ferry service redirected from terminating in the main village of Kettletoft, to a new terminal seven miles to the south of the island, building a new road to get there.

> *They put the terminal at Loth! Seven and a half miles – everyone has to travel seven and a half miles extra from south end corner, that's where Sinclair General Stores is, down to Loth.*

Through this example he described very clearly the way in which centralised systems of power and decision making come to describe and alter the island landscape from a disembodied view. The logic of the counsellor was that the ferry couldn't dock in certain wind directions, but David argued it cannot terminate at Loth in others. For David, this decision greatly impacts his experience of space: creating a more intimidating and time-consuming journey to the pier than before. The small village of Kettletoft becoming quieter changes his experience of community. This is an example of a change made to the island that left him feeling decisions were made about the island that didn't recognise the local experience.

*If someone like me were to say anything I'd be a crank, born to spoil everything. I complained many times and they just boohooed me. 'You've got to move with the times', they say.*

**DAVID AT HOME, HOWE.**

David understands landscape relationally as a farmer and an islander. He has a deep-seated embodied experience of it as well as a reaction around the way space has been defined by authority figures with a seemingly disembodied notion of the space. He exemplified the way in which many islanders feel equally amused and repelled by those who seem to exercise an elite separation from the embodied island experience. He also allows us to understand the severity of how this dynamic can be felt by islanders when it manifests as a true denial of the embodied experience of landscape and movement. The severity of this experience is only heightened in old age and so this thesis will later build on a discussion of the personal experience of landscape in the context of ageing.

## *Jean Sinclair*

When a butterfly knock comes at the door, Robbie says, 'damn me. it's the minister.'

'But let him in.' He gropes for his pipe. Janet scurries to hang the kettle on the hook,

and cried a welcome to the rattling snake.

Mackay Brown (1954)

It would be inappropriate to knock on the door because – assuming the Sinclairs heard my knock – they'd then have to stand up and come to the door to let me in. This is something even non-zimmer-frame using islanders would find a bit of a strange demand. Not about to assert myself as an elite guest, I'd always chap on the door and call out as I walked in for my visits. 'Ah, it's Esme', Jean would mutter happily from her armchair by the stove, and I'd follow the hum of coal and tobacco smoke into the house. Jean feels she's an introvert and I can tell she values her peace, but she'd promise, 'I can think of plenty to say when I need to.' Jean Sinclair never appeared in the film associated with this paper, but we shared many long conversations. I learned that she was originally from Aberdeenshire and met David at a dance in a village hall. After they got married and moved back to Sanday, she became the island nurse. She worked long hours, driving from house to house and often hopping into bed in the early hours of the morning on unforgiving winter nights. Several babies she delivered in those years have grown up to work as her home carers now, something she seems to experience not as a formal rigid arrangement but a relationship of community care which comes as a natural progression of her life and career on the island. When one of the carers breezes in for the lunch time visit, we watched her pause her friendly chatter to punch some numbers into the landline. Jean always finds it odd, and so pointed out to me, that they must 'clock in' this way when they arrive at each house and 'clock out' at the end of their visit. She probably wouldn't consider that her actions might have power to inadvertently overrule the natural dynamic of those in a completely different place, so she raises an eyebrow when the influences of a centralised authority figure reach out into her home. I watched the carer throw some coal on the fire as she continued chatting. When Jean said, 'That's no really your job', she responded, 'Well we canna have you going cold!', her tone full of nurturing and practicality.

Just as in the Wireless set, the locals are at first bemused by the encroaching of urban professionalism into their homes so Jean too can raise an eyebrow at the geographical scope of an institutional presence and its claim to oversee her experience of her community in her home. Similarly, home care on Sanday often feels the reach of institutional values without physical presence when values around the professional persona or anonymity are expected but don't lend themselves to the lay of the land or the community's network for neighbourly support. In many cases, these manifest as a feeling of the standardised care system being strangely out of touch but having little tangible impact on their capacity to care for one another in an organic community dynamic.

**JEAN SINCLAIR AT HOME, HOWE.**

## *The Soords*

Jean came from Burma to Essex at the age of sixteen. She then met Maurice, also from Burma and they had ten children together. Once their youngest child was sixteen, thirty years ago, they moved to Orkney having seen for sale a big old manse by the beach. At a time where they felt ready for a change in their lives, they felt as though God called them there: 'I never would've imagined having a chapel here when we first came…Back then, they had no idea where Orkney was, the travel agent wanted to know if we needed a currency exchange to go there,' Maurice told me. When they arrived there were no roll-on, roll-off ferries and to take a car off the ferry passengers had to get out and have it craned onto the pier.

*Hello? Where are you? Pardon? In Manchester? Oh, I think we're very far away from you.*

*No, I don't think we need anything…We get lots of funny calls like that, Esme.*

Jean Soord frequently complains about cold calls, once walking out to where Maurice and I were weeding a small patch of the garden to vent: 'She knew my name, she said 'is that you Jean?', she said bewildered. *The Wireless Set* is a story about the dynamics under which the people whose lives represent the starkest contrast to patterns of globalisation come to feel communicated with under its processes. Since 1939 the world is increasingly globalised, technological developments

increase ‘spatial stretching’ and our rising ageing population increasingly joins the fictional community of ‘Tronvik’ in representing those who experience the starkest contrast to such spatial stretching (Young et al., 2006: 305).

The cold call scene in the film associated with this paper often elicits a chuckle from the audience. Perhaps because there is irony in the encounter of two such opposing experiences. As the film invites the viewer to feel rooted in island life, the detachedness of the voice on the phone from Manchester becomes almost comical. When situated on the island, one has a strong sense of being there and can clearly feel how distant it must be from Manchester so the scene expresses the feeling of a contrast that is felt by the islanders but often goes unconsidered by those in bigger central cities. Perhaps, the scene also elicits this response because handling cold calls from impersonal institutions in unfamiliar places is a considered an illustrative experience of old age. People who are negotiating old age on islands acutely feel the imposition of the ways centralised notions of space as standard impose upon those least at-home among such processes.

**JEAN AT HOME, SAVILLE. ‘COLD CALL’ SCENE FROM THE WIRELESS SET.**

**MAURICE SOORD, GARDEN AT SAVILLE**

## *Mary Seagrief*

Mary turned one-hundred years old in September 2022. She was born in England but lived most of her married life in South Africa where latterly she was living in a sheltered housing community until her daughter, Rose, brought her back to Scotland to live with her on Sanday in January 2022. I met Mary at Afternoon Club, where Rose or Rose's partner, Richard would often mediate our conversations by leaning closer to Mary to repeat my words or give her extra prompts. From a few visits to see Mary, including visits to their new house under construction, I got to know about her past. She had been an avid tennis player in England, her best competitive years interrupted by the second world war. Once she married and moved to South Africa, she worked as a tennis instructor at a girls' school and as a physiotherapist. She suffers from no aches and pains in old age, down to luck as well as a lifetime of understanding how to move her body to avoid injury and how to set any issues right. Mary's security largely comes from her family's attunement to her experience of the world as dictated by her weakened senses and frailty. During my summer of fieldwork they were living in a small cottage while making renovations on a new house, one which would have a custom built accessible domain for Mary. On a couple of occasions, I joined in on one of Mary's visits to the house under construction and Rose and Richard showed us around. Pieces of furniture and other belongings from Mary's long life in South Africa would fill this room once they had been collected from storage and shipped across the world. Rose invited me to have a look upstairs, at the bedrooms-to-be and their

wonderful views and after a little bit of discussion, it was decided Mary was feeling strong enough to try the stairs too.

**MARY AT HOME, SOUTH SCHOOL HOUSE**

'Mum's wonderfully careful. And always game!'

I met Mary only a few months after her somewhat disorientating transition from South Africa to Orkney. Though she certainly felt safe and supported, she hadn't quite adjusted from the journey, sometimes speaking as though she was in England or unaware that she was on an island. It wasn't until visiting her a year later, a grandfather clock from south Africa, two cats and a letter from the queen richer, that I realised the importance of not only the context of global shifts on the experience of ageing, but the impact and relevance of ever-smaller spaces as one becomes frailer. As I sat with a cup of tea in the living room and Mary played with the cats I had a new sense of the way in which sensitivity to environments translates from negotiations of

large global shifts to the domestic scale, the magnitude of those environments being largely dependent on ones experience of moving in them.

# *Contested perceptions of environment*

## *Globes and spheres*

So far, this thesis has situated Sanday as an island within a globalised world because the experience of living there is largely shaped by a relationship with several key factors of globalisation. Vitally, it aimed to re-centre the island's voice to evoke the local's experience of imposed spatial narratives within globalisation's 'spatial stretching' (Young, 2006: 305). To write about the way in which globalisation processes shape perceptions of environments is to first establish as a foundation a nuanced understanding of environment as constructed and experienced by subjective perception. Jackson reflects on Husserl's concept of the lifeworld which 'underscores the fact that 'we live in a world of intersubjective relationships, "directly conscious" and "plainly certain" of this experience before anything "is established scientifically, whether in physiology, psychology, or sociology" concerning its nature.' (Jackson, 2012: xii). The concept of the 'lifeworld' is thus used to discuss environments as conceptualised based on subjective embodied experience of moving in them, sometimes as opposed to an overarching theoretical view. Jackson infuses nuance into such understandings of the lifeworld, making sure not to dichotomise notions of 'naïve or natural attitudes' from 'theorized worldviews' but to explore the 'interdeterminate relationship between them.' (2012, xii). Considering the experience of living and moving in environment is what largely leads to conceptualisations of it and vice versa, it is worth first exploring the notion and implications of the image of the 'globe' that is evoked in conversations on globalisation.

Ingold's chapter on 'Globes and Spheres' (2000: 209-217) offers a perspective on the ways in which the image of a globe evokes certain notions about the lifeworld it describes. Ingold does not dispute the physical shape of the earth but discusses the implications of calling upon the image or notion of a globe when describing our experience of the environment we live in. While globalisation is often seen to describe the potential of the modern era to connect humankind into one universal experience of a space, Ingold describes how it in fact signals a process of separation because for one thing, one can only see the world in this way by leaving it. In the common imagination of a globe, the world 'appears as an object of contemplation, detached from the domain of lived experience', he writes. 'By and large, life is lived at such close proximity to the earth's surface that a global perspective is unobtainable' (2000: 209). He is pointing out that

calling upon the image of a globe when discoursing the human experience of environment signals a process of separation from corporeality as the experience of a globe is 'not part of the matrix of any lived experience of environment.' (211). Thus, this image can become problematic if leading to notions of a universal human experience of environment. I add this can fail to recognise the diversity of experiences of environment and, thinking back to the Wireless Set, imposes a standardised stretched perspective of space which fails to recognise those less able to embrace a global view because of geography, culture and/or mobility.

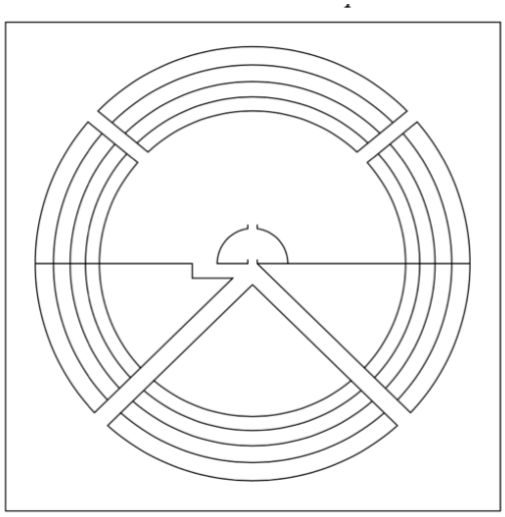


**FIGURE 2. YUP'IK COSMOLOGY IN CROSS SECTION. REPRODUCED BY INGOLD (2000) FROM ESKIMO ESSAYS: YUP'IK LIVES AND HOW WE SEE THEM, BY A. FIENUP-RIORDAN, PUBLISHES BY RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS (1990: 111).**

On the other hand he brings in the example of the Yup'ik conceptualisation of the environment which takes the form of a sphere, describing their perspective of being rooted in a dwelling from which roads lead out across surrounding consecutive spheres. Notions of landscape here are drawn based on positionality and the experience of moving within landscape.

> Unlike the solid globe, which can only be perceived as such from without, spheres – as is clear from this figure – were to be perceived from within. The global view, we might say, is centripetal, the spherical view centrifugal.
>
> (Ingold, 2000: 210)

On the whole, Ingold suggests that 'the lifeworld – imagined from an experiential centre is spherical in form, whereas a world divorced from life, that is yet complete in itself is imagined in the form of a globe.' This formulates a discussion on what the 'global outlook' might tell us about today's dominant conception of environment. Rather than focusing on the experience of

dwelling in it, it invoked an image of a standard human environment in a way that is expelled from landscapes of lived experience.

## *Space versus Landscape*

George Mackay Brown poetically described the way in which processes rooted in each of these perceptions of environment can interact, as activities married to the global perspective played out in a community who conceptualised environment based on the embodied experience of moving in it. Anthropological perspectives on landscape will support a further understanding of the participants' nuanced experience of contested perceptions of environment. Anthropologists including Bender (2001; 2006) and Ingold (2000) have described the difference between space and landscape as while space is homogenous description of environment, landscape describes the way environments are relational and are defined subjectively based on experiences of moving within them: '…through living in it, landscape becomes a part of us just as we are part of it.' (Ingold 2000: 191). To explain the difference between space and landscape he uses the example of a surveyor whose job it is to 'represent' the environment.

> No doubt the surveyor, as he goes about his practical tasks, experiences the landscape much as does everyone else whose business or life lies there. Like other people, he is mobile, yet unable to be in more than one place at a time. In the landscape, the distance between two places, A and B, is experienced as a journey made, a bodily movement from one place to the other, and the gradually changing vistas along that route. The surveyor's job, however, is to take instrumental measurements from a considerable number of locations, and to combine these data to produce a single picture which is *independent* of any point of observation.
>
> (Ingold, 2000: 191)

Landscape then, unlike a detached representation of space, is experienced from a subjective position and is defined based on movement. Bender agrees that while at first glance 'landscape' might seem to denote something objective and distant, it is something 'engaged with through active involvement'. The importance of the experience of a journey in defining landscape speaks to the importance of movement and thus mobility in this discussion. Considering the individual, corporeal and sensory experience of negotiating landscape is important to later understand the impact of one's landscape being painted by a disembodied view. Since landscape is 'a subjective notion, and being subjective and open to many understandings it is volatile' (Bender 2006: 2).

Overall, through an anthropological understanding of the impact and importance of conceptualisations of space we can further understand tensions between the embodied experience of landscape, and notions of space under globalisation. Since these differences have much to do with movement, the importance of understanding the corporeal experience of elderly islanders is becoming clear. Through those wide-spanning, landscape-less notions of environment, we can also see that subjective perspectives of environment are largely shaped by the scale at which one has the capacity to negotiate their landscape. Bender wrote, '…peoples delineation and understanding of landscape owe a great deal to the particular historical, social and political contexts in which they themselves live and work.' (2006: 3). The Orkney landscape, too, is conceptualised and experienced subjectively based on one's engagement with it. It seems worthwhile to note, however, the Orkney landscape tends to lend itself to a cultural acceptance of this very point: that human perceptions of environment paint the landscape just as they are determined by one's experience of living in the landscape.

## *Island-scape and Orkney ethnography*

Underpinning this project is my feeling that Orkney landscape and livelihoods especially elicit a conceptualisation of environment which acknowledges the ways mind and matter interact and have interacted through time. Members of the farming community might admire or observe how their neighbours have chosen to manage their land and livestock, or as David described – begrudgingly move his fence two feet in off the verge when reprimanded by the Orkney Islands Council. The landscape physically situates us among relics of past communities' perceptions of landscape. The crofting lifestyle was fading to an end as David returned home to Sanday to take on the family farm, in his twenties and newlywed. 'It would've been poverty', he tuts in his nineties. Those rebuilding or renovating houses might reflect on the original intended purpose for the buildings on their land, crofts with one end for cows and another for the large family, or wonder how to repurpose outbuildings previously used as cowsheds or mills. We wonder about the beliefs and intentions of our neolithic forebearers too, whose passage tombs now have a central role in Orkney's tourism economy. How might they have been experiencing this landscape? And what beliefs about life and death led them to burry only select members of the community in these cairns facing out to sea. Their skeletons were disarticulated and mixed with animal bones, pieces of pottery, stone tools, and jewellery. Clues of others' perception of the environment make up our physical landscape, thus instilling a collective understanding that landscape is painted by human life worlds. While this section could call for further discussion on deep time in Orkney and the feeling of being centred in a (pre)historic landscape of human intentionality, it will instead continue with an exploration around the experience of negotiating landscape as it begins to be prescribed a global view of environment. Today, human decisions

dictate resident's ability to move in the landscape: it was someone's subjective notion of space which led to the ferry terminal being moved seven miles south and it is someone's judgement that the sea is too stormy that cancels the ferry and bars resident's movement from the island. It was someone's decision that the non-linked isles are too far away to keep providing many health care services just as it is someone's notion of space that decides elderly residents can make the journey. For many reasons those centred in Orkney's non-linked isles are likely to perceive that landscape is something drawn by people's various subjective notions of it.

Furthermore, and as foreshadowed in the first chapter, many anthropologists are conceptualising islands in terms of the 'island-scape' to acknowledge the way the relationality of landscape works in the island experience. As anthropology moves away from discussing islands based on the extent to which they are bounded or not, it raises those voices discussing the way in which island and non-island experiences of space relate to one-another in complicated dynamics. Having a lived experience of the island-scape as it comes to be painted with the notions of space dominant in this era of globalisation, means weight is added to the demands of moving around it. It means struggling to access centralised services, having to do so more as services are withdrawn from the island and it means that the journey will likely not be understood by institutions with the 'flat' notion of space a 'surveyor' might produce. The understanding on isles that landscape is tied to human intention also often means globalisation's reshaping of the experience of island-scape is felt personally.

> *If I had to go to Kirkwall now it would cause difficulty to me to get in there and and and, you know what I mean…It hit the pensioners worse. The amenities being withdrawn – older people have difficulty…But they don't understand, and they wouldn't listen.*

So far, we have established that elderly people on islands are acutely impacted by and thus have a strong understanding of the way in which processes of globalisation carry and assert certain experiences and perceptions of environment. The rise of elderly populations in rural and island communities is itself a symptom of globalisation. Further processes of globalisation are present in their health care system which raises challenges in providing care which acknowledges their experience. Understanding the 'lifeworld' view and the way in which environments are defined subjectively based on movement within them can help explain many of the complaints around isles health care. The National Health Care service in the UK is a complicated network of systems and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into detail about its organisational structure. What is important to consider though, is that being a country-wide organisation in which decisions are made from, and services are provided in, centralised locations, the care of those in island communities is impacted by notions of landscape detached from any embodied experience of

moving within said landscapes. While the wide-spanning structure of the NHS often coincides with the conceptualisation of the environment from the image of a 'globe', elderly islanders have an acute awareness of navigating landscape on the smallest scales as defined based on personal mobility and sensibility.

> To say that landscape and time are subjective does not require a descent into the miasma of cultural relativity. It simply means that the engagement with landscape and time is historically particular, imbricated in social relations and deeply political.
>
> Bender (2002: 104)

## *National Health – Care beyond landscape?*

Bender writes, 'whether over the map, or on the ground there are, in most parts of the world, and at most times, conflicts that arise because of people's different understandings, preoccupations, engagements with places and landscapes.' (2002: 7). The UK's National Health Service (NHS) embodies and thus imposes an ever-dominant conceptualisation of environment that, as a national service is experienced in rural and island areas similarly to the voice over the wireless set, creating many intrinsic tensions in Sanday resident's efforts to access health care. As this chapter gives a very brief outline of the way in which the UK's NHS functions across spatial scales, it will begin to make a case for *the Wireless Set Dynamic* as a tool to further the potential of rural and island health care in Scotland and beyond.

The UKs National Health Service (NHS), established in 1948, is a public health care system based on the values that all residents should receive free, comprehensive health care despite ones geographical or financial position. It is a single entity which aims to employ global developments to provide equal support to communities across a wide space. Since the NHS has increased longevity, it is a source of resilience for island communities in many ways.

In Scotland, responsibility for the NHS is a devolved matter, meaning legislation about NHS Scotland is made by the Scottish Parliament. It is the Scottish Government who decides what resources are to be devoted to the NHS. Of course, at a global level, the World Health Organisation (WHO) asserts care standards so the NHS must also align practice to these, a note on the globalised nature of care discourse. At local levels around Scotland, there are community health partnerships – committees of NHS Boards which are structured to ensure close involvement of authorities, patients and public. Therefore, the NHS is organised in such a way that gives opportunity for local variations in set-up and most localities have integration joint

boards which allow more community control and collaboration with community councils. At the same time, there are almost always tensions at different levels. As the Scottish Government decides on funding, for example, its perception of community needs ultimately impacts the work the communities can do. As a complicated structure with many levels of centralised authority, it holds room for decision-makers to misunderstand contextual needs at multiple local scales and further, can be a difficult structure in which to feedback to those in power.

While the National Health Service (NHS) promises free and equal health care for all members of the public despite social or geographical circumstances, this wide-spanning health care setup dictated from centralised hubs often means an intrinsic level of service standardisation based on an urban reality. This structure finds itself out of place in many island communities and adaptations for their unique and varied needs can become complicated and costly. On this note, there is a lot of conversation within the NHS about how best to provide care to rural and island communities and a number of key challenges are experienced within the service. The Scottish Government recently introduced the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill in the Scottish Parliament.

> The accompanying communities impact assessments highlights concerns raised in the consultation which included: the general need for flexibility to account for specific island and rural communities when developing a national approach to social care, barriers to accessing social care for island communities such as transport limitations and small and dispersed populations, barriers to portability of care packages between urban and rural/island areas, barriers to social worker and social care recruitment due to working age population decline and the need to attract workers to the islands, ensuring funding models for social care accurately reflect additional costs associated with delivery on islands.
>
> (Burgess: 2022)

The experience of a complicated National Health Care service for elderly islanders is perfectly suited to being understood based on patterns by which environment is perceived subjectively, and the dynamics that come about based on tensions between these perceptions. Nation-wide care developments, just like the wireless set try to spread and offer services across space. The NHS supports increased longevity of elders on islands yet functions by perceptions that are standardised based on a centralised, urban experience of the environment. It thus also reveals vulnerabilities as elderly islanders try to navigate the environment this view constructs. *The Wireless Set Dynamic* as conceptual tool offers an opportunity to recentre the local experience to

embody a landscape painted by various opposing perceptions. On one hand this can resonate as a social dynamic whereby, for example, notions of anonymity or the personal-professional dichotomy are out of place on an island largely grounded in community care. Island residents' expectation for face-to-face dialogue can mean that the assertion of values from a 'disembodied' voice is often considered strangely out of place on the island. At a more weighted level, the care infrastructure of the island cannot fully depend on neighbourly support, so feelings deepen when those most acutely aware of navigating their landscape become at risk under the NHS' engrained perception of environment. Addressing this is it not only a case of imagining the island landscape, but also about embodying the barriers frail people experience in their lifeworlds. As the structure of the NHS can ultimately dictate life and death, local impressions of its inability to account for this can quickly become deeper than a raised eyebrow in face of professional ignorance.

The following section brings in an example of the NHS' centralised authorities interacting at different scales to make a decision about isles care which showed ignorance to the landscape as it was defined and negotiated for optimal health care at a local embodied level. 'Island community councils have united in an urgent plea to NHS Orkney this week, amid the threat of potentially "life-threatening" delays to medical care', was the opening line of an article in the local newspaper on 22nd November 2022. *The Orcadian* reported a tension between NHS Orkney, as based in Kirkwall on the Orkney mainland, and the community councils of ten of the archipelago's non-linked islands. While out of hours emergency calls from island residents are currently managed by the switchboard in Kirkwall's hospital, the Balfour, NHS Orkney was threatening a redirection of these emergency calls to NHS 24 – the emergency number for all of Scotland. Affected community councils united in a letter addressed to all county health board members, in which they expressed 'great surprise', their fears over the impact on resident's care, and their anger and dismay at not being consulted. Chairs of community councils from ten non-linked isles got together to write a letter asserting that the prolonged time to get through to a professional would add considerable waiting times and that the issue of navigating distance from Sanday to a nearby hospital is usually offset by being able to quickly get a response on the phone. They also asserted that whoever answered the phone on the NHS 24 number would have an even more separate perspective of the local area and would not know who to call or how to facilitate care in the island landscape and community, leading to further delays.

Orcadian

Redirection for isles out-of-hours service?

Islands united against 'life-threatening' healthcare change

By Sarah Sutherland

ISLAND community councils have united in an urgent plea to NHS Orkney this week, amid the threat of potentially "life-threatening" delays to medical care.

But NHS Orkney has defended plans to scrap the current out-of-hours medical service for the county's non-linked islands, in the face of an open letter addressed to all health board members.

The chairmen and women of ten community councils across the North and South Isles have rallied against the abrupt change, which they say came out of the blue.

According to their letter, it came as a "great surprise" to community council members when they were told at a meeting on November 7 that their current out-of-hours service at The Balfour switchboard is to be replaced

Continued on page 5

The out-of-hours service for Orkney's non-linked isles is currently managed by the switchboard at The Balfour – but residents across ten islands believe redirecting them to NHS 24 could cause "life-threatening" delays in emergency situations, given the distance issues they already face.

TRACTOR & FARM INSURANCE

Ferry funding plea ramps up with 'risk to life and limb'

By Iain Grant

**FIGURE 3. ARTICLE IN THE ORCADIAN. 22ND NOVEMBER 2022.**

> The out-of-hours service for Orkney non-linked isles is currently managed by the switchboard at the Balfour [Hospital in Kirkwall] – but residents across ten islands believe redirecting them to NHS 24 could cause "life-threatening" delays in emergency situations, given the distance issues they already face.
>
> (*The Orcadian:* November 2022)

This article exemplifies the fear and neglect island communities can feel when a 'disembodied' voice comes to assert control over their experience of landscape when life or death issues are concerned. The communities felt very strongly about the risk that would be posed by having to negotiate a system with no physical presence on the island and thus no applied or empathetic awareness of the processes necessary. Understanding the patterns expressed in the Wireless Set as evoked from the perspective of islanders could help to encourage a recentring of the island experience of a National Health Care service. The following weeks newspaper (1st December 2022) reported that the change had been put 'on hold' following the collective efforts of the island councils:

> One of the key issues raised by community councils was the lack of consultation over the move […] The pause on plans would allow officials to gain an understanding of the views held by island residents.
>
> (Stephen Brown, quoted in *The Orcadian*: December 2022)

THE ORCADIAN
Thursday, December 1, 2022

# NHS 24 isles rollout put on hold

By Sarah Gilmour

PLANS TO change the way out-of-hours medical services are accessed in Orkney's non-linked isles have been put back, following a public backlash.

Last Thursday, *The Orcadian* reported on the concerns shared in a letter penned by ten island community councils and addressed to NHS Orkney board members.

The fears outlined in the letter sprang from an announcement that the health authority was to roll out NHS 24 as the point of contact for out-of-hours medical enquiries in the isles. Currently, folk living in non-linked isles can access healthcare advice from an Orkney-based clinician outside working hours by contacting the switchboard at The Balfour.

Responding to concern voiced by these communities, which included fears that the change would delay urgent care and potentially put lives at risk, NHS Orkney has this week confirmed that it will be delaying the switchover to NHS 24, which had been due to begin in December.

One of the key issues raised by community councils was a lack of consultation over the move. This week, Orkney Health and Care's chief officer, Stephen Brown, said that the pause on plans would allow officials to gain an understanding of the views held by island residents.

"We are continuing to listen to the views of all those effected by the full-time implementation of NHS 24 in the outer isles and have postponed the initial timeframe of early December," Mr Brown said.

"We are working with the communities to hear their concerns, and together ensure there is a safe and resilient process in place that can be sustainable."

Stephen Brown.

**FIGURE 4. ARTICLE IN THE ORCADIAN. 1ST DECEMBER 2022.**

## *Recentring the Island Voice*

In 2010, NHS Orkney and Orkney Islands Council established a partnership arrangement to create an integration joint board, Orkney Health and Care. Orkney, 'like other communities, is facing a critical issue in terms of budget pressures on statutory services and an ageing population.' (Alexander, 2018: 4). Many medical professionals and rural health researchers have sought to address how best care could be provided to the isles. Brinkhorst and Siderfin (2018) wrote an interview-based report aiming to 'map the opinions of the elderly about their social lives, health and access to healthcare and through this to better understand their needs.' In the case of this thesis it supports an appreciation of the experiences whereby many services are lacking because local lifeworlds are underrepresented in the National Health Service's innate perception of environment as homogenous space. Experiences of island landscape ultimately become peripheral under this conceptualisation and are expected to adapt to care being centralised to the capital. Following the afore-mentioned report, Alexander (2018) aimed to address the question, 'How can community led care solutions be implemented in the small island communities of Orkney?' which also produced recommendations for the delivery of services in Orkney: 'Personalisation and choice are key drivers in the current health and social care landscape, and the introduction of the Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 has allowed individuals greater choice and flexibility in how their care needs are met.' This recommendation led to 'The Island Wellbeing Project' which appointed 'community link workers to the Isles.'(4). This project was evaluated twice using interviews and focus groups which found that there is very strong feeling on the isles around accessibility to health and social care and the complete absence of many services raises ethical questions (Foulds, et al. 2019). This project offers a recentring of the islands voice within the context of a new perspective on the root of the tension. Thus, the following chapter will outline some of the concerns around *The*

*Wireless Set Dynamic* present in many of the every-day examples spoken about within the community during my fieldwork. My main impression was that residents feel lucky when it comes to general check-ups as they have a permanent General Practitioner (GP) for an island of 550 residents. Until threats to emergency care services, they generally felt emergency care services whereby a helicopter would fly patients to Aberdeen or Inverness worked too. Their complaints were around the structures of the provision of care provided to the non-linked isles from Kirkwall, and the ways in which isles are neglected in the system that requires extra efforts and understandings to work in island environments.

During my time on Sanday, many residents expressed their dismay around the withdrawal of important health care services. Where a dentist used to visit to the island regularly and set up an office in the school or hotel, residents have had to travel to Kirkwall for dentist appointments for many years now. This loss seemed one of the first in many residents' minds when asked about their experience of health care. Many sounded frustrated or simply confused about this neglect for their island community and don't remember this withdrawal being explained or justified in conversation with them.

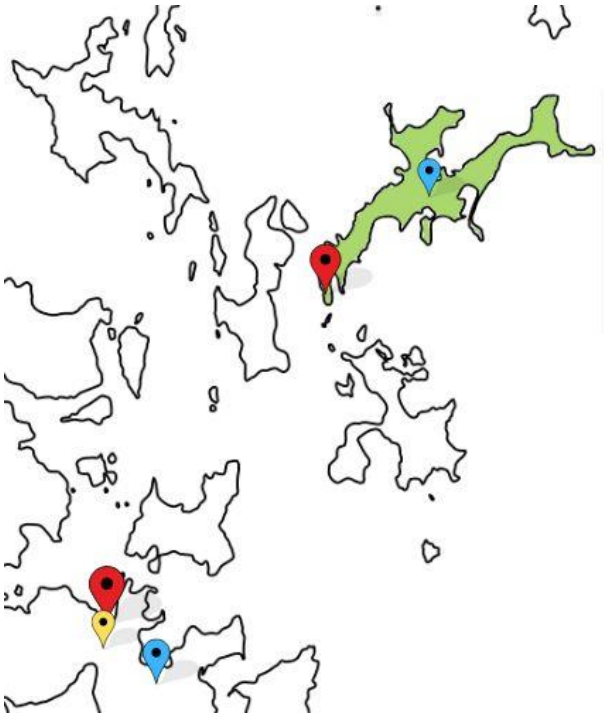


**FIGURE 5. POINTS IN JOURNEY TO KIRKWALL.**

As well as the dentist service being withdrawn years ago, chiropodists and optometrists stopped visiting after the COVID-19 pandemic. Islanders are now forced either to travel to Kirkwall or to pay for these services privately. The journey is frightening and near-impossible for most islanders and if they are to take it, they rely heavily on community support – from those with a

strong understanding of negotiating the island landscape – the weather, ferry and plane times, and with time to support an elder on this journey. Figure 5 depicts the points in this journey on a map from a disembodied, flattened description of space. The blue pins represent Sanday and Mainland Orkney's respective airports and the red pins, ferry terminals. The yellow pin represents Balfour Hospital in Kirkwall – Orkney's central hub for appointments that cannot be provided by parish General Practitioners. By mapping the journey from Sanday to Kirkwall as in Figure 5, and looking at it from above, it becomes clear how the corporeal and emotional experience of journeying across this landscape can become reduced under this conceptualisation of environment. What is not expressed in this map, and incidentally has proven difficult to express using written or spoken words, is the meaning of this landscape in the lifeworlds of physically and mentally vulnerable islanders.

> For those involved in rural studies, contemporary issues are often related to what is referred to as the 'mobilities turn', in essence the ways in which transportation, communication and technological development impact on the meaning of space and place for all ages.'
>
> Champion (2012: 81)

The film associated with this thesis focuses on the lifeworlds of three Sanday residents over the age of eighty to offer to the conversation of island health care, an image of their corporeal and emotional worlds, how they navigate vulnerability and find and express resilience as the environments around them pose acute challenges. The film does not provide an image of the journey from Sanday to Kirkwall for a hospital appointment simply because my participants either avoided or were unable to make the journey. Further, filming the journey rather than lending a trusting arm would have raised ethical risks. Elderly islanders travelling to Kirkwall for a hospital appointment would hope to be able to depend on a family member being able to spare a day of their time to accompany them, preferably driving them there and offering a hand at every leg of the journey. In this best-case scenario, an appointment still costs the price of fuel and of booking a car on the ferry two ways. Many islanders are in the habit of killing several birds with one stone though, so might happily make the journey if any and all appointments can be arranged in one day. One would take the day to run errands and perhaps stock up in the supermarket. Making efforts to recognise the commitment of a journey to Kirkwall from the perspective of islanders by, as Jean Soord describes in the film, arranging all necessary appointments in one day, is an example of an effort to recognise and thus not complicate their experience of moving in the environment.

Without the support of a friend or family member, the journey looks very different and for elders on their own is often impossible. Having gotten up and out of bed early, with the help of home-carers for some, residents need to make their way to the ferry terminal at Loth. For this they would need to book the local taxi or ask a friend or family member to drive them. Remembering the ferry times and organising this is already demanding for some ageing minds. After being dropped off at the pier, they would need to hope for a helping hand walking down the ramp onto the ferry and past the car deck up the stairs. In strong sea winds this can be challenging for even the able-bodied (most people in Orkney know the feeling of being close to blown off their feet or struggling for breath in strong winds). Climbing the steep narrow stairs into the passenger area of the ferry is impossible for most people with poor mobility and especially complicated with poor sight. A couple of the ferries are said to have a lift, but which is not readily available and rarely works. If travelling by car, and if holders of a disability badge, passengers are allowed to stay in their car. This would depend on having someone fit to drive bring you on your journey. Say our passenger was able to make it up the steps into the passenger lounge, the doors are heavy and there are high steps in every doorway so if alone, one would need the strength to hold open a door and the sight and mobility to step over it. The environment is scattered with safety and warning signs about taking care on slippery surfaces and using railings. Inside the passenger lounges are plastic seats or leather-covered benches which are comfortable enough for most but have straight backs and lack the support many elders are likely to need for an hour and a half long journey. Especially in winter, the sailings can be rough, and harrowing for even the fittest of passengers. Upon arriving at the Kirkwall pier, their next task is to make it to the hospital. This would mean arranging a taxi to collect them at the pier. They would hope to luck out with a sympathetic taxi driver who would help them out by parking close to the ferry, looking out for them and perhaps meeting them to lend a hand into the car. Without this support, elders with poor mobility, sight or hearing would struggle to looking for a taxi on a busy pier amidst traffic leaving the ferry and traffic queueing for the next crossing. The journey so far has been mentally exhausting and frightening for our hypothetical islander as they have struggled now for several hours to navigate risks in their environment. Having arrived at the hospital, often already fatigued from the journey, they would hope to be looked after and seen swiftly, otherwise risking a long time in the waiting room worrying about tending to their needs in an unfamiliar environment. Given that there are usually only two sailings a day, morning and evening, this day trip means not only planning a hospital visit but a full daytrip to Kirkwall, where to eat lunch and dinner and how to get around. Appointments can be delayed, and plans can change so without the support of someone cognitively and physically fit, it can be complicated, frightening or impossible to manage one's day alone. Many are lucky enough to have family or friends in Kirkwall to visit for lunch or to stay the night until the ferry

the next morning, but many aren't fit for a night away from home. The landscape as experienced from the lifeworld of an elder from an island is far from clear in figure 5 and further, barely encapsulated in this short paragraph. All in all, being expected to travel to Kirkwall by ferry is one way in which elderly Sanday residents are made vulnerable by a care system which imposes a landscape-less perception of space by the centralisation of services as residents are expected to risk their health in efforts to seek out health care.

Their other option is to travel by plane, a much shorter journey of around fifteen minutes. The plane is cramped though, with only eight seats and a big step to get in. Seats often book up quickly, so it takes organisational capacity to book a ticket in time for an appointment. Mary Seagrief's daughter, Rose told me that she gave up her seat once when David needed to go to Kirkwall and found there wasn't space on the plane. Compared with the pier, the airport in Kirkwall is far away from the hospital, meaning a longer taxi journey and thus a higher fare. If elders are to travel alone by plane they rely on careful planning of transport arrangements and many kind helping hands along the way. In their frail states they take risks along many legs of the journey and usually find the journey draining physically and mentally. Going to Kirkwall is not only about the logistics of getting there but about the experience and implications of being forced out of their comfort zone by an authority which does not seem to recognise the journey. However, many health care service providers no longer visit the isles because the journey is expensive to the NHS, time consuming and inconvenient. To be situated in a centralised space and with the capacity to dictate the experiences of islanders without having to experience space as a journey expresses privilege. It is reminiscent of the one-way dialogue evoked in *The Wireless Set* and is often felt as cruel or as a power-dynamic on the island.

**FIGURE 6. STAIRS ON THE EARL SIGURD**

I grew to understand that those residents who work to advocate for improved health care provision must learn to carefully choose their battles, aware that being provided one service might reduce the likelihood of being granted support in other ways. For example, Care for Sanday, a subgroup of the Sanday Development Trust, is a team of Sanday residents working enthusiastically towards establishing very sheltered housing on the island. As it stands, residents whose health or mobility changes such that their own home no longer suits their needs, have their care-home options in Kirkwall and on another north-isle called Westray. Details such as doorways and corridors too narrow for a wheelchair could lead to someone being uprooted from their home community and support network. *Care for Sanday* emphasise the impact very sheltered housing would have on the island and are largely inspired by Kalisgarth on Westray.

> A facility such as this on Sanday would not only enable residents who require 24-hour care to remain on the island that is their home, surrounded by family and friends but would also offer a wide range of local employment opportunities at a variety of skill levels, enabling existing islanders to obtain employment as well as attracting new families to Sanday.
>
> (Care for Sanday Steering Group: 2022)

One day on Backaskail farm having been for a walk on the beach, I was chatting to David's daughter in law who was enthusiastic about my visits and about a project to provide an image of elderly resident's experiences of an ill-fitting health care structure. She regularly stands witness to the difficulties they experience and recalled one occasion whereby the hospital staff in Kirkwall had deemed a patient fit to be discharged. Since he had been flown to the hospital in an emergency, he had few belongings with him when he was sent by taxi to the pier to get on the ferry back home to Sanday. He was in a frail state of health and still in his hospital gown. The passengers on the ferry did a sweep around to pay his fare when the ferry staff came asking for tickets. The patient had no arrangements in place to get home from the terminal at Loth once the ferry arrived, becoming completely dependent on the community around him to arrange his transport home and get him settled inside his house.

Elderly residents of Sanday, in their efforts to access a National Health Care service have a very similar experience to that which Mackay Brown describes of the residents of Tronvik. Thus, Mackay Brown does not only paint us a clear poetic picture of the dynamics of this experience but offers us a tool with which to remedy it – that being by recentring the local experience of landscape as it begins to be defined by out-of-place narratives. Mackay Brown is also telling us a bigger story about the experience of space under globalisation, taking those he considered most

sensitive to the 'globe' perspective as in a powerful position to teach us about globalisation processes. This chapter has described some of the Sanday community's experiences of vulnerability within space dictated by a homogenised detached view of it. In this relationship with the structure of the NHS, the island community is offered opportunities for increased resilience. As care is both a resource and a relationship, they also experience vulnerabilities in the relationship through which it is provided: they struggle to find a dialogue with professionals who are rooted in their island landscape and their experience of landscape feels not seen nor validated by those in power. This dynamic is thus in some ways a social relationship between communities existing in different environments and on this level, the Sanday community – to a great extent – can continue to carry out community care in a way which fits the organic dynamic whilst raising an eyebrow when notions of urban professionalism rub off on their daily lives. However, this is a dynamic which becomes loaded and harmful when it dictates weighted personal experiences. Thus, these processes carry implications about the care and belonging of the community within the archipelago and the country as much as they expose frailties of individuals. It is this project's core grounding that understanding the experience of frailty of elderly islanders can offer much deeper insight about how environment is experienced by those most vulnerable to globalisations dominant conceptualisations of it, and thus can let us make reflections about the nature of a globalised environment on the whole.

## *Islands of vulnerability and resilience*

Notable in the recent newspaper article and similar examples of discourse around the provision of care to islands, are the use and semantics of the words, 'vulnerability' and 'resilience' when discussing the capacities of island communities. This thesis too, has employed these terms in the knowledge that this chapter would come to describe its use of them. In the article above (fig. 3), NHS Orkney's head of primary care was quoted defending the proposed transition to NHS 24 stating it would, 'increase resilience across the isles.' The article continued:

> …island representatives have come together to express fears over the 'profound effect' this could have on emergency healthcare provision in Orkney's most vulnerable communities.
>
> (*The Orcadian*: November 2022)

An exploration of the semantics of these terms will demonstrate the way in which contested perceptions of environment are also relationship dynamics. It will become clear that communities' vulnerability is categorised as such in connection to a notion of strength or stability, teaching us about the expectations of communities and individuals within

environments of globalisation and thus encouraging a practice of looking to places of vulnerability and resilience in order to understand globalisation itself. Campbell (2009) writes about the use of such terms in describing social economic systems, 'dictionaries tend to define vulnerability as susceptibility to being harmed or wounded.' (86). It tends to describe the condition of an entity (a person, group or place) in relation to a specific threat and accordingly, a focus on vulnerability reduction requires the vulnerable entity to adapt, rather than limiting the hazard (2009: 94).

> Most attempts to reduce vulnerability have focused on the characteristics of the vulnerable entity that give rise to the capacity to suffer harm. Resilience, used in much of the disaster literature as an antonym for vulnerability, refers to the capacity of an entity to recover from harm.
>
> Campbell (2009: 94)

Lauer et al (2013: 41) write that 'what determines system vulnerability is its exposure and sensitivity to perturbations and its capacity to adapt'. It must be noted that in island studies or studies of small communities, resilience is often a loaded term whose usage is discussed in the context of colonialisation and the way in which such communities are disrupted and made vulnerable by exterior harm, then assessed in terms of resilience. 'If contemporary island societies are indeed vulnerable today it is a result of changes wrought by exposure to a wider world' (Campbell 2009: 94). His conceptualisation of the word 'vulnerable' and how it's used to describe islands suggests the term dubs the island the problem and the mainland robust, independent and central. Since, as Van der Leeuw (2008) writes, concepts of ''resilience'', ''robustness'', and ''vulnerability'' can only be understood in relation to one another' (29), the use of the term gives rises to discussion around the structural characteristics of the entities using them.

Vulnerability and resilience language in the context of the above newspaper article in describing care for non-linked isles implies an expectation on island communities to adapt to an ill-fitting system, connotating the superiority of said system and thus a power dynamic. This chapter explored these terms to establish the point that communities and individuals on islands are made vulnerable in relation to a wider system which defines their environment. By noticing the way in which the application of these terms in fact speaks to the nature of the wider system which pulls the vulnerability and resilience of its members into question, we can thus understand all above descriptions of the Sanday community's experience as revealing of the narratives which come to shape it. *The Wireless Set* is not only a story about an island

community's experiences of a globalising world, but a way of spotlighting their experience as having power to reveal the flaws and fragilities of the system that concerns it.

When something as personal and serious as health care becomes a process revealing differences in perceptions of environment, such differences become charged with impressions about vulnerability and resilience on a personal level. So, if looking to cases of vulnerability and resilience within structures that create these states can tell us about said structure, what might a look at some of today's most acute experiences of vulnerability and resilience be able to tell us about the very nature of environments of globalisation?

# *Frailty*

## *Environments of Ageing*

*The Wireless Set* is a framework within which to understand globalisation's perception of environment and the dynamics this can spark at many scales. Mackay Brown takes the radio, not to symbolise the poor resilience of the community, but to centre their experience in such a way that asks: in which relationship and which construction of space are they vulnerable? Where are the vulnerabilities in this dominant construction then? Ingold too, in terms of 'Globes and Spheres' defined the perceptions of environments that may lead to such dynamics: the displaced perspective is prone to map environments as globes, as objects of contemplation detached from lived experience and thus reshaping experiences of landscape. Understanding health care under the NHS as a wireless set too, offers a framework within which to consider the impact of its disembodied authority over space as revealing vulnerabilities at multiple scales, in the community and in individual lifeworlds. The environment conceptualised from lived experience is complex and textured and defined based on one's own embodied experience of moving in it. *The Wireless Set Dynamic* as a framework then, also recommends embodying the most acute experiences of vulnerability within these dominant notions of space to truly understand the dynamics of this relationship from every scale.

In old age, people can often be socially categorised as intrinsically and homogenously frail or vulnerable. The term 'frailty' describes the capacity of individual persons to navigate or adapt to external threats. Thus, just as the words 'vulnerability' and 'resilience' refer to the capacity of communities to avoid harm by navigating wider systems, anthropologists in the field of ageing and care have been discussing more and more, the ways in which the experience of frailty is contextualised by environments and systems which expose it. Peace's extensive studies on environments of ageing acknowledge the importance of environmental contexts from the macro

scale of an ever-globalising world to the cultural specificity of environments of ageing, to the importance of domestic spaces in shaping the experience of ageing. Milbourne and Kitchen, (2014) acknowledge the role of mobility in the relationship between urban and rural, thus offering an example of one key way in which environments define frailty in Sanday resident's experience on the island. Many also discuss frailty as defined by authoritative institutions. In 'the social construction of frailty', Kaufman (1994: 56) discusses the health care system in the US as a context defining frailty, pointing out that this system is the only one providing an ideology for defining it and the methods for addressing it. Thus, this project is situated in a body of anthropological research into experiences of ageing as intermeshed with changing environments in many senses of the word.

> Anthropology continues to challenge universalizing biomedical reductionism of age through attention to cultural context, narrative, identity, and personhood. It has been further enriched by theories of care mobility, globalization, and science and technology studies.
>
> (Danley, 2019: 1)

Furthermore, many anthropologists are discussing frailty in terms of dynamics of interdependence, and some discuss it in relation to individualism and around agency, choice and dispossession. Many, often creative writers such as Donald Hall (2015) are recentring attention to the stories of elders. In response to his work, Popova writes '…the great tragedy of our culture of appearances is that people seem to disappear from our scope of curiosity as they grow old' (2015), acknowledging both that part of the ageing experience can often mean becoming socially peripheral, as well as the power of recentring such powerful insights. There is increasing emphasis in the health care profession on the philosophy of 'Person Centred Care' (Brooker, 2007: 29-39), which strives to recognise the unique personal context around care needs. Lonergan (2023) further expresses the importance for person-centred care in understanding and staying in tune with the reality of elders in order to provide the full extent of pastoral care. *The Wireless Set Dynamic* as a contestation of space which can take the shape of personal feelings of abandonment is a concept that could be carried over into such discussions (Brooker, 2008; Lonergan 2023; Fazio et al. 2018). In *Anthropology of Ageing and Care* (2015), Buch writes that emerging forms of care for the elderly reflect diverse social changes and calls for an understanding of care as both a resource and a relational practice and combines emic and etic approaches to the study of care to highlight the relationship between 'global political economic transformations and the most intimate aspects of daily life' (1). *The Wireless Set Dynamic*, as an

assertion of a construction of environment and the complex dependency relationships around it, is the context under which this thesis considers experiences of frailty.

## *The Frail Wireless Set*

> 'This is a great affliction you poor soul,' said Mr Sinclair the missionary. 'This is very bad news indeed. Yet he died for his country. He made the great sacrifice. So that we could all live in peace, you understand.' Betsy shook her head. 'That isn't it at all, 'she said. 'Howie's sunk with the torpedoes. That's all I know.' 'I'll break the news to him,' said Mr Sinclair. From inside came the noise of shattering wood and metal. 'He knows already,' said Betsy to the missionary. 'Hugh knows the truth of a thing generally before a word is uttered.' Hugh moved past them with the axe in his hand.
>
> (George Mackay Brown, 1969: 2006)

Before this, Mackay Brown made revelations about the Wireless Set through its role in the community. Around the dinner table, it represented the impact of a detached disembodied perception of environment expressing its authority and standing out of place in the community's organic dynamic. When it started to envelop the island in its narrative of a nation-wide process, the community became enmeshed in a dynamic whereby they were made vulnerable. Members of their community were at war and the information about the war did not speak to their experience. The island was made peripheral and their emotional lifeworlds became situated in a narrative which made them peripheral as persons. Mackay Brown ends his story by moving deeper, from the community's experience of listening to a strange, disembodied authority amongst and despite their daily lives, to the emotional intuitive worlds the voice passes by. When Mr. Sinclair described Hugh and Betsy's loss of their son within a national narrative from which their experience had been excluded, the emotional depth of their lived experience was neither seen nor understood, their vulnerability and resilience challenged. Thus, by peeling back the layers of the fictional community's lifeworld, Mackay Brown is poetically expressing the way in which the assertion of disembodied perceptions of their space ties into a complex emotional dynamic and is felt most acutely in the emotional lifeworlds of those living in the starkest contrast to it. This is a layer in the emotional and corporeal lifeworlds of this project's participants I am hesitant to reduce to written words.

## *Embodying shifting perspectives*

This chapter then, acknowledges that this would be the natural point in our discussion of *The Wireless Set,* to move to an expression of the Sanday residents' embodied emotional experience

of frailty in space. It would call for a reflection on the ways in which small-scale domestic or natural environments like a set of wobbly steps leading up from a beach expose frailty and emotional vulnerability and expect resilience. It would mean reflecting then on the many ways in which scales of perceptions and of constructions of environments create worlds of vulnerability and resilience. However, Mackay Brown not only encourages a deeper look into this embodied emotional experience, but through the example of metaphor and poetic writing he offers a methodological framework within which to do so. He encourages us to do this not by making their experience an 'object of contemplation' (Ingold, 2000: 210) as my written description of their experience of frailty might threaten to do, but by centring and sensorially embodying their lifeworld.

Thus, the following section discusses the potential of an observational camera and of the filmmaking process to explore *the Wireless Set Dynamic* in all its shifting gazes. It anchors the film in this thesis' overall discussion on environment as perceived from various perceptions, exploring the potential to embody a frail lifeworld as well as a detached gaze. Grimshaw and Ravetz (2009) discuss the use and understandings of observational cinema based largely on the extent to which it can encourage attachment or detachment from corporeal experience. While on one hand it has been considered 'a form of scientism in which a detached camera serves to objectify and dehumanize the human subjects of its gaze' (2009: 545) they make a new case for observational cinema:

> The distinctive emotional texture of the film emerges from the dense web of relationships between people and place. Far from being intruders, Everson and Stoica learn to inhabit an already confined space, developing relationships of trust and understanding with their subjects that become an integral part of the work itself.
>
> (2009: 545)

A core focus of this thesis has been the relationality of landscape, and the experience (or lack there of) of moving in it as that which creates perceptions of it. Ingold emphasises the importance of 'enskillment', a term emphasising a relational perspective which:

> conceives of the human subject as a complex organism enmeshed in a dense web of relationships that includes other sentient beings, non-human animals, and the material environment itself. Through this relational approach, development and change are understood as ongoing, reciprocal processes in which the human subject-as-organism both shapes and is shaped through its relations with the lifeworld.

(Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2009: 550)

The experience of ageing on Sanday is largely an acute experience of landscape, one where the smallest details in the environment become part of a lifeworld of frailty. Within this lifeworld, disembodied perceptions of environment reach out and map their space, altering and challenging their experience of navigating it. Film offers an opportunity to inhabit and explore the fine details of another lifeworld. However, this discussion in many ways comes as a response to critiques of observational methods as a detached 'fly on the wall' approach.

While this project seeks to attest to the powers of observational film as an opportunity to commit to a methodology of embodiment and empathy, as well as to express the intangible details of vulnerability and resilience to a diversity of audience, the controversy around observational film to achieve this raises the most important issue of all. That is that the film making process itself debates the validity of knowledge based on the extent to which it is grounded in an embodiment of the experiences of others. After spending a summer using the camera to try to embody my participant's experiences of space in some way, paying attention to the magnitude for them of steps or pieces of gravel I hardly noticed before, I left for eight months to sit in a dark editing room above the arctic circle to edit hours of footage into a film. I came to contemplate their experience from afar, so immersed in this contemplation through editing, that I struggled to picture their 'here' and 'now'. After inhabiting the disembodied gaze with which many others have been guilty of discussing and contemplating the island, I returned to Sanday with a finished film, a year after my first visit there. It was then that I was deeply struck by the sense of being again immersed in my participant's depth of experience and thus gained a strong understanding of the ways in which the shifting gazes of *The Wireless Set Dynamic* interact.

When I came off the ferry in the morning, my first stop was Howe to see David and Jean Sinclair. Jean was sitting in the same chair in that dimly lit corner I had found it very difficult to film in. The dining room looked as though someone had given it a big spring clean, clearing away piles of clutter and removing any tripping hazards. The table was pulled to the side of the room to create a large open space to move around in and Jean was there, struggling to put music on. 'I'm to stay in this corner', she said. 'I had a fall and was there for about an hour before they came up from the farm and now I'm not allowed to get up otherwise I'll get put in a home.' I don't know how long she'd been asking *Alexa* to play some music but the technology wasn't responding to her soft voice and thick accent. 'Alexa! Play Blue Roses', I enunciated, and the little speaker started to sing. We chatted for a couple of minutes before she said, 'Go through and see Dave. I'm not sure if he's sleeping.' David wasn't in his usual place in the living room, and it didn't seem like he was

in the bathroom either as the door was ajar and it was quiet inside. I peered back into the dining room, 'He's not in there?' 'The carers came in this morning, and he said he didn't want to get up because he was tired', Jean told me. I checked the bedroom which was empty with a perfectly made bed and was puzzled. I'd had some warning that I might notice a change in both of their health since my last visit, but I started to wonder where David might've gotten to without Jean knowing. The house felt isolated and quiet though it wasn't empty. I tried another door and found David in a second bedroom, in a hospital bed looking pale. 'Are you on duty tonight?', he asked me, 'I want to get up.' He'd had a fall in the winter and broken his femur. Having been in the hospital for eight weeks he arrived home just a couple of weeks prior to my visit. It was 11.00am so I asked whether he'd manage to wait another hour for the carer to help him out of bed. David nodded and his lungs rattled. He lit up a little bit with some of my small talk, but I was having to shout, and he was having to squint and shift towards me to gesture that he couldn't hear. When he moved, he'd cough and struggle to sit up enough to let air pass. 'Shall I leave you in peace?' I eventually asked and he nodded. As I was leaving, I met another visitor at the door and was relieved to be reminded of the caring community in which the couple were battling old age.

My next stop was the community centre where I had organised a debut screening of the film, paper bowls of popcorn dotted around enthusiastic viewers. The feeling of having a room full of pensioners watch a film I had made about their own battles with frailty and personal searches for resilience was one of deep accountability and situated me deeply in those experiences of theirs. In contrast to this, I was reminded of my own perception of the Sanday landscape on my first visit, a year ago to that date. The sky was overcast, and I drove around a green flat landscape, dotted with houses and farms and lined with sandy beaches but felt it was desolate. I saw very few people outside and since there are no markets or busy streets or packed-full pubs it is very hard to get a sense of community without becoming a part of it. Instead, understanding the community depends on knocking on a door and jumping straight from a detached view of environment into the domestic, personal experience of Sanday. It was a visitor to the island who reminded me of this when he commented that he was pleased he came to see this film and to have had his perception of the idyllic rural broken. He felt he gained a deep sense of peoples' lives here. On this note, many on Scotland's islands contest the use of the term remote and have seen it be related to the way in which visitors can be prone to willingly blind themselves to mundane or hard-to-swallow aspects of local daily life that would interfere with their own mission to escape such things. In this case, the visitor was glad to find a sense of the experience of islanders as like me, he'd felt a significant gap between his perception of the island natural

environment (the landscape of fields and houses) and the deeper layers of community, social and personal life.

My shock to see David's deterioration in health can only be explained by my displacement from his world for the months prior. It was through displacing myself and battling with a perspective that left me prone to contemplating the island from a disembodied gaze that I felt a stark connection when I returned. Thus, the film, 'The Wireless Set' is about using the camera to empathetically explore the lifeworlds of ageing islanders and their vulnerability and resilience as defined by negotiations of space: both on corporeal scales of moving around in landscape, to emotional and social impacts of having it conceptualised and shaped by a disembodied authority. The experience of applied visual anthropology pulls the filmmaker and researcher into almost all levels of this dynamic, from the close focus on each wobbly step and the felt accountability of filming moments of vulnerability, to a disembodied contemplation of a lifeworld and landscape in which I had, at some stages, no physical presence. On seeing the film, some members of the community were brought closer into jeans lifeworld, as she struggled with her mobility in the island landscape.

> As a direct result of seeing the film about life on Sanday, The Wireless Set, for our old folk by Esme Andrews, The Sanday Men's Shed stepped up to the plate to improve the quality of life for one of its residents and in doing so will help many others. The issue was it was becoming hard and harder for one of the residents to enjoy her daily walk along the beach with her beloved dog. The Men's Shed set two in improving access to Saville beach by building some steps. They created these out of reclaimed lorry wheels and landscaping the sand. The steps were installed along the side of the former beachside store house. Rope that was also salvaged from the harbour was used as a handrail. Now there is safe access to the beach and daily walks are back on the menu for all the local residents. This may never have happed if members of the Men's Shed had not seen the film, which highlighted the issue in very real terms.
>
> Sanday Men's Shed: April 2023

Screening the film to the community not only encouraged my own reflection on the embodiment and disembodiment of various experiences of landscape but demonstrated the power of film in expressing these experiences to others too. Film offers a sensory understanding of the corporeal emotional experiences of others. This example also encourages reflection on the way in which subjective perceptions of landscape shape the very landscape as much as the landscape creates

subjective experience. It was when prompted to empathise with Jean's lifeworld that community members reshaped it to appreciate her experience.

**Figure 7. New steps onto Saville beach**

## *Conclusion*

This project started out as an exploration of problems concerning the provision of health care to Orkney's non-linked Isles. An anthropological consideration of perceptions of environment perceives this as a relationship of contested experiences of landscape. As a structure which both supports increased resilience and exposes vulnerabilities, the National Health Service (NHS) is largely a product of a globalised world. The provision of care seeks to employ a global view of space to extend resources in a transcendence of landscape. Ageing islands too, are in many ways features of a globalised world yet acutely experience the shortcomings of globalisation's dominant perceptions of space. While islands have often been studied in the past as bounded against the impacts of globalisation, this thesis understands that their experience of vulnerability and resilience is enmeshed in a relationship of contested perceptions of environment. The provision of care by the NHS to Sanday articulates many perceptions of space, from the disembodied description of space from a physically absent authority to acute

experience of vulnerability when one's experience of negotiating landscape goes misunderstood. Its structure means its services reach out under a one-way authoritative dialogue. It is controlled from a centralised space and thus practice is largely standardised to what works in an urban setting. Decisions are made from out-with the island, thus from a detached notion of the island space which maps space from above and makes it an 'object of contemplation.' Thus, care under the NHS, like *The Wireless Set* is both a resource and a dynamic.

In this light, this project is one of applied anthropology, offering *The Wireless Set Dynamic* as a conceptual framework within which healthcare professionals in Scotland can understand the needs of rural and island communities. It explores the way in which dominant perceptions of space become present in tools and services which seek to improve the resilience and connectedness of a country at large. While no experience of landscape is the same, it is described and defined by subjective bodily experience. The framework asks for a consideration of lifeworlds, the perception of a space one might have when detached from the matrix of lived experience as well as that developed by inhabiting a body and mind of acute sensitivity to environments and the way they are dominantly acted upon.

Not only does Mackay Brown realise that this is a social dynamic between communities – tied up with themes of power and one-way dialogue and misrepresentation – he also offers a tool with which to further reflect on globalisation processes. This project then, does not only stand to offer a framework within which to consider health care provision to Scotland's rural and island communities but follows the lesson to centre voices of acute vulnerability and resilience in order to discuss the nature of globalised environments. In this light, discussions around health care become a lens through which to understand that those detached perceptions of space disregard and reshape landscapes of movement and expose vulnerabilities and frailties in its members. This plays out as a relationship of misunderstanding when a community feels unseen by a disembodied voice asserting its values on their experience, to deeper feelings of neglect when those values dictate matters of life or death. It also reveals itself in deep emotional and corporeal sensitivity to perception of environment, and thus patterns which describe but do not embody one's experience of moving in landscape.

The tool *The Wireless Set* provides is a note on the power of recentring the voice of those most starkly impacted by globalisation's dominant perceptions of environment. Having understood in this thesis, that terms of vulnerability and resilience speak to the situatedness of communities or persons within a given structure, this project has wondered, 'What might the acute embodied experiences of vulnerability and resilience reveal about the very nature of globalisation? *'The Wireless Set* not only describes a radio but becomes a term reminding us about the

vulnerabilities of globalisation itself. Film has been explored as a method with potential to retune the wireless set and to embody the lifeworld and landscape of those whose vulnerability it reveals and resilience it demands. As *The Wireless Set Dynamic* describes misunderstanding of a space based on the tensions between the disembodied perspective as well as the local experience of this perspective, film equally inspires an opportunity to embody these shifting gazes of vulnerability and resilience.

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