UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

A Home away from Home?

An anthropological study on the experiences of home-making and feelings of belonging amongst Dutch migrants in northern Norway

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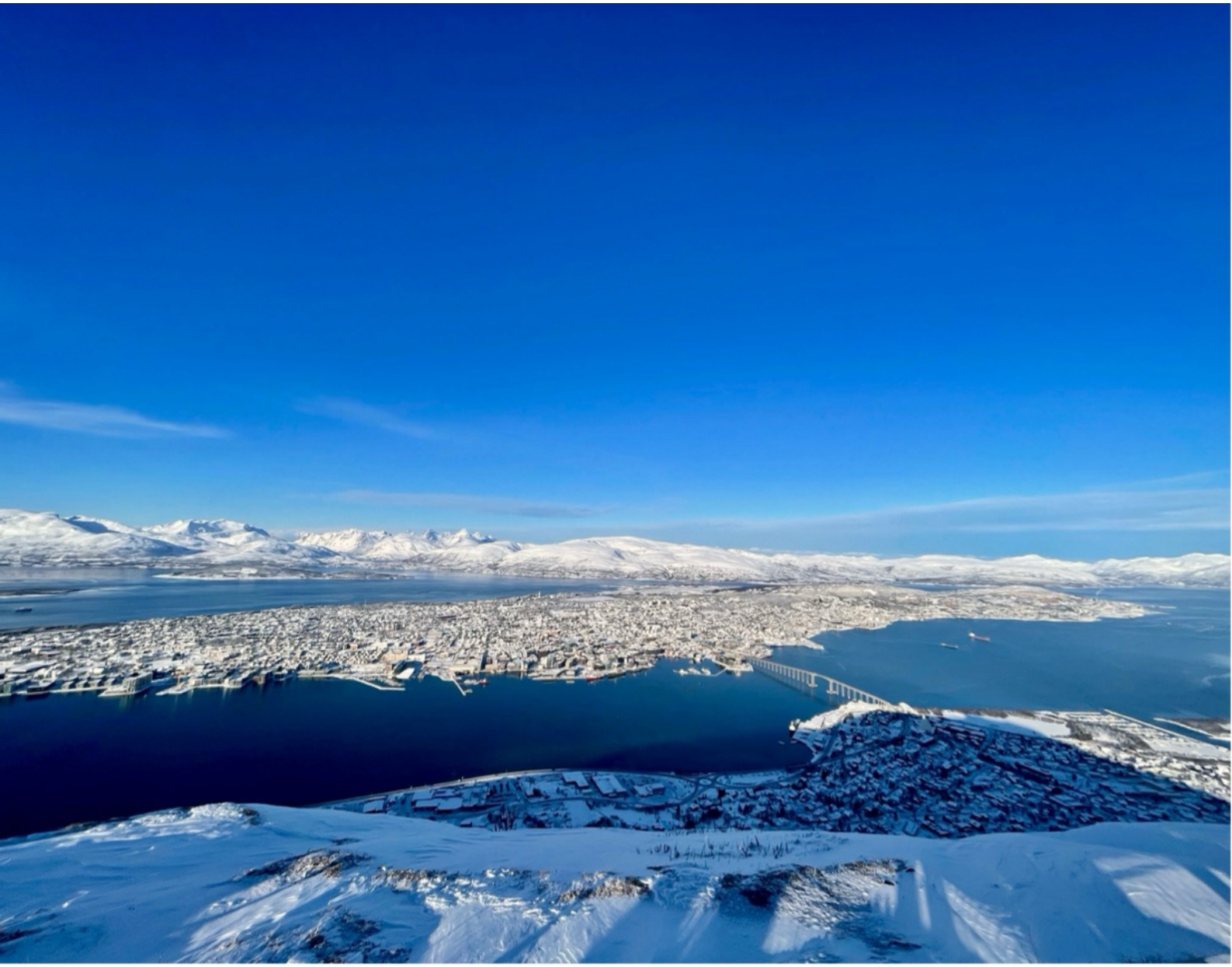

Abstract

This thesis is part of a bigger project, and, together with the film *A Home Away From Home* (2024), illustrates different ways in which Dutch people experience living in northern Norway and how they engage in home-making practices. The study explores the ways in which they engage in home-making practices to create a home for themselves, while also reflecting on their sense of belonging. The research can be placed in a broader context within anthropological debates on migration and 'home'. Through employing different qualitative research methods, such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and making use of the film camera, this thesis aims to argue that Dutch migrants in Norway engage in home-making practices through engaging in (new) hobbies, creating networks, embodying the environment, learning the language, and adapting to a new culture, which also evoke feelings of belonging. All while reflecting on their identity as a Dutch person in northern Norway. Moreover, the study analyses the role of memories of an old home in creating a new one, together with exploring the transnational ties that Dutch migrants sustain in both the Netherlands and Norway.

Keywords: *home, home-making, migration, identity, placemaking, belonging*

“Home, a place and a special relationship with it, lies at the roots of everyday life. However, only conditions such as those engendered by international migration bring it to the fore as a unique source of attachments, desires, needs, and dilemmas.”

- Paolo Boccagni 2017, xxi.

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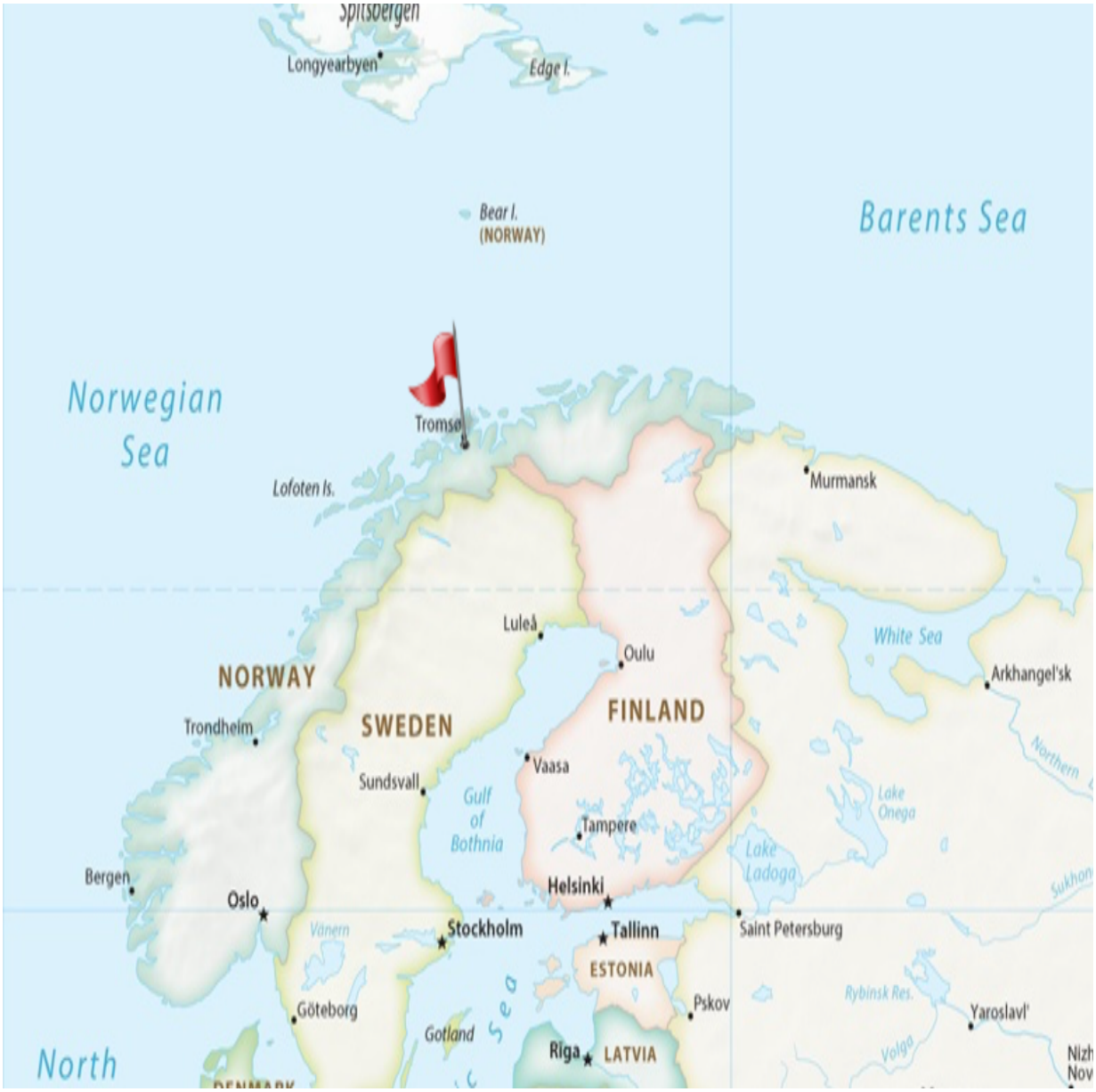
Figure 1: Tromsø on a map



[1]

The image shows where Tromsø, where the research was carried out, is located on a map of northern Europe.

[1] *Tromsø på kartet*. Photograph. TimeIn. http://lokaltid.timein.org/norge/tromso/map Accessed May 6, 2024.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is a part of the bigger master project that I have carried during my studies for a Master of Philosophy in Visual Anthropology degree at UiT, the Arctic University of Norway. The project was planned and organised starting in November 2022, and finished in May 2024, resulting in this thesis and a thirty-minute film. I conducted fieldwork from the middle of April 2023 until August 2023. The work on this project provided a unique and valuable experience which I am very grateful for. I could not have carried out this project without the help of some very important people, whom I would like to thank here.

First and foremost, I would like to thank the people who have helped me tremendously by participating in this project. It is through your participation and your openness that I can even do this project, thank you. In particular, I would like to thank Miek, Ernst, Ananke and Irana for also helping me out by being willing to be on film. I cannot thank you enough for helping me out with my first experience of doing my own fieldwork with a camera.

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Introduction

> The next morning I'm standing on my balcony, on the backside of the house. Looking over to the white landscape. (…). On the horizon, dozens of kilometres further, the silhouette of the Norwegian coast. Mountain, after mountain, after mountain. At sunrise it looks like every layer has a different light shining on it. The white mountaintops turn yellow, bright orange and red. The sky above that is clear, cloudless, pink, lilac, and blue. (…). For a little while, the construction in my backyard in Amsterdam seems very far away; I lean on the balustrade, breathe in the cool Norwegian sea-air, and relax.
>
> Irwan Droog 2022, 13.

The passage above originates from a book written by Irwan Droog (2022). The cover of the book states that he did "what most people can only dream of." Irwan Droog moved from the Netherlands to Selvær, a small island located in northern Norway. As of January 2023, there were a (probably underestimated) number of 6973 people living in Norway who were born in the Netherlands (CBS 2023). Only half a year earlier, in July 2022, this number was estimated to be 6787 (CBS 2022). This shows a large increase in the number of Dutch people moving to Norway. Together with his girlfriend and his dog, Irwan lived on Selvær for a few months before returning to the Netherlands.

> At a distance we spot our transportation, the big, white ferry, from which we contacted the captain yesterday to make sure that he would come and pick us up today. (…) We will spend a few days on the road, we will see the roads get busier the more we drive south. We will pass one, two, three, national borders and end up on the ring road, an exit, a street, a parking spot. Thousands of cars, thousands of people around us. We will come home. And yet it feels like we are leaving home. Somehow, I hope that there would be too much wind today. That it would rain too much, hail, snow, anything. (…) That life would stay on pause just a little bit longer, here and now, with the soft sun, the fresh polar wind, the rushing sea, and other than that the absolute quiet. Somewhere I hoped that the ferry wouldn't go.
>
> Irwan Droog 2022, 214.

The research that I have carried out over the course of a few months in 2023 is intimately connected to these quotes coming from Irwan Droog's book. Even though he writes about his

own experience, which lasted only half a year, the concepts and feelings he describes, have been of great importance in my research. One of the last passages of his book is particularly fascinating: “We will go home. And yet it feels like we are leaving home.” (Droog 2022, 213). What does one mean by home? Where is home? Can one have multiple homes at the same time? And what does it take to create a home in a new place?

Located above the arctic circle in Norway, lies the city of Tromsø which, at the end of 2023, was home to 78.745 people (SSB n.d.). Out of those people, there were around an estimated 128 people with Dutch roots (SSB n.d.). It is the summer of 2022; I stand outside of my new apartment. I’m watching my parents and my brother drive off. They will head back to the Netherlands, while I am staying in Tromsø. It feels strange. I am in a new place; I do not know anyone; I do not know where the closest supermarket is. I must figure everything out. I am stressed. But at the same time, I feel a form of excitement. As my parents drive away, I wave to them. I whisper to myself: “Bye, I will see you in a few months.” Holding back some tears, I start to think about what I am doing. Getting ready to start studying, working, meeting new people, building a life; on the road to possibly creating a new home. Fast-forward a few months, it is the middle of May 2023, a month that I know as a comfortable, sunny, warm, spring month. Here, it is different. It is raining, the wind scratches my face, and the cold feels strange to me at this time of the year. I am walking through the city centre of Tromsø and make my way towards a café. In front of the door, I see a bike. It is chained to a streetlight. I later find out that this bike belongs to Linda[2], a Dutch woman I have met during this research. I meet her in the café and ask about her experience coming to Tromsø. She migrated to southern Norway in 1991, but after not feeling like she belonged there, she moved to the northern Norwegian city in 1993.

> I was going to drive here [Tromsø] with my car, and then they said to me “Are you crazy? You cannot drive all the way up north in the winter!” So, I went with the Hurtigruten. I drove to Trondheim and got on board. It started storming. We never docked anywhere; Bodø, Lofoten, we passed everything. And I was nervous of course because where am I going? At one point we docked in Finnsnes, have you ever been there? It was the first place we stopped, and it was horrible. (…). Just a harbour and cold, and other than that, there was nothing. Then I arrived in Tromsø, and it was the same. The snow was a few meters high. (…). I should have gotten an apartment from

[2] All names in this thesis are pseudonyms, except for the names of the people who also appear in the film.

> the hospital, but they did not have one anymore. So, I had to go to a hotel near the hospital. When I drove up there, my car stopped, I slid down, could not see anything, and it was still awful weather. So that was my start. (…). I reflected a lot on that. Why would you stay [after such a start]? In the end I lived in the hotel for three months and that was perfect. (…). I was surrounded by students, colleagues, and friends, which contributed to me staying here. I immediately joined the mountainsports club (…). I moved away from the south very deliberately, and when I arrived here, I felt like I was home.[3]

As becomes evident in the passage above, Linda, a Dutch woman who moved to northern Norway, had a troubled start coming to Tromsø. Why did she stay? What did she do to feel like she belonged in Tromsø? What made it home for her? This research is focused on the concept of home. More specifically, the aim of this research was to explore how Dutch migrants in northern Norway engage in home-making practices after moving abroad and how they reflect on their feelings of home and belonging. Home-making is an actor-oriented approach, which entails that people engage in home-making practices through giving something meaning. A place becomes a home through people actively giving it an emotional and relational signification (cf. Boccagni 2017, 8). I came to wonder what other Dutch people in northern Norway do to be able to give meaning to their surroundings. Do they feel like they are at home here, or do they still attach meaning to the Netherlands through memories from before their migration (cf. Bell 2003)? Moreover, and maybe most importantly, what do they do to make a place, their home? This led me to the research question I aim to answer in this thesis:

How do Dutch migrants in northern Norway engage in home-making practices, concerning their feelings of home and belonging?

Motivation and relevance

The motivation for this project comes out of a personal drive to find some small, personal answers to these very broad and open questions. I was curious to hear from other people who have been in a similar situation that I was facing, namely moving abroad. With a project on such a personal level, the process, and sometimes even the outcome moved beyond 'just' doing research and 'just' wanting to tell and show the stories of these Dutch migrants in northern

[3] Linda, semi-structured interview, 11/05/2023

Norway. The study has enabled a growing intertwining, and in some cases even friendships, in the lives of both me as a researcher, and the participants (cf. Lems 2016, 322). I will elaborate some more on this, and on the additional ethical considerations, in chapter 2.

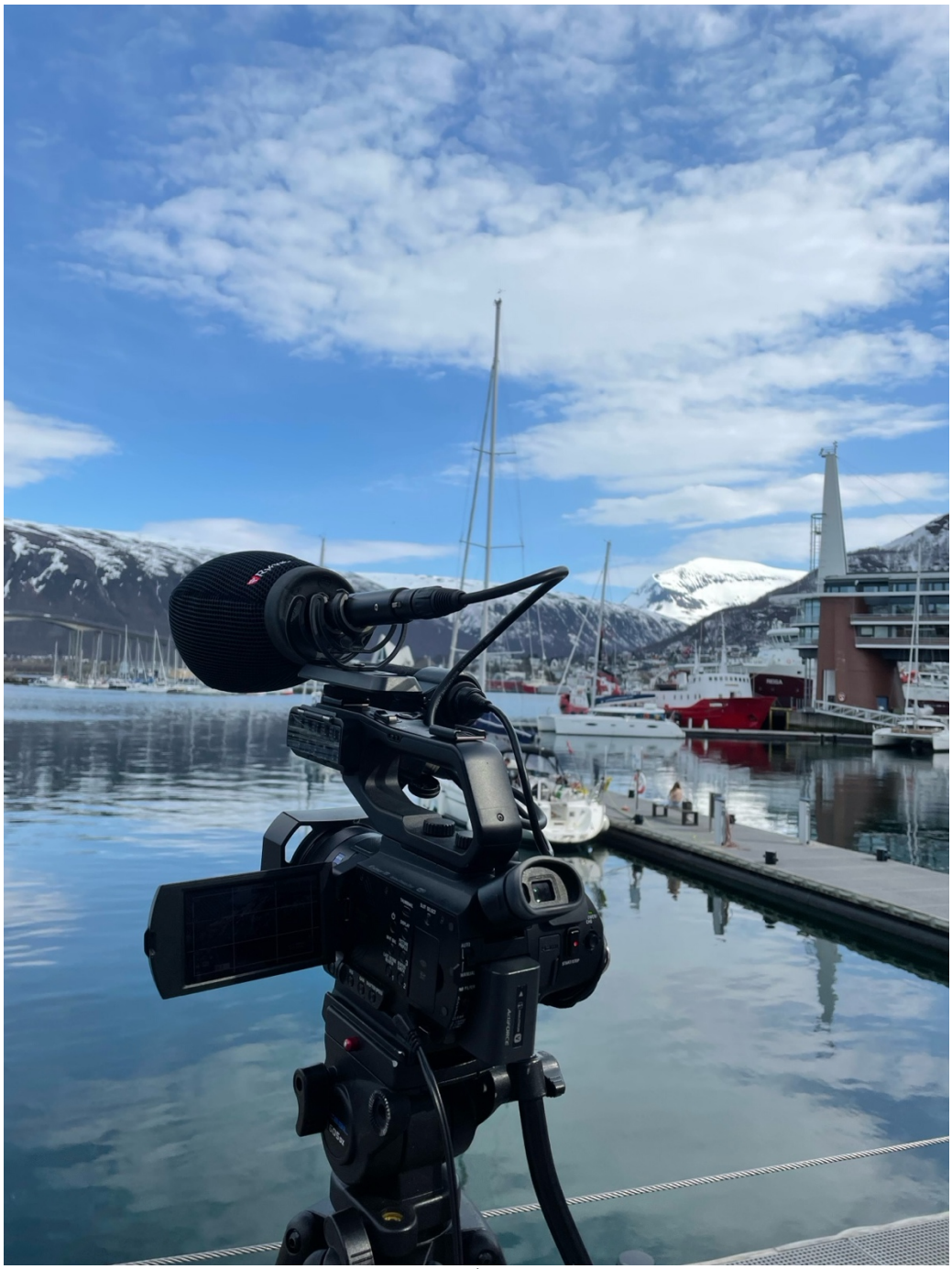
In terms of scientific impact, this work may serve as a starting point for further research. After the second world war, the nation-state system experiences a fundamental paradox: most people have the right to leave their home country, but only few enjoy the right to freely choose where they want to move and settle (Freier and Holloway 2019, 1172). Consequently, a lot of research has been focused on explaining and understanding so-called south-north migration, while other migration dynamics have been left understudied (Freier and Holloway 2019, 1177). The context in which this study took place, is a less studied form of migration, namely voluntary migration within Europe, and within the regulations of the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA).

As for societal relevance, this project may be interesting considering the current 'obsession' with Scandinavia. I hear more and more people talk about Norway when I am in the Netherlands. There is even a documentary series on Dutch television, aired in March 2023, in which is shown how Dutch migrants live in Norway and Sweden (Omroep MAX 2023). They are now working on a second season. Moreover, Tromsø is gaining attention. Transavia, a Dutch airline, has, since December 2023, added direct flights to Tromsø to their destinations.

Outline of the thesis

In this thesis multiple themes are analysed and discussed. In the chapters that follow I aim to analyse how Dutch migrants in northern Norway engage in home-making practices concerning their feelings of home and belonging. This research is placed in a context of voluntary migration within the EU/EEA. Dutch people who migrated to northern Norway did so voluntarily, which may have influenced the practices associated with home-making. In the first chapter I will provide a clearer ethnographic context of this research. I will elaborate on the sites where the fieldwork was conducted and the data was acquired, and provide a context on my participants, who are referenced and quoted throughout this thesis. The second chapter describes the methods and methodology of this project. The third chapter focuses on theory and debates around the central topics of the thesis. The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters detail the empirical material that has been collected throughout the research project. In the closing chapter I aim to give an answer to the research question, reflect on this project, and list some limitations and options for further research.

Context and Methodology



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[4] All images that are used in this thesis are photos made by me, Lisanne van Ringelesteijn, or stills taken from my film *A Home Away From Home* (2024), unless stated otherwise.

Chapter 1: Ethnographic context

This research contains two research sites. The most important one is Tromsø, a city in northern Norway where almost all the research has been carried out. Some other parts of this research have been done in a few different cities in the Netherlands. In Tromsø, the research has been carried out through (visual) ethnography, including participant observation, qualitative interviews and filming. In the Netherlands, the fieldwork that was done, has mostly centred around filming different cities that are important for some of the participants. After providing contextual information on the different fieldwork sites, an overview will be given on the people who have participated in this study.

1.1 Northern Norway

Northern Norway is the most important field site in this research. More specifically the city and municipality of Tromsø. Out of the nine participants in this research, seven of them live in Tromsø. Two of the participants live in the neighbouring Lyngen, which is about a two-hour drive (and ferry-ride) away from Tromsø.

Tromsø

Tromsø lies at 69 degrees north (Tromsø Kommune, n.d.), and is located well within the arctic circle in northern Norway. It is about a six-hour drive away from the well-known Lofoten islands, and a two-hour flight away from Oslo, the capital city of Norway. Tromsø is also viewed as the arctic capital which entails that the city contributes to the development, the strengthening, and the representation of knowledge on arctic knowledge and arctic issues that are important for the peoples and communities in the Nordic arctic area (Tromsø Kommune, n.d.). The city centre of Tromsø is on an island, also called *Tromsøya*[5], but the city of Tromsø also stretches over to the mainland. Tromsø is surrounded by water, fjords, and other – both bigger and smaller – islands.

Nature

Northern Norway is home to some breath-taking nature. The mountains and fjords draw a picture of a dreamy landscape. Tromsø, the place of residence for most of my participants, is close to this nature. The main city is located on an island, surrounded by water and mountains. These mountains provide the landscape for different popular seasonal outdoor activities, such

[5] *Øya* is the Norwegian word for island.

as skiing, hiking, snowshoeing, trail running, mushroom picking and so forth. When walking along the harbour in the city centre, one has a view on multiple mountains, with *Tromsdalstinden* and *Fløya* being the two most known mountains on one side. More on the west side of the island, one can enjoy the mountains from *Ersfjord,* located on Kvaløya. On the Tromsø island itself, there are some pieces of nature and calmness located just outside of the city. For example, the *Prestvannet* lake, which is located about 2 kilometres from the city centre, or *Telegrafbukta*, a beach on the south side of the island.

Moreover, there is wildlife surrounding Tromsø. One can see reindeer and moose roaming around on, for example, *Kvaløya*. On the water there is also plenty of life and one can see whales in the waters surrounding Tromsø from the end of October until the end of January (Visit Tromsø, n.d.). The nature and the arctic environment are topics that will be of importance in this thesis, as they came up in almost every conversation I had with the participants.

Above the arctic circle

Even though Tromsø is located well above the arctic circle in Norway, the climate in Tromsø can be classified as mild in comparison to other places on the same latitude due to the presence of the Gulf Stream. This makes the winters in Tromsø relatively mild, with an average winter temperature of around -4 degrees Celsius (Visit Tromsø, n.d.). Tromsø is home to two very distinct natural phenomena that occur every winter and every summer, namely the Northern lights – *Aurora Borealis*, and the Midnight Sun, which attract a lot of tourists to the area. In the winter, Tromsø is subjected to the polar night (*mørketid*), a period where the sun does not rise. The official polar night season in Tromsø of the 2023/2024 winter lasted from the 27th of November until the 15th of January. In contrast, in the summer, the midnight sun season, the sun does not set between the 20th of May and the 22nd of July in 2024.

1.2 The Netherlands

The Netherlands can be classified as a second field site within this research. It has mostly been important as a research site for the film. I went to the cities that Miek, Ernst, Ananke and Irana, the participants who will appear in the film, see as meaningful. They have memories there, and sometimes call those cities ‘home’. I wanted to experience their feelings and, when I was in the Netherlands in the summer of 2023, I made a journey to see these cities through their eyes. I will provide some information on the cities here, but they are mostly seen in the film that is made alongside this written thesis.

Amersfoort

In the summer of 2023, I visited Amersfoort for the first time. The city of Amersfoort is in the province of Utrecht, in the centre of the Netherlands. It is the place of birth of Ananke and Irana, two of the participants in the film, and they hold some dear memories of the city and its terraces, the markets, and the buildings. I have studied in Utrecht for four years, but had never been to Amersfoort, which is just thirty minutes away. I got to experience the city as a visitor, but also through the memories of Ananke and Irana. For them, Amersfoort is a place with special memories and holds a significance. Amersfoort recently (November 8th, 2023) received the title of best European city of the year (VVV Amersfoort, n.d.). This begs the question: why would one leave the best city of Europe?

Groningen

The next city on the 'road trip' through the Netherlands, is Groningen. It is located in the north of the country. It is a lot more 'rural' than Amersfoort, and the province has a lot more open fields and spaces. Groningen is a meaningful place to Ernst. I asked him about the places I should visit, or rather, the places that he holds memories of. He gave me a list and I went through the city, but also to the neighbouring villages in *Het Hooge Land*, which is a more rural part of the province. Ernst kept talking about how he has a lot of memories from that place, and how he could still call it home.

Nijmegen

Nijmegen, the next city on the list, is located close to the Dutch-German border. It is a student city and hosts some important events. It is the city where Miek studied for her master's degree, and it is the place that she calls home. She occasionally makes a trip to Nijmegen.

Rotterdam

As a last city, the city of Rotterdam is included in this research. Rotterdam is a big harbour city in the southwestern part of the Netherlands. I grew up in a small town that is a part of the municipality of Rotterdam, about thirty minutes west of from the city. I include it in this area, because the start of my film *A Home Away From Home* (2024) contains images from the place I grew up. Moreover, it provides information on my background, in the same way the other cities provide some information on the backgrounds of the other participants.

1.3 The people

This research focuses on Dutch migrants living in northern Norway. Nine people have participated in this study and shared their views and opinions on home-making practices and their feelings of home and belonging. The group of participants that is featured in this research is a diverse group in terms of age, with the oldest participant being at the end of her seventies and the youngest being in her early twenties. In terms of gender, it is less diverse, as seven of the participants are women, and two of them are men. Even though I do not think that gender has a big influence on the topic that is discussed, I do think it is relevant to mention that I was able to get in touch with more women than men.

In addition to this information, my participants all have been living in Norway for various amounts of time. The shortest time someone has been in northern Norway is eighteen months, while the longest is a timespan of over 45 years and counting. Considering economic status, I did not ask my participants in detail, but I would believe that they all share a sort of similar economic status, as they all chose to migrate and live in Norway, instead of being part of a forced migration. This will be more discussed in the third and fourth chapter of this thesis.

All the participants seem to have integrated well into the north Norwegian society. They all work or have worked in their new place of residence. Karen and Piet are retired now but they used to contribute to the society that is their new home. Karen was a language teacher in both Dutch and Norwegian. She has a passion for language and teaching and explored this passion in teaching Dutch to the children of other migrants. Last year (2023) was the first year in which no new children signed up for her class, which she feels very sad about. Piet was employed as a physical therapist, which seems to be a commonly occurring profession among the people I spoke with. Both Suzanne and Linda work as physical therapists in Tromsø. Ernst is working for the Tromsø *Kommune*, and Ananke is working at the local hospital. Miek is working in a bakery/café. Ananke is a student at the local university but also has a job and works in a home for the elderly. Maria also works as a caretaker in a home for the elderly in Lyngen.

Chapter 2: Methods and methodology

This project contains both a written thesis, and a thirty-minute film. When doing the fieldwork, I kept this in mind as well, which led to me using different methods. These methods all have different strengths, in either written text or film. In this chapter I will elaborate on the different methods that have been used in this project and why I have used them. First, I will dig more into the distinction that is made between anthropology and ethnography and how both are used in this thesis. Second, the different methods will be discussed. Moreover, I will explore some of the consequences that I encountered from using certain methods and how this influenced the project. Lastly, some of the ethical implications will be listed.

2.1 Anthropology and ethnography

In this thesis, both the discipline of anthropology and ethnography will be central. It is important to differentiate between the two disciplines to show how both are applied in the project. David MacDougall (2006, 1) states that "one of the functions of art, and often of science, is to help us understand the being of others in the world." Both anthropology and ethnography contribute to this understanding of 'others in the world'. First, it is important to get an impression of what anthropology and ethnology entail.

Tim Ingold (2017, 21) states that "ethnography aims to describe life as it is lived and experienced, by a people, somewhere, sometime. Anthropology, by contrast, is an inquiry into the conditions and possibilities of human life in the world." Using the definition that Tim Ingold provides, he argues the following: Anthropology is generous, because it pays attention to what other people do and say. It is open-ended, because in anthropology we do not seek final solutions for things but rather seek ways along which life can keep on going. Third, it is comparative because there is an awareness that for any path one might take, they could have taken a different path as well. Lastly, an anthropologist is critical because they are not content with things how they are right now. To make a future in the world, we need to have a dialogue, and anthropology exists to expand the scope of that dialogue and to make a conversation of human life itself (Ingold 2017, 22).

In line with Tim Ingold (2017, 22) I emphasize that anthropology and ethnography have a lot to contribute to each other, but, in principle, they are different. The most important thing I want to stress here, is that I don't view ethnography as just a method of anthropology, as it is often referred to (cf. Ingold 2017, 23).

In this project, I have made use of both ethnography and anthropology. I have carried out ethnographic fieldwork over the course of a few months in 2023 and with that fieldwork experience I aim to convey the lifeworld's of the people that I have spoken with. On the other hand, this paper is anthropological, as I have been studying the concepts of home and belonging together with the people that are my participants (cf. Ingold 2017, 23). We have had conversations that made us have mutual discoveries about home, and the feelings of home, through talking about it for example. Within anthropology, which I will also apply in this paper, it is important that we also form our own opinions. We must be ready to speak with our own voices, and not just reflect and hide behind the ones from our participants. To be able to state our own opinions as anthropologists, it is important to drop the idea that we can only speak as ethnographers who are reflecting the stories told by the participants, and that we have nothing to say ourselves (Ingold 2017, 24). In this thesis I thus will be occupied with both ethnography and anthropology. The ethnography being an account of all the experiences, stories and opinions from my participants, and the anthropology being more speculative, and bringing in my own voice within the bigger debates around migration and the concept of home.

2.2 Participant observation

The first method that has been used in this project, is participant observation. Tim Ingold (2017, 23) argues that participant observation is key to the practice of anthropology. It is a way to correspond with the people who are part of the research. This method of participant observation is defined by DeWalt and DeWalt (2011, 1) as a method "in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture." The explicit being what people can articulate about themselves, and the tacit being what happens mostly outside of our own consciousness, such as feelings of (dis)comfort (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011, 1). As DeWalt and DeWalt state, everyone is an observer and a participant in their everyday interactions, but there are only a few people that engage in the systematic use of this information for social scientific purposes. The method of participant observation requires this engagement in systematic use of information, and a particular approach to the recording of observations in, e.g., fieldnotes (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011, 2). During the fieldwork period I have kept a small journal, in which I collected my fieldnotes. In addition to the more practical and factual fieldnotes, I also wrote down my feelings. By doing this, I can look back on the thoughts I had in the spring of 2023 and find out about things I could have forgotten otherwise. I employed the method of participant observation to be able to try and get an inside in the ways of knowing,

and the daily lives of my participants. I engaged in different activities together with my participants, such as going to an open day at the community gardens, making food, hiking, and so forth, to try and see the lives of my participants how they are lived and experienced in northern Norway. Participant observation has been different in usage than what I am used to from previous fieldwork. For in this project, I am using an instrument, the film camera. The use of the camera, with the intention of making a film is a time costly process and can be at the expense of other methods. Sometimes, for example, the use of the camera led me to either not being able to participate as much, or not being able to film as much as I would have wanted. However, using the camera also has a lot to offer, which will be discussed later. Nonetheless, the use of camera has made things a little bit different for me, and I had to learn how to observe and participate while using a camera. Cristina Grasseni (2021, 13) argues that the tools we work with are first and foremost our bodies; our eyes, our senses, and that we are looking, seeing, and noticing, while we are also working with our other senses; like moving around, listening, and doing things. When using our bodies in participant observation, we can understand the experiences and lifeworld's of the participants. I then had to learn how to make the camera feel like an extension of my body.

Even though Grasseni (2021, 13) states that "participant observation is about appreciating imaginaries and ways of knowing other than our own" I do believe that doing participant observation amongst people that are similar, can be a very valuable method and skill to acquire as an anthropologist. The 'group of people' whom are the subject of this research, are Dutch migrants in northern Norway. As I am already living in Tromsø myself it was not hard to enter the geographical field. I would argue that I engaged in, what I would call *Anthropology at home, away from home*. In anthropology it has often been a tradition of researching people and cultures that are distinctively 'other' and 'elsewhere' (cf. Anderson 2021, 212), where the fear exists that doing anthropology at home could cause 'home blindness' leading to the disappearance of distance needed for good research (cf. Bendixsen 2021, 93). I argue against this fear and would even call it a strength that I am doing research where I also have an embodied experience, which makes me able to approach the experiences of the participants in a totally different way. I am in the position where I can approach the dilemmas and experiences of the participants through my own position. Although I am in many ways similar to the participants in this research, participant observation showed me to see things through their eyes. In turn, providing me with very interesting material for this research project.

2.3 Qualitative interviewing

In addition to the method of participant observation, I applied the methods of informal conversations, and semi-structured interviews in this project. These methods are a part of qualitative interviewing. I have conducted eight semi-structured interviews during the fieldwork. Before meeting with the participants, I made a topic list that contained some topics that I deemed necessary to discuss, and during the fieldwork I have altered this list when necessary. I came up with the topics, but the participants were free to interpret those topics in their own way, and answer in their own words (cf. Boeije 2010, 63). Next to that, they were free to add topics that they felt were lacking. I believe that using semi-structured interviews has allowed me to get some more in-depth knowledge about the thoughts and reflections that my participants shared on their feelings of home and belonging, and on the different home-making practices that they engage in while living in northern Norway. Next to these, what can be viewed as more formal interviews, I have conducted multiple informal interviews, or small talks, with people that belong into my participant group, and with people that do not belong in my participant group necessarily but are also European migrants living in northern Norway. These informal interviews, act as a part of participant observation and can also be viewed as conversation (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011, 137). I have used this method, for example, when meeting some friends from my participants, or just talking about my project with people that I met during my stay here in Tromsø. The use of qualitative interviewing and informal conversations has been very enriching in the collection of material for this project. Because it leads to a different kind of information that is very usable in this project, namely information combined with the informants' own reflections on the topics.

2.4 Audio-visual methods

In addition to the more 'traditional' methods of doing fieldwork, I have also used audio-visual methods in this ethnographic fieldwork. There are a lot of different ways to incorporate audio-visual material into one's fieldwork. I have chosen two methods that I will go more in detail on in this paragraph.

Filming

In addition to the methods listed above, an extremely important method has been filming. As, in addition to the written thesis, this project contains a thirty-minute film. What I believe is good to note here, is the statement of Andy Lawrence (2020, 5), as he writes how "Filmmaking and writing should not be set against each other – they should be seen as complementary

practices." Lawrence (2005, 5) mentions how there is a continuous re-engagement with the emotive moments of fieldwork that can help the ethnographer with writing a more evocative and situated ethnography, when the filming is done earlier than the writing. In this project the filming has mostly been carried out during the fieldwork period lasting from April 2023 to August 2023. The film aims to provide a sense of the lifeworld of someone towards an audience (cf. Lawrence 2020, 5). The intention I had when filming for this project, was to see how other Dutch people live their lives in Tromsø, and to see what kind of activities they take part in to enhance their feeling of home. I aimed to create something that can bring my participants to life in a different way that I can achieve with words. As "Visual ethnography brings our audiences up close to our research findings and participants, it invites them to sense and feel other people's experiences." (Pink 2021, 4). Thus, when doing this ethnographic fieldwork with a camera, it allowed me to let the participants tell their story beyond just words, by for example going to the garden with Ernst, or making pancakes with Miek. By showing their practices, and not just writing about them, the connectivity between memory, identity, belonging and home in a new place, becomes richer (cf. Sandu 2013, 501-502).

Additionally, the raw data produced by the filming can be an interesting source for analysis. Filmmaking is then not only a way of showing the lifeworld's of people towards an audience, but also a way of creating ethnographic discoveries (cf. Lawrence 2020, 4). Examining the audio-visual material repeatedly in the editing room, made room for discoveries that otherwise could have gone unnoticed. For example, Ananke and Irana talk about their identity shifting from tourist to local and vice versa (more explanation will be given in chapter 6), which I could have forgotten about if I did not have the material to look back on.

Photo elicitation

A second audio-visual method that has been used in this project, is photo elicitation. The term photo elicitation was first mentioned in a paper published by photographer and researcher John Collier (1957). He mentions how anthropologists had generally used the camera solely to support their findings by an illustration (Collier 1957, 843). John Collier takes this data and asks two theoretical questions; "How can photographs function other than as illustration?" and "How can you apply photographic imagery to direct research?" (Collier 1957, 843). At the end of his research, Collier (1957, 858-859) argues that the use of photographs functions as a language bridge, but also that it helps an interview to proceed in a meaningful way. Douglas Harper (2002, 13) defines the idea of photo elicitation as basically inserting a photograph into a research interview. Photographs can trigger memories of what we once knew. Using the

method of photo elicitation taps into a different part of the brains of the participants than just a spoken interview does. As "images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words" (Harper 2002, 14), it is an interesting method to use in research.

I employed this method of photo elicitation by asking Ananke and Irana, two sisters who came to Norway with their parents, moved back to the Netherlands, and then decided to migrate to northern Norway again, to show me pictures from both their youth and the present day-to-day life. The plan with this was to just ask them to show me some pictures, and after asking the first question, we engaged in an hour-and-a-half long conversation about the different photos, their feelings, and their reflections on home and belonging. This use of photo elicitation thus resulted in an abundance of material for this research.

2.5 Ethical considerations

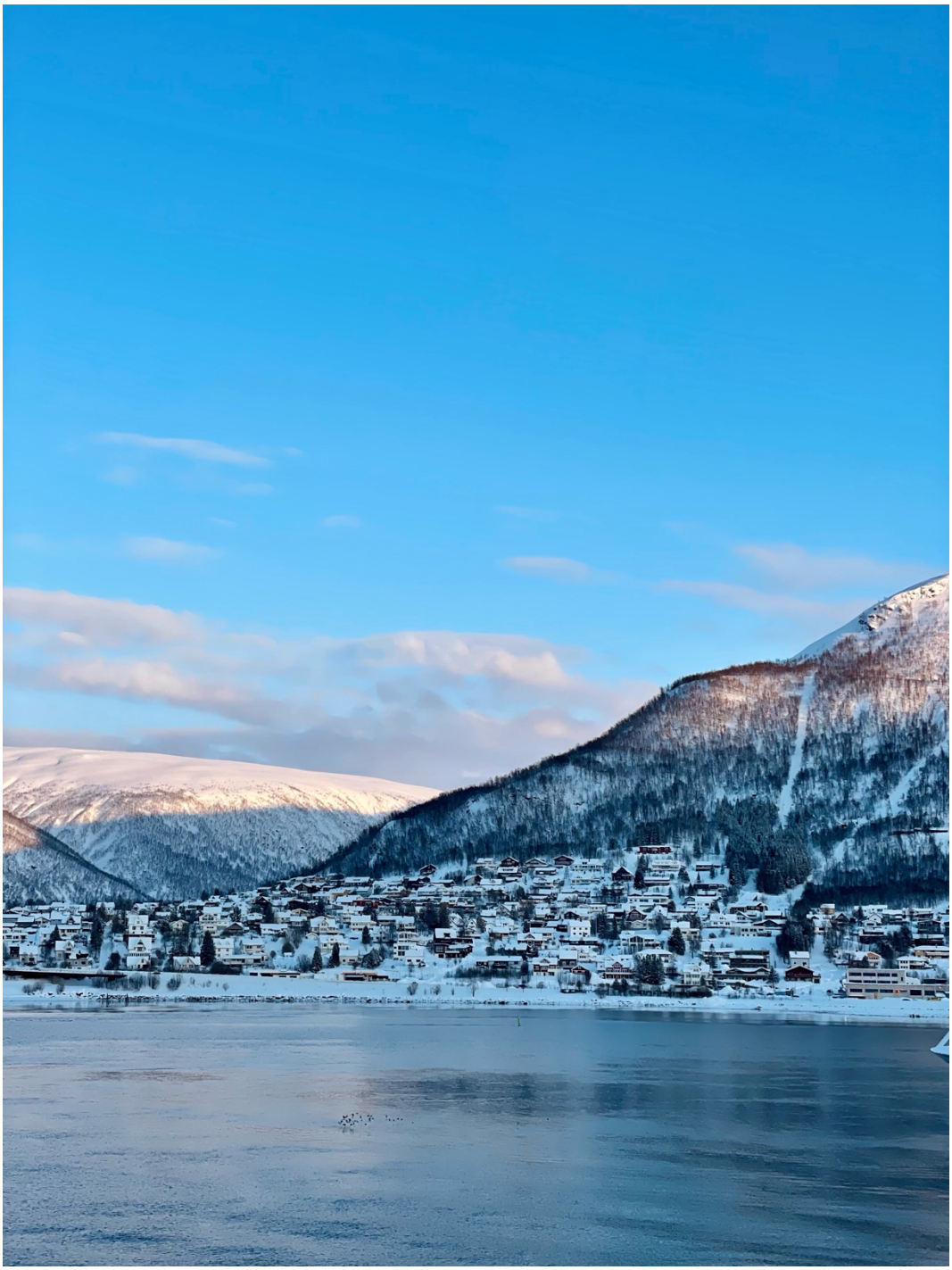
As the research project contains both a written part and a film, I have dealt with different ethical questions. First and foremost, I want to state that all the information that is shared in either the written thesis or the film, has been given to me only after I had made the goals and ideas of my research clear to the participants (cf. DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 215). In addition to explaining the goals of the research, I obtained both oral and written consent from the participants. The participants that do not appear in the film, have given me oral consent during the interviews to use the material in this written thesis. Their identities have been anonymised, by giving them pseudonyms. For the participants that do appear in the film, this was more complicated, because they cannot be anonymous in the thesis, while their faces and names are on the film. Thus, I made a written 'contract', which they signed, allowing me to use their personal data in this project. They will not have pseudonyms in the thesis.

Second, a more personal ethical consideration arose in this research. David MacDougall (2006, 3) argues how "corporeal images are not just the images of other bodies; but they are also images of the body behind the camera and its relations with the world." It is thus important to also reflect on my own positioning in this research before I can make any statements on the lifeworld's of the participants. As I am Dutch myself and migrated – although it is only for a set period of two years – to northern Norway, I can be seen as similar to my participant group in many ways. This led me to often think about my position in the field. Initially, I thought I would need to keep a certain distance between myself as a person, and myself as a researcher. However, I soon found out that it is hard to separate these, as everything that I do in Tromsø also has a lot to do with home-making, leading me to reconsider the project. As a result, I would now argue that my position is a valuable one, and a possibility to get really close to the living

conditions, dilemmas, experiences, and home-making practices of the participants. It is also valuable that I can connect with the people in this study due to the things that we have in common. As I share a personal experience with my participants, although it may be in different circumstances or for different reasons, this can help to establish rapport. A more personal involvement moves the research between storied, reflected experience and more immediate, lived experience (cf. Lems 2016, 321-322).

Lastly, an important ethical consideration in this project, has to do with the power of representation, especially in relation to editing and making my film *A Home Away From Home* (2024). After spending time with the participants, I feel like I have gotten to know them, their personalities, their views, and their opinions. Then comes the task of editing the material, and making a story which does both their stories and their personalities justice. During editing, I found it hard to 'have control' over what the future audience does and does not get to see. As Paul Henley (2006, 378) describes, an author is "very much alive (…) and aspires to be an active agent communicating a particular set of meaning through a narrative." These stories that we try to communicate are much more than 'just a story'. As Michael Jackson (2002) explains, stories "are not simply an imitation of events as they actually occurred. In changing the order of things, stories construe what happened adventitiously as somehow decided by the protagonists themselves. (…). In making and telling stories, we rework reality in order to make it bearable." (Jackson 2002, 16). When communicating meaning through visual media, the question of power is always present. I have asked the participants who occur in the film if they wanted to see the film beforehand, or during the editing process, but they all mentioned that they wanted to be 'surprised' by the final film at its first screening. This shows that they have put a lot of trust in me as an editor. I have thus made every decision in the editing room considering if I was doing justice to the participants, while simultaneously trying to create a meaningful story.

Theoretical Analysis



Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I will outline the theoretical framework that will be used when analysing the empirical material. The chapter will explore the anthropological, societal, and theoretical debates concerning migration within Europe, the concept of home, home-making and placemaking, the feelings of belonging (and alienation), and the importance of language.

3.1 Migration within Europe

Migrating within the EU/EEA

This thesis focuses on how Dutch people in Tromsø engage in home-making practices. Before I can begin to analyse that, I deem it necessary to look more into the debates that surround migration, especially voluntary migration within Europe. "In a strict sense, migration is the movement of people through geographic space." (Kearney 1986, 331). As, nowadays, more and more people are on the move, both voluntarily and forcefully, states aim to maintain an authority over mobilities, which has become of great concern for governmentality and politics (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013, 195). Most of the migration theories and debates are focused on explaining south-north migration and leave other dynamics greatly understudied (Freier & Holloway 2019, 1177). South-north migration is the movement from the so-called Global South to the so-called Global North. As these terms are often used in scholarly articles and theories, I will use them for this analysis, but I want to state that I do not wish to endorse or approve these static terms and their connotations.

In this thesis, the migration within the so-called Global North is central. Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013, 189) argue that there are regimes of mobility that normalise the movement of some while at the same time criminalising the movement of others. This can be related to what Doreen Massey (1993, 151) defines as the 'power-geometry of time-space compression', where different social groups and individuals are placed in very distinct ways in relation to the flows and interconnections in the world. This has to do with power in relation to flows and movements (of people). For different groups are more in charge of their movement than others (Massey 1993, 151). As the focus here lies on Dutch people migrating to (northern) Norway, they move in a space in which their movement is normalised, namely within the EU/EEA regulations. Within Europe there are rules and legislations established between the countries that are a part of the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA). Both the Netherlands and Norway are a part of this space, which allows the normalisation of movement

from the Netherlands to Norway, as the people who partake in the movement are a part of a free flow of goods, people, and capital (Rijksoverheid, n.d.).

Migration and imagination

The participant group of this research is thus part of a privileged, free flow of movement towards their destination. It is interesting then to look at the concept of transnational migration and how this relates to the research. Transnationalism is defined by Lazar (2011, 70) as "the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement." In the context of this research, that would entail that we can view the Dutch migrants as people who exist in different social fields, and that those fields are both maintained and changed throughout their movement to Norway.

Now, it is interesting to look at how these different social ties and social fields are connected to home-making, belonging (and alienation), and how this is affected by migration to a different country. Liisa Malkki (1992, 24) states how "(…) now, more than perhaps ever before, people are chronically mobile and routinely displaced, and invent homes and homelands in the absence of territorial, national bases – not in situ, but through memories of, and claims on, places that they can or will no longer corporeally inhabit." Even though this thesis' focus lies on voluntary movement, the creation of home or homeland through memories and claims is still a fascinating aspect of migration. One possible interesting concept to use here then, is Bell's (2003) mythscapes. Bell (2003, 75) defines mythscapes as the "discursive realm, constituted by and through temporal and spatial dimensions, in which the myths of the nation are forgotten, transmitted, reconstructed, and negotiated constantly." Mythscapes can create feelings of nostalgia from the country where someone was born (cf. Bell 2003, 76). In addition to this, I argue that people could also acquire mythscapes from a new country, the country where they move to, which could lead towards the creation of a new home in a new country. Thus, when moving from the Netherlands to Norway, Dutch people could be able to create home in the Netherlands as well as in northern Norway.

3.2 Home, home-making and placemaking

After having some more context on how transnational migration and memories can have an influence on home-making, this section aims to provide a clearer understanding of the concept of home-making and how it can be applied to this research. But first, there needs to be a clear definition of what home entails.

Conceptualisation of home

When thinking of home, the first thing that is important, is to make a distinction between house and home. Where a house is a physical structure, I aim to argue in this thesis that home is much more than that. For a long time, anthropology has focused on the association between a particular house or place, and home. When we imagine home, often it is not the place or the physical structure itself, but the feelings, practices, and relationships with a certain place that give home a powerful feeling and a sense of belonging (Samanani and Lenhard 2019, 1). As home, "in contrast to a house, is saturated with the meanings, memories, emotions, experiences, and relationships of everyday life." (Dowling and Mee 2007, 161).

Samanani and Lenhard (2019) argue for a conceptual distinction between house and home, and for the importance of the actual structure of a house in shaping our lives. I agree that there should be a distinction made, but I also argue that the two concepts are interrelated, making 'home' a mix of both a physical structure, as well as something imaginable and abstract, a feeling or a memory. In line with this, Dowling and Mee (2007, 161) argue that a house is the material structure that provides the setting for more emotional attachments and meanings of everyday life.

In this thesis, I aim to argue that home can reach further than just the emotional attachments and meanings of everyday life to a material structure. I argue that the physical structure combined with the emotional attachments are a big part of home, but that it is also more abstract through feelings, memories, or emotions. Thus, home can be a physical site, e.g., a house, or it can even be as big as a nation. Home can be experienced as a physical "here", as well as it can be imagined or remembered through memories as "there" (Ward 2003, 81). The concept of home contains a mysterious paradox, as "it is through movement away from a home that one is able to sense a more complete characterisation of it." (Ward 2003, 88). Thus, it is interesting to see if Dutch people in northern Norway are more aware of sensing what they feel is their home. "For many people, home is a place of belonging, intimacy, security, relationship and selfhood." (Downing and Mee 2007, 161). Now, it is needed to investigate how some places can become a home. How can one place feel like home, while other places do not? A place of residence or a country, are not automatically one's home, but they are made home through home-making practices (cf. Downing and Mee 2007, 161).

Home-making

There are many theoretical frameworks that aim to analyse place, home, and identity. Most of these frameworks are actor-oriented and focus on the idea that place and identity are fluid and

constructed (Ward 2003, 81). I aim to argue that 'home' is a social construction as well, in which home-making is the practice that people engage in to create this. In line with Ward's (2003,88) statement, through movement away from a home, in this case the Netherlands, one may be able to make more sense of their feelings, and characterization of what they define as home. After migrating, this would come more to the front, as humans feel a need to attach meaning to their surroundings. This social construction in which meaning is added to a place, can be done through "(…) processes of control, embodied experiences, memories, sensorial perceptions, personal emotions, social practices, narratives etc." (Wieczorek 2019, 9). This makes home-making an actor-oriented practice. For people engage in home-making practices through giving something meaning. A place thus becomes a home through people giving it an emotional and relational significance (cf. Boccagni 2017, 8).

Home-making is a complex and intricate dynamic process (Sandu 2013, 497) Moreover, Adriana Sandu aims to show how "(…) personal narratives, influenced by class, gender, ideology, period of migration, reasons for migration, urban and rural origin, religion, and citizenship status, are powerful social constructs that influence contemporary home-making practices in a transnational, globalised world." (Sandu 2013, 497). As mentioned previously, the people in this research are part of a privileged and free movement of flow between EU/EEA states, which then may have an influence in how they engage in home-making practices. The Dutch migrants could be seen as transnational migrants, who sustain relationships that link together their society of origin; the Netherlands, with the society of settlement; Norway (cf. Lazar 2011, 70). Transnational migrants build various types of social, economic, familial, political, and organisation links across the borders of countries. They live their lives across a border. They maintain relationships, take actions, make choices, and develop networks that can link them to both societies (cf. Sandu 2013, 497-498). Thus, for many of the transnational migrants, meaning and emotional and relational significance (cf. Boccagni 2017,8) is often attached to more than one place, shaping a home through memories as well as through everyday life, experiences, and practices (Sandu 2013, 498).

It is these factors that are often left understudied, according to Adriana Sandu. She (2013, 498) states that the assumption is often made that home is the place one returns to, mostly the country of origin, even though migrants feel 'at home' in a different country. Moreover, she argues that most literature on contemporary migration tends to focus more on the public sphere, and not on the private sphere (Sandu 2013, 499). In Adriana Sandu's research, there is an exploration being offered on how migrants engage in practices that 'make them at home'. This 'making oneself at home' is then presented in relation to belonging and engaging in community

work, creating networks, facilitating learning, and therefore providing a link between the private and public world of transnational migrants (Sandu 2013, 502).

In this research I focus on home-making practices in the everyday life from Dutch migrants living in northern Norway. In doing so, I am particularly interested in both new things that have been picked up in the new place of residence, but also in the customs and things that stuck around from before the migration. Thus, making home-making in this research both related to everyday life practices, and to memories. In Adriana Sandu's (2013, 502) research, it became clear that ordinary objects can become particularly significant in practices of remembering, such as books, pictures, ornaments, etc. can represent memories and re-enact or re-create a home. Things like this can create opportunities for rooting in a new place as well as creating a home in a new place through comfortable memories from an old place. Moreover, other practices can help in signifying a 'lived home', such as gardening, cooking, watching certain programmes, listening to certain radio stations, creative hobbies, reading etc. (cf. Sandu 2013, 503). Other practices that help in home-making, are social practices. In Sandu's (2013, 504) research the social practice of food is mentioned as a critical dimension in home-making, such as shopping for the ingredients, inviting friends for a meal, cooking the dish, etc. Beyond this, I will argue in this thesis that other social practices and building networks, such as meeting friends and going to do hikes, or other sports, will also play a significant role in home-making practices in northern Norway.

As Peer Smets and Karin Sneep (2015, 93) describe, "home-making practices (…) take place against the backdrop of permanency and movement, staying and leaving, continuity (practices of everyday life) and discontinuity (changes which threaten everyday practices). The results of these home-making practices can contribute to a sense of belonging (Smets and Sneep 2015, 93). In the next sub-chapter this notion of belonging will be discussed more.

Placemaking

Before going into the notion of belonging, I deem it important to also shed a light on the practice of placemaking. One way of understanding placemaking can be as "an intentional process of situating, revealing and creating meaningful environments." (Freeman 2020, vii). In line with this statement, Marta Wieczorek (2019, 4) argues that a place can be made in terms of formulation of socio-cultural meaning and the negotiation of identities. She argues furthermore that place is never a fixed entity that one can find. The spatial world is a socially constructed process, and there is an active practice of negotiating meanings and attachment to a certain place (Wieczorek 2019, 4).

A place is always there, it is where we are and we cannot escape its presence, which enables it to play into the way we see and engage with the world (Lems 2016, 320). An anthropological theory on space and place should thus be process- and person-oriented (Low 2009, 22). Place is then something that is both made and experienced by people. This is what Low (2009, 26) describes as embodied space; "the location where human experience and consciousness takes on material and spatial form."

Marta Wieczorek (2019, 5) states how the perspective of embodied space looks at how people's lived experiences and sensorial engagement with the world contribute to their perception of a certain place or space, and that these embodied entanglements can also transgress a place when the people move. This is an interesting topic to mention here, as I am curious to see how the Dutch people experience the space of northern Norway and how they, in turn, attach meaning to this embodied space.

3.3 The notion of belonging

Home-making and placemaking in a new location after migrating, are tightly related to the feeling of belonging. Marco Antonsich (2010, 644) argues that belonging is often seen as a self-explanatory term and therefore left unexplained and undefined in various academic fields. Sometimes, belonging is viewed as a synonym for identity, more particular a national or ethnic identity. Other times, belonging is seen as a synonym of or an association with the notion of citizenship. Most of the times this is without a clear definition on how a sense of belonging might differ from citizenship and identity (Antonsich 2010, 645). Belonging is a multidimensional phenomenon and needs to be discussed as such. Within this thesis, the concept of belonging is important, as it is often claimed by the participants that they do or do not feel like they belong in the Netherlands or in northern Norway. What is important to note here, is the difficulty of translating the term belonging into other languages than English (cf. Antonsich 2010, 646). In the context of this research, that means that most of the participants do not use the literal translation of belonging, when talking about it. The literal translation in Dutch for 'to belong' would be '*behoren*' or saying 'I belong here' would be '*ik hoor hier (thuis)'*. However, this is not something common to say. In this research, belonging has often been expressed through saying things like 'I feel at peace here; I feel good here; I feel like I can be myself' and so forth.

In this thesis, I will be following the framework that Antonsich (2010, 645) proposes in his article, where he is concerned with the forms of territorial belonging in the sense of the mundane claims like 'I belong here'. The discussion of belonging in the more mundane sense,

as will be the focus in this thesis, can be organised in two analytical dimensions. In the first one, belonging is "a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place." (Antonsich 2010, 645). The second dimension is where belonging is a "discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion." (Antonsich 2010, 645). This distinction given by Antonsich builds on a similar distinction given by Fenster (2005 in Antonsich 2010, 645) who differentiates between belonging as a personal, intimate, private sentiment of place attachment, which is built up and grows out of everyday practices, which he calls a 'sense of belonging'. And belonging as an official, public-oriented 'formal structure' of membership, which can for example be given by citizenship. The focus of this thesis will be put on the analytical view of belonging being a personal, intimate, feeling of feeling at home. However, it is important to also include the so-called politics of belonging, in which belonging is used as a more material claim to inclusion or exclusion, as that is also a factor that might play a role in migration and subsequently in acquiring a feeling of belonging.

Feeling at home

When talking about belonging it is important to get an understanding on how it becomes attached as an emotional feeling to a particular place by an individual. Antonsich (2010, 646) calls the outcome of that, place-belongingness. Place is felt as home, in which home stands for a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment. On a more geographical scale, it can differ to which scale people feel like they belong. It can be someone's own house, the neighbourhood, a small community, or even a national homeland (Antonsich 2010, 646). Given this information, Antonsich (2010,646) states that it is not surprising that this notion of belonging is also often rendered in terms of rootedness. He aims to focus on belonging as feeling at home, attached to, and rooted in a place, and highlights five factors that play a role in feeling 'at home'. These are auto-biographical, relational, cultural, economic, and legal factors (Antonsich 2010, 647).

The auto-biographical factors relate to someone's history, personal experiences, relations, and memories that attach them to a particular place, e.g. childhood memories. The place where someone was born and where they grew up often remains a central place in the life of that individual due to childhood memories, and the presence of family members (Antonsich 2010, 647). The relational factors are referring to the personal and social ties that someone has in a place, such as the relationship with friends and family, but also interactions with strangers (Antonsich 2010, 647). Out of the cultural factors, language is often described as the most important factor, as every language has its own ways of constructing and conveying meaning,

and defining and interpreting situations (Antonsich 2010, 648). I will elaborate more on the importance of language in a different paragraph that will follow in this chapter. Economic factors are important to the feeling of belonging, as they contribute to creating a safe and stable material condition for someone. Lastly, legal factors play an important role in creating a feeling of belonging, through for example citizenships and resident permits (Antonsich 2010, 648). This legal factor might seem of less importance in this research, but the legal factor of e.g. a passport can also bring along a big debate in someone's life and their feelings of belonging. I will focus more on that later and give examples in chapter 6.

These factors proposed by Marco Antonsich are good factors to take along in this research, however I do argue that rootedness is not stiff, nor is it bounded to one place. As for many transnational migrants, conceptualisations of home are often ambiguous, and they may attach meanings to more than one place (cf. Sandu 2013, 498). This leaves an opening into the discussion on if the Dutch migrants might experience a feeling of belonging in more places, or in none. Additionally, the creating of this place-belongingness; feeling like one has found a place where they belong, is only one end of the spectrum. If someone cannot acquire this feeling of belonging, they might encounter a feeling of loneliness, alienation, and isolation (Antonsich 2010, 649).

The politics of belonging

Creating this feeling of belonging does not happen in a political vacuum. Nira Yuval-Davis (2006, 197) distinguishes between belonging and the politics of belonging. The first one being about "emotional attachment, about feeling 'at home' and (…) about feeling 'safe'". The politics of belonging, on the other hand, happen more when the belonging is threatened in some way (Yuval-Davis 2006, 197). The politics of belonging is often concerned with the boundaries that separate a population between an 'us' and 'them'. And the harsh underlining of this, is about meeting other people and deciding whether they belong inside or outside the imaginary boundary line of a nation or community (Yuval-Davis 2007, 204). Linked to this is the notion of identity and citizenship, where citizenship (or the lack of) can compromise or legitimise a full sense of belonging for marginalized and excluded groups (Yuval-Davis 2007, 206). Most of the Dutch people that I spoke to in this project, do not have a Norwegian passport, but they still feel like they belong in (northern) Norway. Seemingly, it might not always be necessary to attach belonging to either belonging to 'us' or 'them'. This could have to do with the changing and 'new' forms of migration in the globalised world (such as migration within the EU/EEA) and the reducing possibilities to make clear distinctions between different groups in a place (cf.

Anthias 2006, 18). However, as mentioned earlier, I argue that the Dutch migrants belong to a form of privileged migration and often do not see themselves as migrants, nor are they viewed as such. Even though the politics of belonging might not seem evident at first, I do believe that they play a role in the background. There is a distinction being made between an 'us' and 'them', 'Dutch' and 'Norwegian'.

In this thesis, I deem it is important that both dimensions of the notion of belonging are shown and thought about. As belonging is just as much a personal and intimate matter, as it is a product of power relations in a certain place (cf. Antonsich 2010, 652-653). Some can feel like they belong in a new place, while others may experience alienation, rejection, hostility, danger, and fear in this new place (Dowling and Mee 2007, 161). People can 'belong' in various ways and to many different objects or situations. "Belonging can be an act of self-identification or identification by others, in a stable, contested or transient way." (Yuval-Davis 2006, 199). Belonging, then, will always be a dynamic process.

3.4 Home-making practices in the new home

After having discussed (a part of) the existing literature on migration, home, home-making, placemaking, belonging, and the politics of belonging, this section will provide a little context on the more practical things after migrating, such as language, and social aesthetics.

Language

When migrating, (body)language is an important factor when it comes to home-making practices, and in addition, in the acquiring of a feeling of belonging. As a particular language indicates a particular way of creating and communicating meaning, a certain way of interpreting situations through for example gestures and signs (cf. Antonsich 2010, 648). A language can be understood by a group of people who have knowledge on this language, and even though that might be distinguishing an 'us' and 'them', it can also awaken a sense of community, in which one cannot only understand what is said, but also what is meant by that (Antonsich 2010, 648). Learning a language in a new place of residence, in this case (northern) Norway, can then help the Dutch migrants to generate a sense of belonging, and feeling 'at home'.

Social aesthetics and culture

In addition to language, the social aesthetics and culture of a place can also play a role in creating a home, and feeling like one belongs. A place is defined by culture and its social aesthetics, which are "the specific combination of rituals, customs, colours, textures, and

physical surroundings (…)" that define a place (MacDougall 2015, 2). MacDougall (1999, 5) argues that "the aesthetic dimension of human experience is an important social fact (…). It is important because it often matters to people, and influences their actions, as much as anything else in their lives." The social aesthetic of a place exists in everything, in the material structures, objects, social activities, and in people themselves (MacDougall 1999, 5-6). To get familiar with a societies social aesthetic can then help people feel at home, as MacDougall describes:

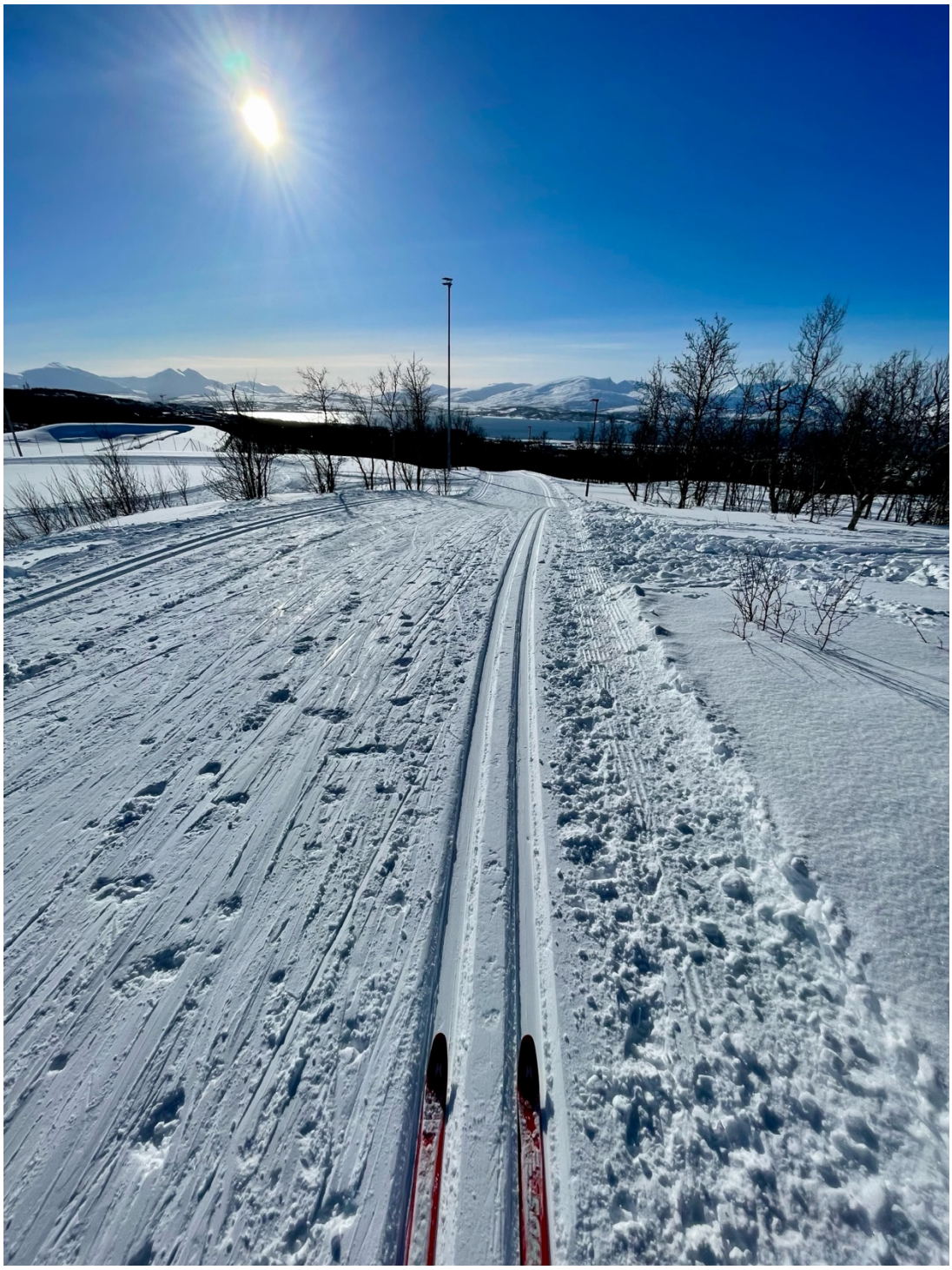
> Some societies specifically emphasize artistic expression, other codes of interpersonal behaviour, other special regimes of physical activity or public display, and still others particular forms of religious or spiritual experience. (…). Whatever its particular local form, each variant serves to define a familiar social space and the individual's sense of belonging, like a lock and its key.
>
> David MacDougall 1999, 6

In this research, the social aesthetics of both northern Norway and the Netherlands are interesting factors in the home-making practices and thus the feelings of belonging from the participants. I do want to note here, that I am aware of the abundance of important factors that play a role in creating a home, and feelings of belonging. However, for the sake of this research I will keep it confined to the factors and notions that I have mentioned in this chapter. In the next chapters, I will display and combine the ethnographic material that I have collected during the fieldwork with the debates and theories described above, aiming to provide an argument on how Dutch migrants engage in home-making practices in northern Norway.

3.5 A quick summary

In this thesis I will argue that the participants engage in home-making practices through an actor-oriented approach, in which they have their own agency in making a home away from home. This 'giving of meaning to a place' is done through activities, related to people and objects, but also to the environment and the place that they're in (nature), making it an embodied experience. These home-making practices are closely related to notions of belonging, which is linked to the social identity, but also to the acquisition of cultural practices and customs. Moreover, I argue that memories play an important role in home-making, as it can create a notion of belonging to both the Netherlands and Norway, by tapping in on mythscapes.

Presentation of empirical material



Chapter 4: Migrating from the Netherlands to northern Norway

The following chapters will be based on the empirical material that has been collected during the fieldwork. The empirical material will be presented and analysed in combination with the theory and the debates that have been mentioned above. In this chapter I will first dive more into the background and motivation of my participants to migrate to northern Norway.

4.1 Background and motivation

All of the participants were born in the Netherlands and were a part of a voluntarily migration movement to northern Norway. Why did they choose to migrate? More importantly, why did they stay?

Attracting people to small communities

I have spoken to different people who all had different motivations of moving to northern Norway. Two of these people have a particularly interesting story to tell. Their names are Ananke and Irana, two sisters who came to Norway with their parents and their two other siblings in 2005. Ananke, the older one of the two sisters, explained how their parents ended up deciding to migrate to Norway in 2005. There was a forum for Dutch people in Norway which stated that they wanted more people on an island in northern Norway in an attempt to get the population and the tourism rate up again. This island is called Vengsøy and is about a 2-hour ferry ride away from Tromsø. "With four kids they thought 'why not?' And then we went to Vengsøy. (…). And I just had to come along, because I was ten years old, so I did not really have a choice haha."[6] As a ten-year old girl Ananke thus arrived in northern Norway, on Vengsøy. I also spoke with her sister Irana, who was five at the time they migrated, "I don't remember a lot from the moving itself, but I do remember a lot from the time we lived on the island, before we came to the city."[7]

The way in which Irana, Ananke, their other siblings and their parents migrated to northern Norway is an interesting take on migration. Paal Wergeland (2020) wrote on the phenomenon of Norwegian communities actively trying to get Dutch people to migrate to their community. In a lot of smaller communities, young people move away to the bigger cities. To try to slow down the shrinking of the community, they actively attempt to attract Dutch people to their society. "They seduce with cheap houses, job opportunities, fresh air and spectacular

[6] Ananke, semi-structured interview, 24/05/2023
[7] Irana, semi-structured interview, 06/06/2023

landscapes." (Wergeland 2020). Wergeland (2020) writes about a Dutch couple that came to Norway in 1997. They are now running a recruitment agency to attract more Dutch folk to the smaller communities in Norway. As they believe a lot of people in the densely populated Netherlands dream of more space and maybe even a *Småbruk*[8].

The parents of Ananke and Irana saw an opportunity in going to a small community. They started a tourism business for families who had children with disabilities; a vacation home where they would offer to help to take care of the disabled children while the family could then also enjoy some quality time on their own. After two and a half years on Vengsøy, Ananke, Irana, their parents and their siblings all moved to Tromsø where they lived for eight and a half more years. After those years spent in northern Norway, they all migrated back to the Netherlands. Ananke explained that their grandfather got sick and how other factors started to play a role in wanting to migrate back to the Netherlands.

> (…) The weather plays a part; family plays a part. All the things you do not have here, you are thinking about. My brother wanted to start studying, and I maybe wanted to try something different. So, then everything leads to… everything comes together. So, then it was, okay we will go back to the Netherlands. We all left together.[9]

The practice of actively trying to pursue Dutch people to migrate to Norway is very interesting for this research, as well as in the light of current debates on migration. Most of the literature and societal debates are not focused on a migration flow from within Europe. As Freier and Holloway (2019, 1172) state, only a few people enjoy the right to choose where they want to move and settle if they leave their home countries. Even more interesting in this case is then how small communities in Norway are actively trying to get Dutch people to settle there. However, besides the attraction of living in a smaller community, there are other reasons for migrating to Norway, which will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

The Norwegian dream

Some of the participants left the Netherlands to fulfil a dream of moving to (northern) Norway. One of those participants, is Suzanne, a woman with a passion for Norway. I met her in a bakery in the Tromsø city centre. We started talking and she told me that she came to Tromsø in 2018, but that she had the dream of moving to Norway for a much longer time than that. About ten

[8] A *småbruk* is an area of land that is used for farming, but often smaller than a 'regular' farm.
[9] Ananke, semi-structured interview, 24/05/2023

years before coming to Tromsø, she had a summer job in the south of Norway. During that period, she 'fell in love with the country' and decided right there and then that she wanted to move to Norway after her graduation. After a lot of applications, she got a call from Tromsø, where she then moved to, only ten days after hearing that she got hired.

> I could get a job starting the first of October. At first, this would only be for three months. But that was fine for me, then at least I was in Norway already. Because that was my dream; to move to Norway. (…) So, then I packed a backpack and a suitcase with clothes, and eh, came this way.[10]

For Suzanne, the goal was thus to move to Norway, because that was her dream. Through a more coincidental path she ended up in northern Norway, where she has now been for five-and-a-half years and counting.

On a slightly different side of the same coin, I met some people who desperately wanted to move out of the Netherlands. Piet and his wife Maria now live in Lyngen. We met online, and I had an interview with both of them on Zoom. Piet and Maria did not have the dream to move to Norway per se but wanted to desperately move out of the Netherlands. They found that the Netherlands were too busy, there were too many small things that they did not like. There were multiple countries that they considered, and Norway had always been high up on their list. After Piet graduated as a physical therapist, he found an advertisement in a newspaper for a hospital in Norway. He applied, got accepted, and he and his wife moved to Norway in 1986. Initially they moved to the south but after a few years they felt uneasy.

> We started to make a road trip in our campervan with our son who was two years old at the time. We really headed out with the plan to see what the rest of the country had to offer. And we really liked it here [Lyngen], so er, I applied for a job and within a very short amount of time I had a job. And now we are still here, haha.[11]

Piet and his wife moved to Lyngen in October 1990 from the southern part of Norway. Piet mentioned that he felt way more accepted in the northern part of the country. He felt like they never really fit in in the south, that they felt a little bit rejected, but that they never experienced anything like that when moving to northern Norway. They bought a house in Lyngen after six

[10] Suzanne, semi-structured interview, 07/05/2023
[11] Piet, semi-structured interview, 12/05/2023

months of living there. “And then the people [in Lyngen] thought by themselves, ‘oh they are serious. They are staying.’ And then we were immediately a part of the community.”[12] Piet and Maria thus could not feel ‘at home’ in southern Norway, could not acquire a feeling of belonging, which left them to feel alienated (cf. Antonsich 2010, 649) whereas in northern Norway they immediately felt this belonging. This has been a big reason for them to stay in Lyngen. I will go more into this feeling of belonging in chapter 6.

4.2 Deciding on Tromsø

In this paragraph, I would like to circle back to the case of Ananke and Irana. As mentioned before, they both came here as children, aged ten and five. Then, after years of living in northern Norway, they migrated back to the Netherlands in 2013. But now, at the time of writing, eleven years later, both Ananke, Irana, and their older brother are all back in northern Norway, living in Tromsø. Why did they decide to come back to northern Norway?

Ananke tells me how she came back to Tromsø after living in the Netherlands for two-and-a-half years. Living in the Netherlands was a big transformation for her and that she did not feel like she belonged there.

> I have tried to tell myself for a long time that I just had to try. That it was just a transition phase, that I just had to get used to living here [the Netherlands] again. But it was mostly the rushing, the Dutch rushing. Everybody has an agenda. You cannot just visit someone. You also cannot just, like you can in Norway, knock on someone’s door and asking if it fits to drink some coffee. They do that here and that is so not done in the Netherlands. It was the tiny things that were very different. There are also other things at play. I couldn’t ski, (…), I missed the mountains, I missed the snow, the long summer months with the long lights. And yeah, I just did not feel good. It was a little bit like being at a party somewhere and you feel like ‘oh… I would rather just go home’. I had that feeling constantly.[13]

Ananke spent a significant part of her life in Tromsø, from the ages ten until eighteen, which led her to feel more like she belonged in Tromsø, which motivated her migration back to northern Norway. Irana spent a different part of her childhood in Tromsø, from the ages five to

[12] Piet, semi-structured interview, 12/05/2023.
[13] Ananke, semi-structured interview, 24/05/2023

thirteen. She finished high school in the Netherlands and when she had to choose a place and a subject to study, she chose Tromsø. She is now studying to be an English teacher, which gives her flexibility, as she could technically teach English in Norway, but also in the Netherlands. Even though she mentions that going back to the Netherlands is not something she really thinks about. "Maybe someday, but at this moment that is not something I think about. I am enjoying myself so at this moment I don't feel the need to leave."[14] For both Ananke and Irana, their childhood thus influenced their motivation to migrate (back) to Tromsø.

However, not all my participants lived in Tromsø as a child and still decided to migrate to the north. Why? For two of my participants, their migration had everything to do with (finding) love. Karen moved to northern Norway in 1977. Her husband is Norwegian and "he wanted to go home."[15] Karen, her husband, and their two children migrated from Groningen to northern Norway, where her husband had to undergo some more medical training and had to finish the last part of his military service. After about one-and-a-half year they migrated to Tromsø after living in different parts of northern Norway. Ernst also moved from Groningen to northern Norway. He met a woman on Svalbard and fell in love. She is originally from Tromsø, and Ernst decided to move with her, which has been about 24 years ago at the time of writing.

4.3 A privileged group of people?

Migrating from the Netherlands to (northern) Norway, nowadays falls within the EU/EEA regulations in which people can move freely across borders (Rijksoverheid n.d.). For all my participants the moving process was quite easy. When moving to Stavanger in southern Norway, Piet and his wife Maria had to go to the Norwegian Embassy in The Hague to make sure that everything was written down, but they did not have to worry about being able to go or getting approved for a visa. And now, this is even easier to do. "You do not even have to go to the Embassy anymore, you can do almost everything online."[16]

In the case of Suzanne, it is visible how she is part of a privileged group. She herself did not have any issues when coming to Norway, "It was easy. I just had to register myself at the police and that's it."[17] However, for her girlfriend, this was different.

[14] Irana, semi-structured interview, 06/06/2023
[15] Karen, semi-structured interview, 30/05/2023
[16] Piet, Semi-structured interview, 12/05/2023
[17] Suzanne, semi-structured interview, 07/05/2023

> My girlfriend is from the United States and that is a whole different story. Before she can even get permission to stay here. [she needs a] Visa. But she also must apply at the UDI, and she must provide documentation for everything. It is so much paperwork. I did not have that much paperwork. (…) so yeah, the process is still on-going. A bit annoying to be honest.[18]

Even though Suzanne's girlfriend is from the United States, which is in the so-called Global North, and she is migrating to another country in the Global North, giving her already a privileged position, the position of the Dutch migrants can be seen as even more privileged. In this way, the 'power-geometry of time-space compression' is clearly visible, where different groups of people are placed differently in the flows and interconnections in the world (cf. Massey 1993, 151). Within the EU/EEA regulations there are free flows, and moreover, the Dutch migrants are more in charge of their movement than some other groups are (cf. Massey 1993, 151). This being more in charge can be seen in how they all choose to migrate to northern Norway. They have a certain agency over their movements and are not forced to migrate. They are part of a privileged, voluntary, migration and not of a migration that is forced on them by violence or climate change for example. This may, in turn, influence how they engage in home-making practices (cf. Sandu 2013, 497) as they might already show an interest in the place, making it easier to create a home.

[18] Suzanne, semi-structured interview, 07/05/2023

Chapter 5: Home-making in the Arctic

Now that it is clear how and why the participants ended up in northern Norway, it is interesting to look more into their experiences, and how they give meaning to this place. This chapter will focus on their home-making practices in their new place of residence. It will explore their daily lives, hobbies, the relationship to the arctic environment, food, and the transnational ties they have between Norway and the Netherlands.

5.1 A day in the life

I am not even sure how I would describe a day in the life in northern Norway. At the time of writing this paragraph, it is the 7th of May 2024. The sun shines through the window, making it look and feel warm, even though it is just five degrees Celsius. The day has about nineteen hours of daylight. The sun came up at 2:30 am last night, light peeking through the holes in my black-out curtains. It will set again at 22:45 pm. The contrast with a few months ago is striking, when seeing the sun was not even possible, and twilight would only last from around 10 am until 1 pm. Living in constant darkness, or constant brightness, is something unimaginable to a lot of people, but here, all the way up in the far North, it is 'just another day'. Life goes on as normal.

Living in northern Norway

The participants have been living in this environment for a varying amount of time, from 'just' short of two years, to as long as over 45 years. When moving to a new place, it is important to also give this place a meaning. As through giving a place meaning, and an emotional and relational signification, it becomes a home (cf. Boccagni 2017, 8). This is done through home-making practices, in which the participants actively participate in things that produce meaning to the place. One way to engage in home-making practices in the day-to-day life, and to make oneself 'at home', can be to create networks, or engaging in social practices or hobbies (cf. Sandu 2013, 502). Karen explains how engaging in a social hobby has helped her to feel good in new places. Before moving to Tromsø, she lived in Brøstadbotn, which is about eighty kilometres away from Tromsø. She described that time as being a central part of the 'worst time of her life'.

> When you arrive in a strange place, and you can find something that you are interested in… that can help you to feel more joy in that place. And that is what I did, even in

> Brøstadbotn, the place from which I said was one of the worst periods of my life. At some point, I got in touch with someone who played volleyball and I joined some practices. Here in Tromsø I also searched for a volleyball club. I played for a while, and I also coached a girls' team. That was very pleasant.[19]

Playing volleyball thus helped Karen to feel more at ease in the new place of residence. There are, of course, more factors that can be considered when looking into the home-making practices of the participants. And, even after living in northern Norway for a long time, engaging in home-making practices is something people keep doing. Piet tells me that he found renewed energy after he retired when he was sixty years old. He is the chairman of the neighbourhood association, with whom he is working to get nature more broadly accessible for elderly people, or people with small children, who cannot easily go up the steep mountains.

Besides finding a social network with 'strangers, this can also come from building relationships. Ananke explains how she is living together with her boyfriend and their dog. Her sister Irana lives a few blocks down the road, and they share a friend group together. Moreover, Ananke explains how her boyfriends' family has become her family as well. She now has cousins in the area, and they often go out for dinner with the family or go out for activities in the mountains. Linda explains how she found a friend group when she first arrived to Tromsø, just 22 years old at the time of arriving she had to settle in a new place.

> The thing is, here in Tromsø, almost everyone moved here. Even from a different part in Norway, they also can't go home easily to visit [someone]. (…) Friends are here, and we are all dependent on each other. I was dependent on them… but that was the same for the Norwegians, they also didn't have their parents here. And then you do a lot of things together. You go out and do things together. That is a big benefit of making friends. (…) You can do things together.[20]

Building a social network through relating to friends, has helped Linda to settle in Tromsø, also because she found people to do activities with, and these activities in turn helped her to feel at home. She explained how she never went out on her own, always with friends. And after doing something, she explained how they always ended the day with a dinner. "It [eating together] is something I introduced [when she was just arriving here], but we still do it to this day. If we

[19] Karen, semi-structured interview, 30/05/2023
[20] Linda, semi-structured interview, 11/05/2023

went out in the mountains or something, we end the day with a dinner at someone's house."[21] Karen also experienced finding a network in Tromsø. After living in Brøstadbotn, where she felt miserable, everything changed when coming to Tromsø. Her family started to live in a community in an apartment building.

> When we moved to Tromsø, the whole situation turned around. A lot of families with children who were the same age as our children. I had people around me, the kids had other kids around them. I had good contacts, and it became a whole different situation. (…) Not everyone was originally from northern Norway. (…) And, because none of them had family in northern Norway, we all were in the same situation. We celebrated birthdays together, sometimes even Christmas. And then, if there were grandparents visiting, they became the grandparents of all the children for the time they were there. We celebrated everything together.[22]

Thus, creating social networks, in any shape or form, has helped these participants to create a good feeling in their new place of residence. It has helped them to feel more at home, which becomes especially clear in Karen's case. She felt miserable in Brøstadbotn, which is a city also located in northern Norway, but felt way different about Tromsø after she started to get involved in different social networks. These ways of 'making oneself feel at home' through personal ties, such as interacting and forming relationships with friends, family, or even strangers, can enhance the feeling of belonging, as Antonsich (2010, 647) argues.

A lived home

In addition to creating social networks, one can be able to experience a 'lived home' by engaging in practices such as listening to music, watching programmes, listening to the radio, or other hobbies such as, among others, gardening, cooking, and reading (cf. Sandu 2013, 503). Karen explains how listening to Dutch radio, reading Dutch literature, and teaching Dutch has helped her to stay in touch with her Dutch roots, but on the other hand helped her to feel more at home in Tromsø. I visited her house in May 2023, I was welcomed by shelves full of Dutch (children's) books, and games. When walking into the living room, I was greeted by the Dutch radioman reading the news updates from that day.

[21] Linda, semi-structured interview, 11/05/2024
[22] Karen, semi-structured interview, 30/05/2023

I think that for me, the most important thing is that I never lost my Dutch language, my Dutch literature, and my Dutch education. (…). I also think that feeling at home, what has contributed a lot to that… You have seen the bookshelves at my home. There are so many Dutch books, and I have always kept reading them. Even when it was hard to get new books when I did not go to the Netherlands for a while. Now it is easy, I can just download them online, which allows me to keep having access to the Dutch books that I want to read. I love the idea that I have my Dutch bookshelves here which I can just dive into.[23]

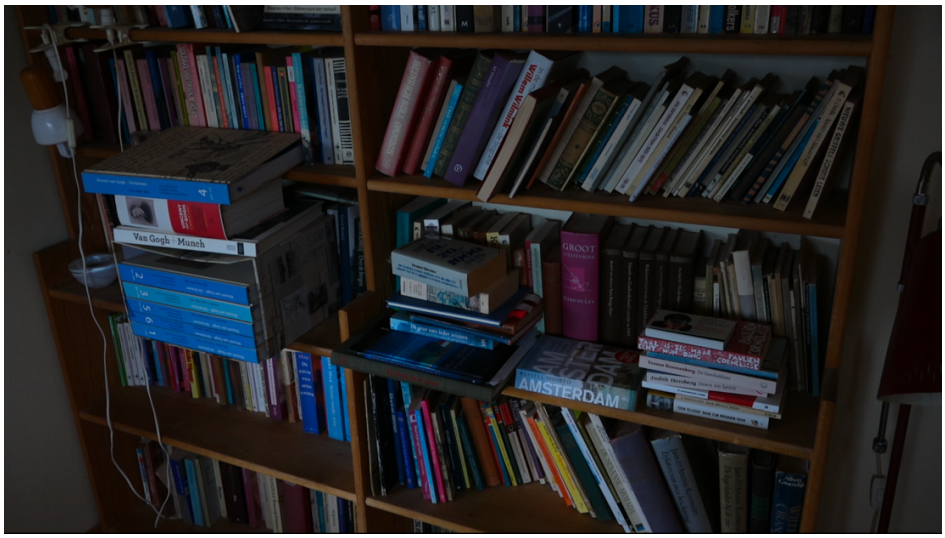


Figure 2: A part of one of the bookshelves in Karen's house

Reading, a big hobby of Karen, relates to her history, it contains memories about the Netherlands. When creating a home in northern Norway, hobbies that tie someone to a central place in that person's life (in this case the Netherlands), can help with creating a feeling of home and belonging (cf. Antonsich 2010, 647).

In addition to hobbies that relate to a central place in one's memories, experiencing or finding new hobbies can create the feeling of 'a lived home' (cf. Sandu 2013, 503. All the participants have multiple hobbies here. Piet enjoys making music. He started playing the clarinet when he was ten years old but got into an accident when he was eighteen and stopped playing. After migrating he picked it up again. "Now I am playing in two music orchestras. It could have been three, but the cities are a bit far away from each other haha."[24] Other than that,

[23] Karen, semi-structured interview, 30/05/2023
[24] Piet, semi-structured interview, 12/05/2023

Piet also picked up the hobby of making knives and knife holders, which he explained to be a "very Norwegian hobby."[25]

5.2 Nature is calling

Another important aspect to mentions is the arctic environment. I argue that the Dutch migrants do not only create meaning through building networks or relating to objects or people. They relate to the nature and to the landscape that surrounds them. It becomes a part of their lived experience; it becomes a part of who they are in a situated place (cf. Low 2009) (cf. Wieczorek 2019). On May 22nd, 2023, Miek and I make our way up to the *Sherpatrappa*, where we can start our hike. It is around 10:00 pm, but we are accompanied by the sun shining on our faces. The city is bathing in a golden glow, and the sky is showing us orange, and pink colours. Not even halfway up, we encounter the first reminder of how far up north we are. We walk up a hill and look onto one of the other mountains, waterfalls flowing down from the top. Miek notices how fast the snow started melting: "Look at all those waterfalls! Two weeks ago, we still had so much snow and now almost everything is gone."[26]

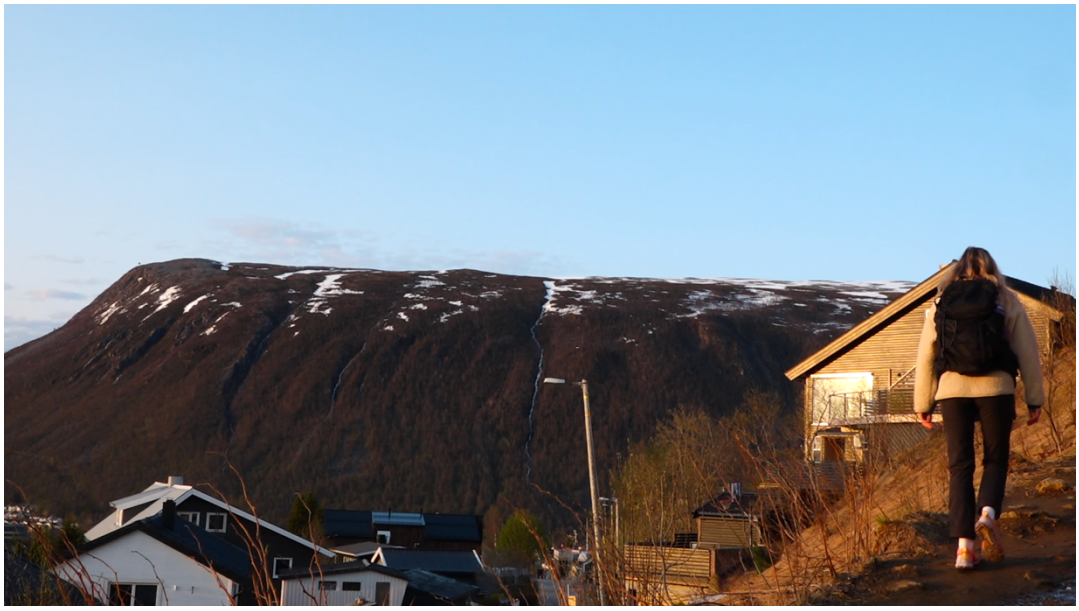


Figure 3: On a hike with Miek

We continue our walk up, until we decide that we are not properly equipped for the left-over snow and ice that we encounter, especially when carrying the heavy camera along. We find a bench that overlooks the city. We sit down and reflect on the environment that we are in. Miek

[25] Piet, semi-structured interview, 12/05/2023
[26] Miek, informal conversation, 22/05/2023

has always liked to be outside, that did not change when coming to Tromsø. She talks about how she used to like to go out for runs in the Netherlands or go out to take a walk in some of the woods, but that the nature in Tromsø offers so much more. She spends a significant amount of her free time in the mountains. She does almost all the activities that one can do on a mountain, such as going trail running, skiing, snowboarding, or hiking, depending on the season. Miek experiences a sensorial engagement with the environment that she is in now, which contributes to how she views Tromsø (cf. Wieczorek 2019, 5). She goes on to explain how she does not know what it would be like to move back to the Netherlands and not have all these opportunities to be outside in nature anymore. She reflects on how much she enjoys the nature in Tromsø and how she would miss that the most if she would move back to the Netherlands.

To be outside

The nature plays a big role in the day-to-day life of the participants. As mentioned before, engaging in home-making practices by participating in (creative) hobbies is a way to make a home for oneself (cf. Sandu 2013, 503). A lot of the hobbies of the Dutch migrants in northern Norway involve around the nature that is surrounding them.

Ananke and her boyfriend spend a lot of time in the mountains. They have a cabin in the mountains about three hours from Tromsø where they spend a lot of their weekends. They are by far not the only people doing this. A lot of Norwegians have cabins in the mountains to escape the city life in the weekends. Going on a cabin trip with friends or family is an important part of the Norwegian lifestyle, and there is even a word for it: *hyttekos* which can be translated to cabin cosiness (Visit Norway, n.d.). When talking with Ernst, he also mentioned how he and his family regularly go on a *hyttetur* in the mountains. In addition to spending the night or a weekend in the mountains, there are also a lot of options to go on a day tour.

When living in northern Norway, it is almost inevitable to have hobbies that have nothing to do with being outside. Piet loves to go fishing near his house, he even bought a boat. Suzanne explains how she is a member of a kayaking club, in which she also found a lot of new friends.

> In winter we go out less, but in summer we do a lot. Every week we do a tour. For me, it is the ultimate feeling of freedom. Especially in the weekends, where you grab your tent, stuff it into your kayak, and you paddle to an island or something. There is no one else there. It is just you and your friends. Making a fire. Other than that, there is nothing.

> Fantastic! That, to me, embodies Norway. Being outside in the nature. not many other people around you. I love it.[27]

As Suzanne explains, she can go out less with her kayaking club in winter. However, even in winter the nature is still very important to the participants and their experiences and sensorial engagement with their environment (cf. Wieczorek 2019, 5). Irana mentions how "There are a lot of different activities in every season. You can think like, yeah okay the ski season is over, then you can go swimming, grilling, biking, and in the winter, you can get your *randonee*[28] skis out of the storage room."[29]

One of Ernst's hobbies also is connected to being outside. He has a garden in the community gardens at Holt, located on the southwestern part of the Tromsø island. On the 4th of June he takes me to an open day at the community garden. I walk with him and see how he is integrated in this community. He knows almost everyone. The atmosphere feels good, even though the day is a bit gloomy, I feel welcomed. Everyone is nice and talks to us. There are some tents put up, where food is being served, there are activities for kids, and there are members of the community selling seeds, plants, and potatoes. Ernst goes to buy some things that he will plant in the following week. On June 11th, we go back to Holt. This time there are no tents, and not as many people around. It is time to plant the vegetables in the ground. I film almost the whole process, while also helping Ernst out with some of the things in the garden.

Figure 4: Ernst working in his garden

[27] Suzanne, semi-structured interview, 07/05/2023
[28] Randonee ski is a different word for back country ski.
[29] Irana, semi-structured interview, 11/06/2023

When asking Ernst if he had the same hobby in the Netherlands, he explains how he had always been interested, but never did gardening on a scale like how he does here. Him and his family can eat a lot from the vegetables and potatoes from this garden. In the harvest of 2022, they even had twenty kilos of potatoes. He also explained how he met new people in this community. People with the same interests as he, which may also help to create a home.

Acclimatising to the Arctic

Even though there is much praise given to the nature here up in the high North. Living in the Arctic comes with its own challenges, and it is not all 'sunshine and happiness'. I remember the first time I had to walk over the icy walkways in the streets. Guarded with spikes I went out, only to realise that almost no one else is wearing them. Some of my Norwegian friends even went out in their sneakers. Something that I did not dare to do. However, now, in my second winter in Tromsø, I wore the spikes a lot less than the year before. Was it dumb? Maybe. But I felt like I 'learned' how to walk on the tricky sidewalks. I even started to wear my sneakers in March, while there was still snow on the sidewalks.

Besides learning how to walk on icy sidewalks, the Arctic comes with other characteristics and challenges that one needs to acclimatise to. The biggest one being the stark contrast in the amount of daylight in the winter and in the summer. Experiencing the polar night, where the sun does not rise over the horizon for almost two months, was an interesting time. I did not think it hit me hard, until I came back from my Christmas holiday in the Netherlands. I came back to darkness, cold, snow, and ice. It hit me harder than I expected. Maria explained to me how her and her husband Piet installed some 'tricks' to deal with this.

> We have our tricks. We have a light above our table and when we double click the switch it gives 'sunlight'. So that helps a lot. So, in the dark period, when we have breakfast, we turn on the lamp, or when I'm writing. It helps a lot. Earlier, we used to have these anti-depression lamps in our offices. Now we have them above the kitchen table, and that is very pleasant. Yes. There are just tricks you need to do for that.[30]

The polar night is a harsh time, which Miek also explains in my film *A Home Away From Home* (2024). She explains how it is a period in which one can be so tired all the time, the energy levels are low. However, she also explains that there are positives sides to it, with the northern

[30] Maria, semi-structured interview, 12/05/2023

lights brightening up the dark skies. And how the other side of the coin, the midnight sun season, is also very special to experience. It thus seems that, even though the polar night is experienced as something difficult, it is not a dealbreaker to stay or not stay in northern Norway.

Other than the darkness, the lack of a 'proper' spring is something that can be experienced as rough for a lot of my participants, me included. Especially May and June are experienced as difficult months in terms of the weather. I spoke with Irana on the 6th of June, 2023. We met in a café, both of us still wearing a sweater, the sky outside is grey, puddles on the ground from the rain that fell.

> Last week [end of May 2023] I was in the Netherlands for a week. It was 23 degrees Celsius, everything was green, there were flowers everywhere alongside the roads and in the woods. And then coming back here, in 4 degrees Celsius and rain and grey skies… that is really… yes, that is a bit painful.[31]

Irana then goes on to explain that both the spring and the autumn are so much longer in the Netherlands than they are up in the North. And that the spring, or rather, the lack of spring, is one of the reasons why her father wanted to migrate back to the Netherlands after the years in the Arctic. In the film we can hear Ernst talking about this issue as well. After working in the garden, we sit down at a picnic table. The sun is peeking through the clouds a little bit. Ernst is in his t-shirt, while I am wearing a down jacket on top of a light sweater. We start talking about the weather in Tromsø.

> You asked me if I would ever move back to the Netherlands; I would not. However, sometimes I can imagine it. (…). With a bit better weather. I don't really feel like that in the summer or autumn, but the spring is difficult. When it is 5 degrees Celsius in May or June, combined with wet snow, you really start to think…. That is a difficult time.[32]

However, for Ernst, even though it is a difficult time, the (lack of) spring is not a deal breaker. He goes on to say that the Netherlands also does not have nice weather all year around, combined with the busyness of the country. He would not want to move away. "(…) Especially if the weather is like this [dry, sunshine peeking through the clouds], it is like, look at this!"[33]

[31] Irana, semi-structured interview, 06/06/2023
[32] Ernst, informal conversation, 11/06/2023
[33] Ernst, informal conversation, 11/06/2023

It thus seems as if the participants have managed to adapt and acclimatise to the weather and its challenges in the Arctic, embodying and learning to live with the nature that surrounds them.

Attaching meaning to the environment can also come in the form of new hobbies. Linda states how so many Norwegians are skilled in knitting or sowing, and that she learned a lot from them, and even started to love it. “In the Netherlands I would’ve never picked this up. (…) but here, they turn into things you also use. You need everything. Everything here needs to be made from wool, otherwise it would be too cold! Haha.”[34]

5.3 The taste of home

When doing the fieldwork, I wondered if the participants are missing any food, or not missing anything at all. Because personally, whenever I spend some time in the Netherlands, I always bring back some food to Norway, especially some specific snacks, or pastries. I came to realise, that food can be an important factor in engaging in home-making practices. As Sandu (2013, 503) explains, cooking can help to create a feeling of home in a new place. There are, of course, new cooking traditions that one can pick up in a new place. After just a few weeks of living in northern Norway, I became familiar with how much people grill sausages here. It is a social thing to do, outside on a hike, or just near the lake at *Prestvannet.* Together with Ananke and Irana I went out to the lake. I bought some sausages, and they would take care of the rest that we needed to make the fire. Out of their backpacks they grab some wood. They taught me how to make a fire like ‘a real Norwegian’. We started grilling the sausages and made some coffee.

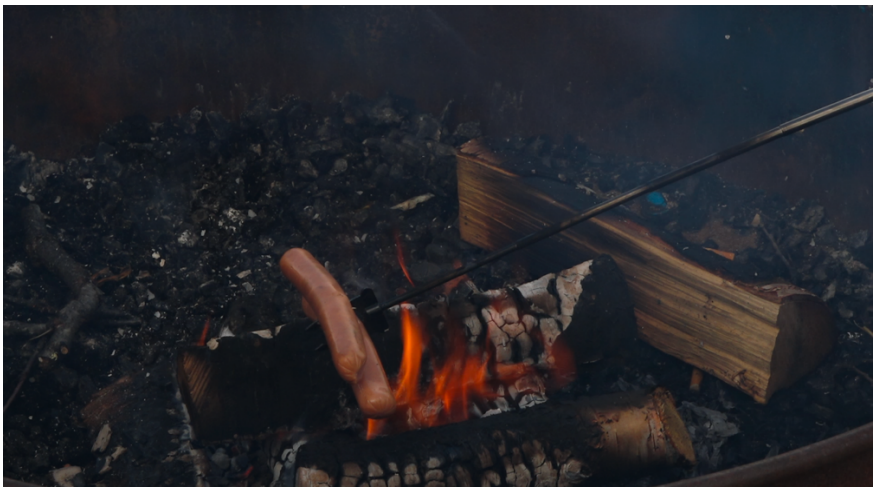


Figure 5: Grilling sausages above a self-made fire

[34] Linda, semi-structured conversation, 11/05/2023

Besides engaging in cooking (in a new way) as a home-making practice, people also "maintain imaginative and sensory memories and ideas of good food that are linked to specific places and times" (Trapp 2021, 125). Some of my participants talk about how they always ask for certain food when someone from the Netherlands is visiting them. Suzanne explains how she always misses one kind of chips.

> When I am in the Netherlands, I love eating *HamKa's*[35] snacks, but they do not sell those here. So, when people know that I'm coming, it's always like "look I brought you some *HamKa's*!" Even though I already ate like six bags that week haha. (…) but yeah, there are a few things that I love that they don't sell here. (…).[36]

Piet explains how he misses *bitterballen*[37], but that the desire to eat them gets less and less through the years. They eat them when they are in the Netherlands sometimes, but they do not miss them as much anymore. "What we [Piet and Maria] did do for a long time, is make *oliebollen*[38] with the New Year celebrations."[39] Making food that reminds someone of the traditions or customs from back home, is also visible with Miek. When we first met, we started talking about food quite fast, and which foods we were missing. We mentioned missing the supermarket in and of itself. The *Albert Heijn*[40], was something we both look back on with good memories. The choices of food in the store were endless, and so different from walking in the supermarket in Tromsø. Then we went on to list the food we were missing, especially the food you eat on the terraces. At the time of this conversation, Miek and I had only been in Tromsø for a bit more than six months. Maria explains how that longing can disappear with time. She has a Dutch friend, and she can tell she has not been here for a long time.

> She is talking a lot about what she misses, and how to order from websites to be able to get Dutch food here. We don't have that at all, we already went through that phase haha. But of course, we are more than happy if someone brings us some cheese or coffee from the Netherlands![41]

[35] HamKa's are ham and cheese flavored snacks.
[36] Suzanne, semi-structured interview, 07/05/2023
[37] *Bitterballen* are a deep-fried Dutch snack.
[38] *Oliebollen* are deep-fried balls of dough often eaten on the 31st of December and the 1st of January, to celebrate the old and new year.
[39] Piet, semi-structured interview, 12/05/2023
[40] *Albert Heijn* is a major supermarket chain in the Netherlands.
[41] Maria, semi-structured interview, 12/05/2023

After reminiscing about the food we were missing, Miek and I decided to make pancakes. I filmed the whole process of making them, and cooking and eating the pancakes brought back some good memories from the 'home' back in the Netherlands.

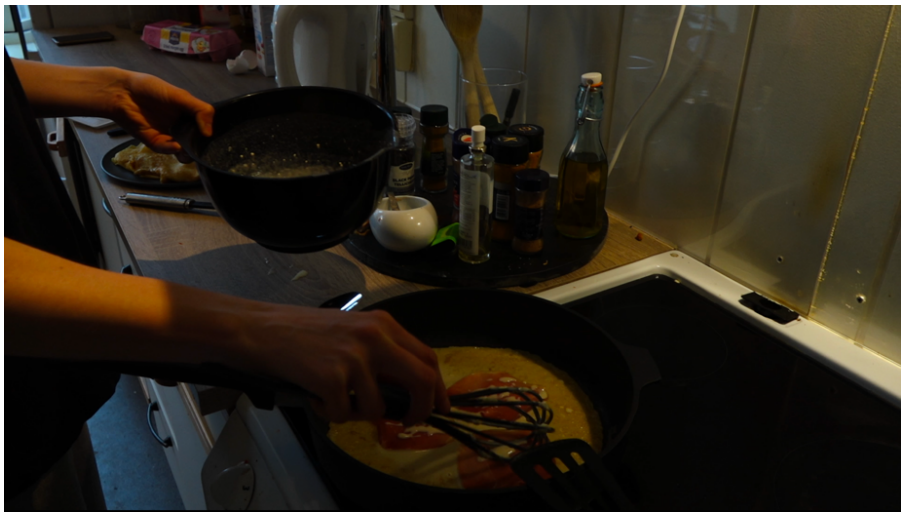


Figure 6: Making pancakes with Miek

By cooking something that reminds Miek of her home in the Netherlands, it is also at the same time acting as a home-making practice here in Tromsø.

5.4 Inside the physical homes of the Dutch migrants

After looking at the different kind of home-making practices that can be related to hobbies, feelings, memories, and emotions, I believe that it is also important to consider the actual house. As a house can also be a facilitator for the creation of meaning, which can help one feel more 'at home'; as a physical house provides the setting for more emotional attachments and meanings (cf. Dowling and Mee 2007, 161). I will argue that this can be done through, for example, decoration. Suzanne explained to me how she has brought some pictures of her family and friends and that there is one thing in her house that could be seen as Dutch. "It's from my grandma, a wooden shoe with tulips in it. Fake tulips because real ones don't last here haha. But yeah, that is hanging on the wall."[42] Bringing things from the previous place of residence to the new one, makes an ordinary object, suddenly, a significant one (cf. Sandu 2013, 502).

When I was first in the house of Ernst, to film his environment, I noticed that his walls are full of all kinds of different pictures, paintings, and other 'ornaments'. "(…) books, 'ornaments', furniture, pictures, textiles, ceramics, plants in different forms and shapes

[42] Suzanne, semi-structured interview, 07/05/2023

represent (…) memories from a previous lived experience" (Sandu 2013, 502). Ernst explains how some of the pictures have been made by his children, others by friends, others by his wife from when she was on Svalbard, and so forth. We walk down the stairs into another room. He shows me the old salt and pepper shakers that he brought from the Netherlands. And moreover, he shows me a painting. It is Swedish, and he explains the significance of it.

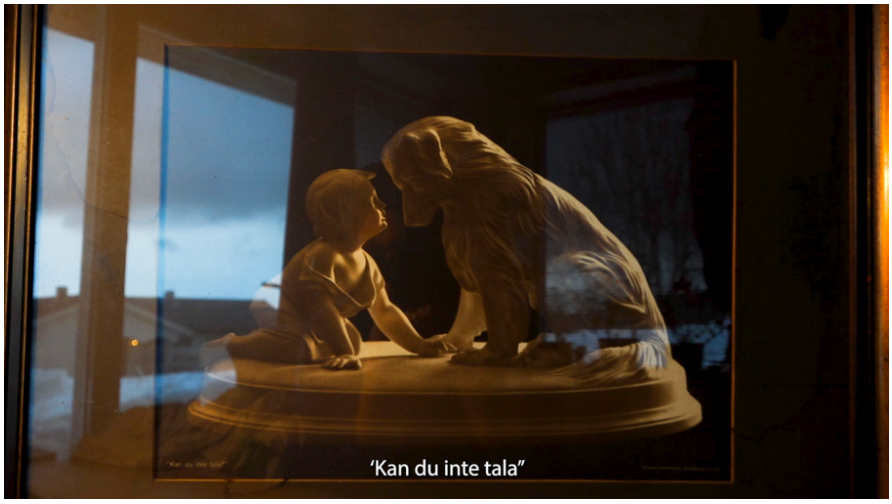


Figure 7: The painting that is important to Ernst

Ernst goes on to explain how he had always had an interest in Scandinavia. He 'found' this picture when he was studying in Groningen. It was a decoration in his new apartment. He has taken it along with him for over forty years and only came off the wall last year. "So, I always think that it is not a complete coincidence that I ended up here."[43] Looking inside the houses of the Dutch migrants in northern Norway and looking at the things that they either bought here or brought from the Netherlands gave me a good idea on how they give meaning to things. As "Their [the objects'] transportation and acquisition, physical arrangement and maintenance represent a critical aspect of how a home has been re-enacted and re-created." (Sandu 2013, 502). Linda and her husband, for example, brought their couch from Germany, the place of birth from her husband, and she explains how they felt like their house in Tromsø 'needed' that couch.

5.5 Ties between the Netherlands and Norway

Within the daily lives of the Dutch migrants, which I focused on in this research, it is important to remember their transnationality. They may sustain relationships with both the Netherlands

[43] Ernst, informal conversation, 08/05/2023

and with (northern) Norway (cf. Lazar 2011, 70) and often place meaning and relational signification to both societies. I argue that they do this through both physical ties and relations, for example travelling to the Netherlands and keeping in contact with family. But also, through recreating memories, for example on holiday celebrations, remembering how they were celebrated, or taking some 'ingredients' from the customs of Dutch holidays and implement those in the Norwegian holiday celebrations.

Contact with the Netherlands

Most of the participants mention that they visit the Netherlands occasionally. Especially the younger participants, who still have a lot of family, friends, and 'fresher' memories from the Netherlands, visit more often. Miek goes at least two times a year, during Christmas and in the summer. Nowadays, it is also easier to keep in touch with people through social media. "We have contact on WhatsApp every day and we send each other daily updates on Snap Chat. That is how we keep each other updated."[44] When everything is so relatively 'close' and easily accessible, it is easier to maintain those transnational ties with the Netherlands. "I mean, twenty years ago a retour ticket to the Netherlands costed 8000 NOK. (…) Now, suddenly, there are direct flights going to Amsterdam for 2000 NOK for a return ticket."[45]It seems to be easier in this modern, globalised, world for the participants to stay connected to both societies. That seems especially important regarding family ties.

> It is not often that I feel homesick. But sometimes I think like, 'oh I would love to sit on the couch with my mom now, watch a movie with my dad, or go and visit grandma.' So yeah, I miss the family life sometimes. The spontaneous visits and staying up to date with everyone's life. Just the ordinary things, I can miss those sometimes. But then when I am in the Netherlands, I can really take extra pleasure out of those things. I know that I wouldn't see my parents every day either if I would live in the Netherlands, but half a year is a long time. But then, when I've been for a month or something, I feel recharged.[46]

People thus maintains ties to the Netherlands, while simultaneously creating a home in northern Norway (cf. Lazar 2011, 70). This transnational maintaining of relationships can be done

[44] Suzanne, semi-structured interview, 07/05/2023
[45] Karen, semi-structured interview, 30/05/2023
[46] Irana, semi-structured interview, 06/06/2023

through (online) phone calls, messages, social media, or visits, which have become more accessible over the years.

Holiday celebrations and customs

When moving to Norway I realised how similar, but also how different the celebration of holidays can be. We have a lot of holidays in common, but the way they get celebrated can differ a lot. The daily life thus gets impacted differently during the holidays. But how do the participants celebrate holidays? And how do the traditions differ from what they were used to?

> On the 17th of May, the national [Norwegian] holiday, I do wear a Norwegian flag. I celebrate that along with them. And as for Dutch holidays… well I did wear my orange football shirt on the birthday of the king. I was telling everyone that the king had his birthday and that everyone is free and partying in the Netherlands. And yeah, the two minutes of silence [May 4th, commemoration day], I also do that. But other than that, most holidays are simultaneously and the same.[47]

In contrast to Suzanne, who thus celebrates some of the Dutch holidays, Ananke explains that her boyfriend and her do not celebrate any Dutch holidays but that she mostly looks forward to the Norwegian national day. "We look forward to it [17th of May], which is of course a big day. it is also my favourite day, really. I think it is so much fun."[48] Even though she does not celebrate Dutch holidays specifically, she likes to add some Dutch traditions to the Norwegian holidays. "*Borrelen*[49] for example, they don't know that here. We used to do that all the time, or '*gourmetten*[50]'. We try to implement small things like that into the Norwegian Christmas traditions."[51] Moreover, she and her boyfriend want to spend more time on celebrating the Dutch traditions when they have children, as it is a part of her. "I don't really feel the need [to celebrate Dutch holidays] now, but I think I will do that later when we have children."[52] Ananke wants her children to also be familiar with Dutch traditions and holiday celebratory customs. Celebrating Dutch holidays or giving them a 'touch of Dutchness' by introducing certain concepts, can be seen to connect to certain mythscapes, and transmitting the myths and

[47] Suzanne, semi-structured interview, 07/05/2023
[48] Ananke, semi-structured interview, 24/05/2023
[49] An informal, social, gathering, accompanied with drinks and different kinds of (deep-fried) snacks.
[50] An evening-filling activity in which people sit at the table, making small dishes (in separate pans) with the help of the ingredients that are on the table.
[51] Ananke, semi-structured interview, 24/05/2023
[52] Ananke, semi-structured interview, 24/05/2023

memories (cf. Bell 2003, 76) of both the Netherlands and Norway onto themselves and to their children.

I would argue that certain holidays can be seen as a mythscapes, which can create both feelings of nostalgia from the country where someone was born, in this case the Netherlands (cf. Bell 2003, 76) but also to create new memories in a new country, by engaging in celebrating the Norwegian holidays. For example, Irana explains that she has celebrated the 17th of May ever since she came to Tromsø for the first time. After a while of living in Tromsø, she stopped celebrating the specific Dutch holidays, even though she sometimes misses them from her childhood in Amersfoort.

5.6 Merging day-to-day life and memories

What I have learned about the home-making practices of Dutch migrants in northern Norway, is how they are all very personal, but also have some common practices. What seems to be most important to be able to create meaning and significance in this new place, is to create a network, do activities, and remember the 'old home', the Netherlands. The participants shape their home in northern Norway through memories, as well as they do that actively through everyday life and practices (Sandu 2013, 498). The most important aspects in their home-making practices are creating networks and finding hobbies that speak to them. A big factor in their home-making practices is how they place themselves in relation to the arctic nature. Besides the outdoors, food also plays an important role in creating a home. Additionally, and not less important, the inside of a house can tell a lot about how people give meaning to objects and to their surroundings.

Chapter 6: Where do we belong?

When engaging in home-making practices, it is important to then ask the participants about their reflections on their feelings of belonging, their identity, and what 'home' means to them. This chapter will go into those topics.

6.1 Identity and language

I will argue that identity is a very important and interesting topic when researching the feelings of home and belonging. Does it interlink with each other? If you feel like an outsider somewhere, it may be harder to engage in home-making practices and create a new home for yourself. Would my participants describe themselves as being more Norwegian or more Dutch and does this have anything to do with how they create a home for themselves? Moreover, in this section I will go more in-depth on the topic of language. What language do my participants normally speak in their daily lives and did this help them in any way to feel at home?

A Dutch person in Norway

When talking about home-making practices, feelings of belonging cannot go unnoticed. Belonging and identity are often closely linked together. Belonging to a certain group is established by the categorisation of oneself and others, even though this is not fixed or definitive and this social categorisation establishes the boundaries between as 'us' and 'them' (La Barbera 2015, 2). Or, in this research, a distinction between being 'Norwegian' and 'Dutch'. Someone's social identity often plays an important role and can be viewed as a dividing line between different groups, even though someone's social identity is fluid and socially constructed (cf. Demmers 2017, 24).

> I do feel like a Dutch person in Norway. Yes. Because a lot of people ask me 'yeah aren't you a little bit Norwegian as well now?' and then I say, no. I am not Norwegian. I am Dutch and I live in Tromsø. I feel a little bit Norwegian sometimes, but I am not a Norwegian. It is weird to explain how it feels, your identity.[53]

Ananke clearly defines herself as being a Dutch person in Norway, and not a Norwegian, even though she can feel Norwegian at some points. This shows that social identity is a fluid construct, that is made by herself, but also by others, asking her if she is not already a

[53] Ananke, semi-structured interview, 24/05/2023

Norwegian by now. She, as an individual differentiates herself as a Dutch person from herself as a Norwegian, by adopting some criteria that are shared by other Dutch people and developing a sense of belonging to it (cf. La Barbera 2015, 2).

The boundary of this differentiation, and consequently the feeling of belonging to a certain place, could also be defined by more 'legal' factors instead of just social identification. For example, a passport, citizenship, or residence permits (cf. Antonsich 2010, 648). "I always say it is a part of who I am. I don't really feel the need to change that. I am not planning to get rid of my Dutch passport and ask for a Norwegian one. That feels strange."[54] For Irana, a passport thus shows belonging to the Netherlands, even though she also feels like she belongs in northern Norway. It is interesting to see how the question of a passport came up multiple times during the interviews. Almost all the participants see themselves as a Dutch person in Norway, even when feeling like they do belong in Norway through all their home-making practices.

> I have been living here for so long now, but I still have my Dutch passport. I think I would have the possibility to apply for double citizenship, I would need to look that up. But giving away my Dutch passport? I would never do that. To me, that is really the connection to home.[55]

Hoi or Hei?

One of the things that is linked to identity, and to belonging, in a 'less official' way, is language. When going to the open day of the community garden at Holt, I am walking along with Ernst. He meets a friend, and they start talking in Norwegian. It is then that Ernst realises that I'm there and not yet very skilled in the Norwegian language. He introduces me to his friend, who is also a Dutch migrant, and the language of the conversation switches to Dutch. Language is a big cultural factor that can have an influence on the feelings of belonging. After migrating to northern Norway, all the participants engaged in learning the language.

> When we were thinking of moving, we bought a book. We started learning about the language and how it is built up. But yeah, that doesn't mean you can speak Norwegian. (…) My patients didn't know English a lot so then you're thrown into the deep end. But it goes fast, as a Dutch person, [to learn Norwegian]. And my wife [Maria] has a thing

[54] Irana, semi-structured interview, 06/06/2023
[55] Karen, semi-structured interview 30/05/2023

> for languages, so she learned fast. She told me she learned through singing children's songs, while she was pregnant from our child.[56]

All the participants speak Norwegian, some more fluent and more often than others, but they are all well-skilled in the language, which can help them to feel a sense of belonging. Being able to understand the newspapers, television, commercials, small-talk around you, jokes, gestures, and signs, can be very influential in feeling welcomed or 'at home'.

> My daily life is mostly Norwegian actually. Even the small things, like having conversations in Norwegian and joining in on conversations with friends about Norwegian topics. Like important events, or Norwegian culture comes up in those conversations. Famous Norwegian people that they remembered from high school for example. Everything that is a part of growing up in Norway. That is a part of what I missed in high school [when I was back in the Netherlands]. (…) So, I have a bit of a 5-year gap in the Norwegian development.[57]

When speaking Norwegian and knowing the language, you can thus get familiar with the culture as well. You can acquire knowledge on the so-called social aesthetics of a place through the help of language. "The specific combination of rituals, customs, colours, textures, and physical surroundings (…)" that define a place (MacDougall 2015, 2) can be understood better through home-making practices, one of which, I argue, can be seen as learning the language. Even though Irana feels like she has a five-year gap from being in the Netherlands, talking with her friends about these things that she 'missed' in Norwegian, can help her to understand everything and create more meaning towards it. Moreover, learning the Norwegian language can help the participants to interpret certain situations more easily through for example gestures, or signs (cf. Antonsich 2010, 648).

In addition to learning Norwegian to create a feeling of 'home' in the new place of residence. Keeping in touch with the Dutch language and keeping in touch with that part of one's Dutch identity, can also help with feeling at home. As Karen explains, keeping in touch with her Dutch side has helped her enormously to create a home in Tromsø. She taught her children Dutch, and even started a school to teach the children of other Dutch migrants. Both

[56] Piet, semi-structured interview, 12/05/2023
[57] Irana, semi-structured interview, 06/06/2023

Ananke and Irana attended that school when they were younger. Ananke and her boyfriend are also convinced on the fact that they will raise their children bilingual.

> We will raise bilingual. That is for sure. It is such a shame if you don't. It's also so easy to do and so unfortunate if you don't do it. I also think if that would've happened to me as a child, if they didn't keep teaching me Dutch, that I would've not been happy with that at all. Because why not? Language is so important and if you can't speak the language with your grandparents, my family, that would be a pity. So, I will raise bilingual. (…) The child will be born half Dutch as well, so of course [we will].

As Ananke explains, she is glad to have been taught Dutch throughout the years she lived in Tromsø. Irana shares this view, as it helped her with the transitioning back into the Netherlands in 2013. Moreover, it becomes clear that language is an important part of someone's identity, and that it is an important communication factor. Ernst explains this as well. He didn't actively teach his children Dutch when they were young, and he now regrets that.

6.2 Looking at the memories

When asking the question 'where do we belong?', many things can play a role. Besides identity, and language, a lot may have to do with memories, and the so-called mythscapes from a place. As argued before, I believe that one can acquire mythscapes from more places, the place of birth, and the place of (new) residence, especially when transmigrants keep connections to both societies. When meeting with Ananke and Irana a few months ago, I asked them if they wanted to share some pictures with me from their childhood and their time in Norway.

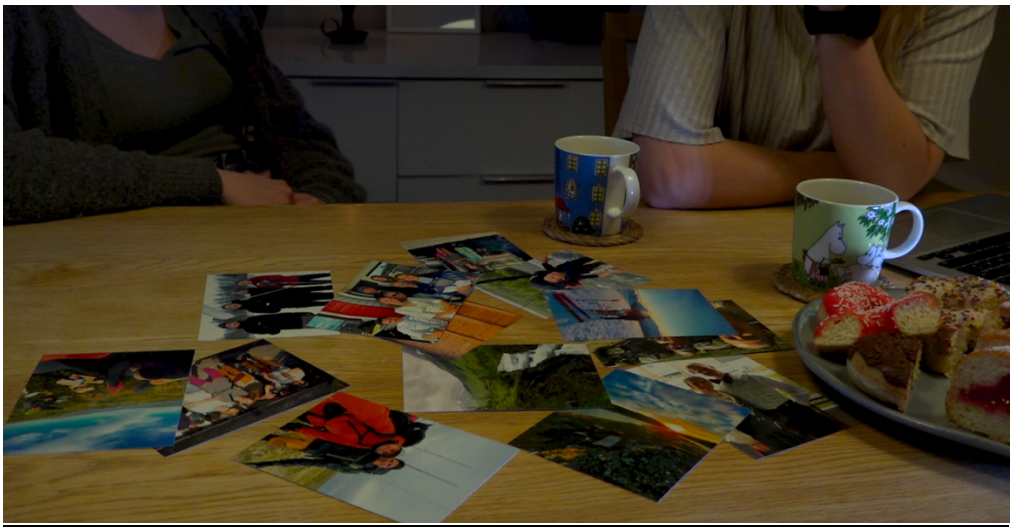


Figure 8: looking at the pictures with Ananke and Irana

Looking at the pictures brought back a lot of memories, and we talked for almost two hours about both Norway and the Netherlands and all the memories they have from both places. Creating a feeling of belonging to a certain place can be done through many different things. And for many transnational migrants, meaning can often be given to more than one place (cf. Sandu 2013, 498). This becomes visible when talking with Ananke and Irana. They have a lot of memories from Tromsø from their childhood, but also have memories from living in the Netherlands. One thing they tell me is very interesting.

- It is funny. After you have been living in Norway for so long, you go on a vacation to the Netherlands. And then you do all the tourist things over there. (…) And asking ourselves 'okay what should we do in the Netherlands?" As if we were there for the first time. (…)."[58]

- Yes. Now that we are looking through the pictures. I saw that, when we were on our way to Norway to move, we did all the touristic stuff in Norway. Like taking pictures with trolls, and underneath the Mo I Rana sign, the northern lights and everything. Then we really were tourists in Norway. but then, suddenly, after a few years, we were tourists in the Netherlands.[59]

- Yes. But I don't think it happens overnight. That you feel more Norwegian. I think it's a very gradual process. That you feel more Norwegian after a longer period. Because, if you look at these pictures, they are all very Norwegian pictures.[60]

When looking at the pictures, more memories pop up and get evoked from their consciousness, which makes them talk about their feelings and makes them share some of their reflections (cf. Harper 2002, 14). It becomes clear that they attach meaning to both places. Moreover, seeing, through the pictures, how they gradually adapt to the Norwegian culture and lifestyle, made me realise that they have created an emotional attachment to Norway, they feel at home in northern Norway. Both Ananke and Irana also share memories to the Netherlands. However, for both, this emotional attachment lies mostly with family. They feel like they do not 'belong' in the Netherlands but rather in northern Norway. In 2013, Ananke, Irana, their parents, and their two

[58] Ananke, informal conversation, 26/02/2024
[59] Irana, informal conversation, 26/02/2024
[60] Ananke, informal conversation, 26/02/2024

other siblings all moved back to the Netherlands. To the place where their roots are. However, out of their family, three of them moved back to Tromsø again. Both Ananke, Irana, and their older brother could not get used to living in the Netherlands again.

6.3 A home in northern Norway?

When considering the home-making practices that the participants engage in, their sense of belonging, their connection to the embodied space that they are in, and their reflections on identity, this section aims to list some of the reflections of the participants on 'home'. What do they view as their home? Is it 'here', 'there' (cf. Ward 2003, 81) or maybe even both?

Settled in northern Norway?

> People always ask me if I would ever go back [to the Netherlands]. No. not if I don't absolutely have to go, in the case of an emergency for example. No. I really, I think I will never go back. I would go for a short period if my grandma would get sick or something or if there's an emergency. But then it would be for a short period. And I already tried for two-and-a-half years. I had to stay there [the Netherlands] for those years to finish my degree, but honestly, that was two years too long haha.[61]

For Ananke it is thus clear, she sees northern Norway as the place where she would want to live for the foreseeable future. Besides the home-making practices she engages in, she mentions that a big factor in why she feels so good in northern Norway may have to do with the time that she spent there as a child. She has lived in northern Norway from the ages ten until eighteen, which she describes as crucial years. This view is endorsed by her sister Irana, who states that she feels at home in Tromsø.

> I think it might be different for me because I grew up here. Not only the country, but Tromsø really feels like home for me. When I came back in 2018, I recognized so many places. (…). There are a lot of memories linked to many places here. I think that's why it really feels like home as well. (…) when I am in the Netherlands I miss a lot of things from Norway. So, through that I also notice that I am in the right place here.[62]

[61] Ananke, semi-structured interview, 24/05/2023
[62] Irana, semi-structured interview, 06/06/2023

A home can thus be formed through memories, from an imagined 'there' (cf. Ward 2003, 81), which became clear when both Ananke and Irana did not feel like they belonged in the Netherlands and that their home was in northern Norway. This does not mean, however, that they have no connection to the Netherlands anymore. They just could not live there.

The same goes for Piet and Maria, who have completely settled in Lyngen. As mentioned before, they did not feel good in southern Norway, but now they are fully accepted into the community, which creates a feeling of belonging, as they are a part of the 'us' (cf. Yuval-Davis 2006, 204). Maria explained, "We knew this was going to be our new home, so we did everything to make that happen."[63] A big factor for them, in seeing northern Norway as their home, is how their children are feeling. "Our oldest son has Asperger's syndrome, and I don't think he would've still been here if we would have been living in the Netherlands. (…) Here, he is feeling good. He took over the farm company, which is now not a farm anymore but a *småbruk*. And yeah (…)."[64]

Karen also explains how she feels like northern Norway is her home. She explains to me how she has been living here for so long that she has just come to love it; the mentality, the nature, the culture, the music. However, she also states that she believes she has two homes, both northern Norway and the Netherlands, even though she could not live in the Netherlands anymore. "(…) If you are away for more than thirty years, you can wish to go back, but you won't go back to the same country that you came from."[65]

The transmigrant reality of having multiple homes

Even though the participants explain that they do feel 'at home' in northern Norway, there is always something about the Netherlands that will be home. They maintain some ties to the Netherlands, often in the form of family, friends, and memories, while also actively creating a home in northern Norway (cf. Lazar 2011, 70). When asking Ernst in my film *A Home Away From Home* (2024) what he would describe as home, he says that he does feel at home in Tromsø. It is the place where his family is, where he has his job, where everything feels right. However, that, whenever he goes to the Netherlands, he also says "I'm going home", mostly because he is going to visit his sister there.

Another interesting view here, is the one of Suzanne. She does feel 'at home' in Tromsø but acknowledges that she could feel 'at home' anywhere.

[63] Maria, semi-structured interview, 12/05/2023
[64] Piet, semi-structured interview, 12/05/2023
[65] Karen, semi-structured interview, 30/05/2023

> I feel at home everywhere. (…). I like that the world has become a lot smaller and that we can stay in touch with everyone, where-ever you are. With videocalls or something. So, the feeling of home… that… I could be sitting in a cabin in the middle of nowhere, with nothing, and still think 'ah yes, home'. It's not material. It is more a feeling that I carry with me. That makes me think now, yes. What is home?[66]

Linda explains how she reflects on 'home', she is thinking out loud "What gives me a feeling of home?" I can see her brain spinning. She mentions the confirmation of her children, where someone gave a speech.

> At all three of them, they mentioned 'young people, you should travel a lot and see a lot of the world. But never forget where your home is.' And then I thought 'home? what a nonsense.' Everyone… you make a home. this is now my home. but who knows what I will do after I retire in 10 years?[67]

Thus, to conclude this chapter, the feeling of 'home' is first and foremost, a personal feeling. It is not static or rigid and is actively constructed by people through attaching meaning to a place (cf. Boccagni 2017). Everyone has their own story and their own experiences with the environment that they're in, making it feel like a home, or not. Some of the participants feel like they belong in northern Norway, such as Irana, Ananke, Ernst, Piet, Maria, and Karen. And then, I argue, there is the 'in-between', where a transmigrant can feel at home in the place of residence, but still feel that the ties to the 'old home' are very much present and playing a bigger role. I could be included in that category, just as Miek, who is unsure if she will stay in Tromsø for a long time. Additionally, there could be a third category added here, where people may feel 'at home' anywhere, such as Suzanne and Linda.

[66] Suzanne, semi-structured interview, 07/05/2023
[67] Linda, semi-structured interview, 11/05/2023

A closing chapter

Now, on the 11th of May 2024, I think back to my first months in northern Norway. It is October 2022, I am sitting on a bus, my headphones blasting a song. I'm sitting there, teary-eyed.

Ik kom weer terug,
Ik kom weer thuis.
Mis het Nederland van Johan Cruijff.
Op elke plek waar ik de weg niet ken,
Mis ik moeten staan in een te volle tram.
Zoek al te lang naar geluk,
Maar voelt toch anders zonder grijze lucht.
Het is niet perfect,
Misschien verre van,
Maar ooit kom ik weer thuis in Nederland.
(...)
Nu is de wereld van mij,
Maar voelt toch anders zonder Albert Heijn.
(...)

I'm coming back,
I'm coming home.
I miss the Netherlands of Johan Cruijff.
In every place where I don't know the way,
I miss having to stand in an overly crowded tram.
I've been searching for happiness for too long,
But it feels different without the grey skies.
It's not perfect,
Maybe far from it,
But one day I will come home to the Netherlands.
(…)
Now, the world is mine,
But it feels different without Albert Heijn.
(…) [68]

[68] Usher, Isabèl. "Ik Kom Weer Thuis". Flying Dog Records, 2022, Spotify.

These are some of the lyrics from the song '*Ik kom weer thuis'* by Isabèl Usher. Listening to the song gave me a very specific feeling. I felt a wave of emotion coming over me, a mixture of nostalgia, a feeling of homesickness, but also a feeling of ease. It really made me realise that for me personally, the Netherlands will always be my home. But now, after living in Tromsø for almost two years, I also call Tromsø a part of me, I call it home. I would say I have two homes now, both 'here' and 'there' (cf. Ward 2003, 81).

Main argument and findings

In this research, the concept of 'home' has been central. I have aimed to combine the practice of visual anthropology with ethnography, and in that way, hoped to describe the life of Dutch migrants in northern Norway as it is lived and experienced by them (cf. Ingold 2017, 21). I also aimed to include my own perspective and reflect on bigger debates concerning the themes of home, belonging, and home-making, within anthropology (cf. Ingold 2017, 24). In this project, the following research question has been central:

How do Dutch migrants in northern Norway engage in home-making practices, concerning their feelings of home and belonging?

I have aimed to argue that the Dutch migrants engage in actor-oriented home-making practices, through actively giving a place meaning, an emotional and relational signification (cf. Boccagni 2017, 8). When reflecting on how they engage in these home-making practices, I argue that they do so in multiple ways, as home-making is a very dynamic process (cf. Sandu 2013, 497). My main findings on this study are the following.

I started by providing some background on their migration, where I also stated that the participants are a part of a privileged, free migration flow within the EU/EEA. This may influence how they engage in home-making practices (cf. Sandu 2013, 497). They did not migrate out of a necessity, but on a voluntary base. Moreover, choosing northern Norway already gives a sense of interest in the environment, which might make it easier for them to create a home. While writing this thesis, I aimed to focus more on the mundane, day-to-day ways in which the participants engage in home-making processes, which I will list now.

First, I have found that they create networks around them, creating a social field in which they create friendships, families, or engage with colleagues (cf. Sandu 2013, 502). Moreover, finding hobbies is an important factor in the home-making practices that the Dutch migrants engage in, as shown in chapter 5.

A second major element is how they relate to the environment around them. The Arctic nature, climate, and its challenges, all become a part of the participants. They embody the space. As it is always around them, it plays into how they engage with the place and its nature (cf. Lems 2016, 320). The participants make use of this nature, a lot of their hobbies are related to the outdoors, such as hiking, kayaking, gardening, skiing, biking, running, knitting, and a lot more. Moreover, the challenges that come with living in the Arctic are thought through by the migrants, and they make it a part of who they are, rendering the environment something that is both made, through engaging in hobbies, and experienced, through for example living through the polar night, by the participants (cf. Low 2009, 26).

Third, the way in which participants engage in home-making is also through learning the language and getting accustomed to the culture of northern Norway. By learning the language, they can feel closer to the other people in the same place, and be able to understand certain signs, meanings, or signals (cf. Antonsich 2010, 648). Learning the language, in addition to other home-making practices also enables the participants to understand the social aesthetics of the place of residence.

In addition to the home-making practices, I hope to have argued that belonging is a concept that cannot be ignored here. Reflecting on belonging, the participants have shown that social identity can be an interesting and sometimes paradoxical point. As, they do not feel like they are Norwegian, yet they still feel like they belong in northern Norway.

Subsequently, I argue, that besides the physical home-making practices that they engage in, and the feelings of belonging that they acquire, there is a more abstract level to this as well. Home-making is also related to memories and feelings of nostalgia, which can be explained through the concept of mythscapes (cf. Bell 2003).

To conclude, I hope to have demonstrated that conceptualisations of ‘home’ and home-making are very personal subjects, especially in the case of these Dutch transmigrants. Nevertheless, all the participants seem to believe that home is something that has meaning, it is more than just a house, it is loaded with meaning, memories, emotions, and experiences of their day-to-day life (cf. Dowling and Mee 2007, 161). This leads me to argue that ‘home’ can be in multiple places. Even though most of the Dutch migrants have actively created a home for themselves in northern Norway through home-making practices, they could still call the Netherlands ‘home’, even when they know they would not or could not live there anymore. This makes home both ‘here’, and ‘there’ (cf. Ward 2003, 81).

Reflections on the project

Over the past year and a half, I have been working on this project, which has been very enriching for both my academic and personal education and growth. The end result is this thesis, and the thirty-minute film *A Home Away From Home* (2024), which can be viewed as an addition to the written thesis. Originally, I was not planning to include myself in this research, and especially not in the film, but as time went by, I realised that my views and reflections could be a valuable addition to the project. By using different methods I hope to have created both a valuable thesis and film, which can be viewed separate from each other but also as an enrichment of each other.

Limitations and further research

As this thesis can be placed in the broader context of anthropological debates on home and belonging and on migration, I hope to have added some insights on how these themes play a role in privileged migration within Europe, and within the EU/EEA regulations. As I am concluding this thesis, I would like to state some of the limitations and give some interesting starting points for further research.

First, I want to acknowledge that the information collected in this project, in both the film and the written thesis, is based on the experiences of the Dutch migrants that I have been able to speak to, and on the observations that I have made. It could very well be possible that other Dutch migrants outside of this participant group have different views and opinions on home-making and their feelings of belonging. Moreover, it seems that Dutch migrants blend in quite easily in northern Norway, leaving less of an emphasis on the distinction between an 'us' and 'them' made by the Norwegian people towards the Dutch. However, I cannot say anything definitive about this, as it has not come up often in the interviews, and I have not spoken to any Norwegians about their views on Dutch migrants in northern Norway. It would be interesting to extend this research to also include the views of Norwegians, and study how this may or may not influence the home-making practices of Dutch Migrants.

Second, considering the new migration forms that are appearing in the globalised world, I would argue that it could be interesting to do more research on how these 'new' migrants view the themes of home and belonging. For example, can people who travel the world feel at home anywhere? Or do they also engage in home-making practices the same way that the Dutch migrants in northern Norway do to actively create a home for themselves?

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