

Learning Sealing

Traditional Knowledge Strengthening Awareness
of Being Greenlandic Today



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Abstract

This thesis investigates in which ways learning ‘traditional’ knowledge such as seal hunting is a strengthening factor for the awareness of being Greenlandic today. It looks at knowledge transfer between one generation and the next as well as the role of knowledge transfer in the education system. Finally, the tension or interplay between possessing *traditional* knowledge and living as a *modern* people is discussed.

Through primarily using qualitative research in the shape of interviews of twelve individuals, this thesis draws on examples from various kinds of education, while accounts from staff at the Children’s Home Uummannaq and from young Greenlanders also provide information on passing of knowledge outside the educational system. The data will be analysed drawing on a range of theories from the cross-disciplinary field of my study, naming Fikret Berkes’ model on traditional ecological knowledge, Thomas La Belle’s theories on informal versus formal education, Gayatri Spivak’s theory on the voices of the subalterns and epistemic violence, and Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, to name a few examples.

This thesis presents voices of particular Greenlanders rather than attempting to account for the Greenlandic people as a whole, and through these voices it is shown that learning sealing in a symbolic or a practical way strengthens the awareness of young Greenlanders. By learning a traditional Greenlandic knowledge such as sealing the awareness of respectively a personal and a common cultural heritage and of how Greenlanders are *as a people* can be strengthened. Additionally, learning sealing in a symbolic or practical way can fill a possible void in the individual’s sense of belonging to his setting and to Greenland as a nation, and raise awareness of who the individual is. Furthermore, learning sealing practically can be a self-confidence booster as well as offer a balance to academic learning. Finally, learning sealing can lay the foundation for an understanding of and empathy for fellow Greenlanders.

Key words

Greenland, traditional knowledge, modern, indigeneity, sealing, identity, education.

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Qujanaq! Tak! Merci! Takk! Tack! Giitu!

Maps of Greenland



Image 2: Map of Greenland with town indications



Image 1: Map of municipalities as per 1st of January 2009

Facts about Greenland

Area 2,166,086 sq. km
 Ice-free area 410,449 sq. km
 Total population 56,749 (Jan. 2012)
 Pop. Nuuk 14,272 (Jan. 2012)
 Pop. Qaasuitsup 17,687 (Jan. 2012)

Distances in Greenland

Aasiaat – Uummannaq 222,25 km
 Aasiaat – Ilulissat 89,78 km
 Uummannaq – Ilulissat 169,71 km
 Uummannaq – Ittoqqortoormiut 1103,99km
 Uummannaq – Nuuk 724,78 km
 Uummannaq – Qaanaaq 911,05 km

<http://www.stat.gl/publ/en/GF/2012/content/Greenland%20in%20Figures%202012.pdf>

http://distancecalculator.globefeed.com/Greenland_Distance_Calculator.asp

Map of Disko Bay area

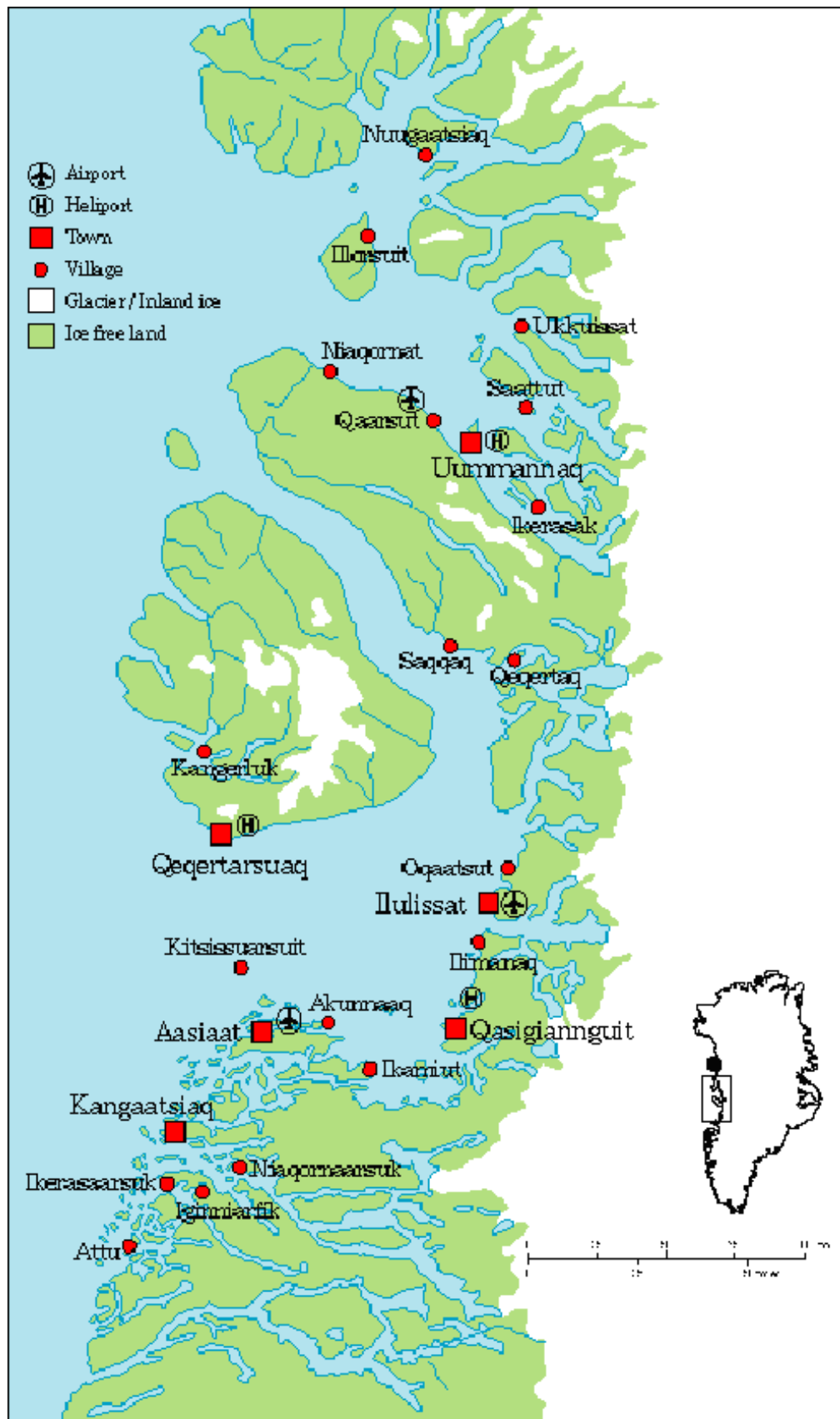


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Photographic journey to Greenland

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Image 5: Occupational hunters selling whale meat at *Brættet* in Uummannaq

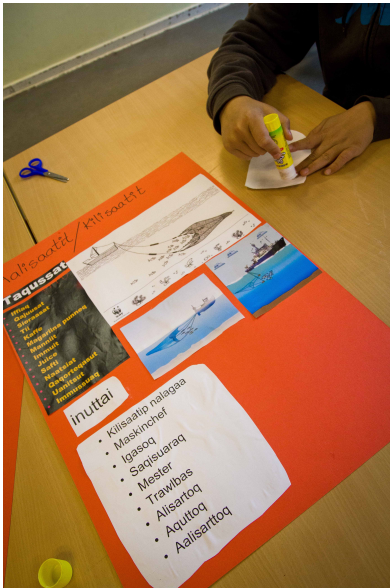


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Image 7: Dog sledges have the right-of-way in Ilulissat

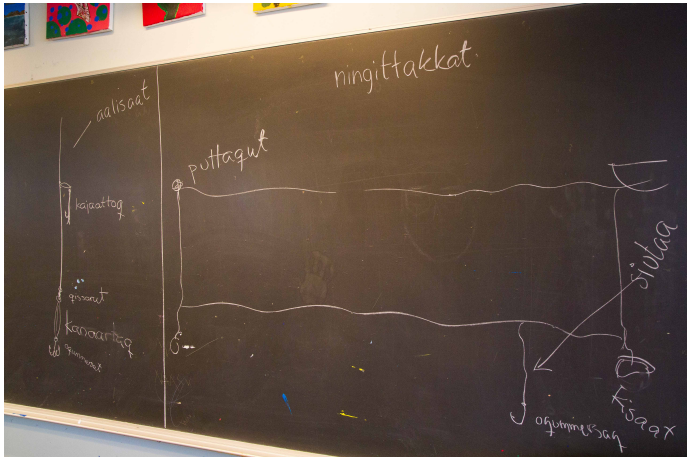


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1. Outline of thesis

‘Why should we learn about sealing in school?’

Do children in Denmark learn about killing pigs during *their* schooling?’

‘No. But it has been a longer while since
the majority of Danes were breeding pigs for a living
than it has since most Greenlanders
were occupational seal hunters and fishermen.’

‘But if it is no longer important to you Danes to learn these things,
why should we Greenlanders learn them?’

We are a modern people too.’

– conversation between a Greenlander and me.

1.1 Introduction to thesis

As in the conversation above, this thesis will deal with the underlying perceptions of and expectations to 1) traditional knowledge and 2) the education system and what it should contain. Though at first, the above conversation circles around differences between learning pig farming and seal hunting, and historical development of two countries, it also points to in relations between Greenlanders and Danes: while the Greenlander subsequently said that she had been joking with me, her tone to me clearly communicated concerns of hers. She expected that I were yet another colonising Danish academic who wished to inform Greenlanders of ‘how poorly they manage’. Furthermore, she gave me the impression that she feared that I might have ulterior motives when encouraging Greenlanders to learn about sealing. Perhaps I were of the belief that Greenlanders should not merely learn about sealing, but that I in fact wished that they should *only* learn about seal hunting so that they would stay ‘traditional’ and refrain from becoming or being a ‘modern’ people.

1.1.1 Research questions

In this thesis, on the basis of my fieldwork in Greenland, I primarily wish to explore the following:

In which ways is learning ‘traditional’ Greenlandic knowledge such as seal hunting a strengthening factor for the awareness of being Greenlandic today?¹

In debating this issue, I will discuss how knowledge on sealing is passed between a parental generation and a younger generation, as well as the role of the education system, drawing on examples from a primary and secondary school, the Hunting & Fishing School and the high-school GU Aasiaat as various kinds of education. Finally, I will discuss whether there is a tension or an interplay between possessing *traditional* knowledge and living as a *modern* people.

1.1.2 Introducing the topic of this thesis

To Greenlanders as well as other indigenous peoples, the duality between being a *traditional* and *modern* people is a sensitive topic to this day. As Teacher 1 told me, Greenlandic teenagers in high-school may very well find it embarrassing to admit it if they know much about sealing as it may cause for them to be considered old-fashioned rather than ‘cool’.² It appears to me, through interviews and conversations in Greenland, almost as if one rules out the other and that it is by many Greenlanders considered impossible to be a combination of a both *traditional and modern* people.

Similar to the developments experienced by indigenous peoples around the world within the past few hundred years, Greenland has experienced a very rapid transition from being a society with traditional livelihoods based on sealing, whaling, and fishing to a modern urbanised society in a globalised world. In the Greenlandic context, this transition happened largely within the last 60 years,³ while the education system, although shifting back and forth between being either pro-Danish and pro-Greenlandic, generally has been inspired and influenced to a great extent by the school system in Denmark.⁴

Merely a few generations ago, Greenlandic children and youth learned sealing, fishing, whaling and domestic crafts from their parents, and they would in turn would pass this traditional knowledge on to their own children. Nowadays, Greenlandic

¹ The choice of words such as ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ is deliberate, although these are indeed widely debated and ambiguous words. A discussion of the meaning of the two, particularly in the Greenlandic context, will be included later in this chapter as well as in Chapter 4.

² Interview Teacher 1.

³ Fleischer 2003: 62-67, Goldbach 2000: 263.

⁴ Goldbach 2000: 264.

youth spend a large part of their daily lives in institutions such as school, while the traditional livelihood as a hunter and fisherman has indirectly been made an unsustainable choice of career by the partially government-set prices for meat and sealskin.⁵ Today, many fewer men live as occupational seal hunters than before.⁶ According to Statistics Greenland, the total number of licenses for occupational hunting was in 2010 amounting to 2,081 persons.⁷ This number, however, does not indicate how many out of these *do actually* live of hunting as their primary income. Greenlandic teenagers expressed to me that they have learned the very basics of sealing from their fathers who now practice sealing as a hobby and a way to get out into nature when the weather conditions are good on weekends.⁸ Sealing has traditionally meant specific tasks for respectively the hunter and his wife, but gender is not an issue which I will focus on in this thesis.

Rapid transition such as the Greenlandic one from ‘traditional’ to ‘modern’ industrialised society has massive consequences for so-called ‘young nations’.⁹ As trade advisor and Greenlandic politician Ib Goldbach describes the Greenlandic transition:

This rapid development brought material progress and a higher standard of living to many Greenlanders, but the transformation of an old Inuit culture into a modern European industrialized culture also had its costs. Culture shock, alienation, and an experience of powerlessness became – together with other civilization diseases – a usual part of daily life.¹⁰

The sense of national identity and belonging is thus challenged, and when people start feeling alienated from their own society, major personal consequences potentially follow such as various kinds of abuse and neglect of children.¹¹ Such can be seen especially in the larger towns, such as the capital, Nuuk, where a larger part of the government financial assistance is spent, according to my informant Ole Jørgen Hammeken.¹²

⁵ Interview Ole Larsen, Dahl 2000: 138-139.

⁶ Interview Ole Larsen.

⁷ Statistics Greenland 2011.

⁸ Interviews with Students 1-5, Questionnaires collected at GU Aasiaat.

⁹ Goldbach 2000: 263.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.*: 259-263, Rosing Olsen 2005: 49-57.

¹² In Nuuk, 50,610 DKK was spent *per each recipient* of social benefits in 2011, whereas in Uummannaq the number was 40,263 DKK per recipient (according to numbers by Statistics Greenland). If seen *per capita*, however, the claim by my informant is proven wrong as Nuuk’s much larger population equals 12,630 DKK per person as opposed to Uummannaq’s 20,906 DKK per person. Thus depending on whether numbers are viewed *per recipient* or *per capita*, this statement can either

Nevertheless, present day Greenland is facing another challenging factor: the increasing degree of globalisation and a growing number of foreign companies and individuals visiting or moving into Greenland in the name of mining for minerals and drilling for oil. This means that in this remote country, the individual Greenlander must already in the near future face a growing number of foreigners in their local area.

The development of a particular society reflects also in its education system. As of August 2012, three new courses were introduced in all Greenlandic educations on high school level, among them *Kulturfag* (Culture). This course is inspired by the similar course *Kulturforståelse* (Cultural Understanding) offered as an elective course in educations on high-school level in Denmark.¹³ In the Greenlandic setting, however, the course is not tied to curriculum and it is up to the individual teacher to choose texts which s/he finds usable for the four or more themes that s/he and the students choose to go through. Thus the individual teacher decides where to place focus, whether it be in the direction of ‘Greenlandic culture as in comparison to Western and other non-Western cultures’ or of ‘Greenlandic culture: past and present.’ As of the time of my interviews in October 2012, teachers disagreed widely on this matter, unsure of the intentions from the level above them, namely the Ministry of Education.¹⁴ Furthermore, they deal with the fact that their students originate from a wide range of hamlets, villages and towns throughout the county stretching 1600 km along the North Western Greenlandic coast.¹⁵ Among other results, this means that their knowledge on Greenlandic culture varies enormously depending on their individual parents and their *atuarfik* (primary and lower secondary school, grades 1-10).¹⁶ At the Hunting & Fishing School in Uummannaq, they too deal with children and youth from a range of different backgrounds. According to the leader of the school Ole Larsen, students at the school have often struggled with the academic-oriented learning of *atuarfik* and high-school, and the practical learning at the Hunting & Fishing School appeals more to these.¹⁷

be perceived true or false. Statement based on interview with Ole Jørgen Hammeken. Numbers based on Statistics Greenland 2012.

¹³ Interviews Teacher 1-3.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Mathiassen 2012.

¹⁶ Questionnaires collected at GU Aasiaat.

¹⁷ Interviews Children’s Home Staff 1, Ole Larsen.

According to the two staff members I interviewed at the Children's Home Uummanaq, their children often struggle to behave like children rather than taking on roles of adults. Furthermore, as it seems to the staff that the children often are unaware of their cultural heritage, the Children's Home brings their children and youths on short or longer trips into the rough nature in their vicinity.¹⁸ On these trips, the children learn traditional knowledge on sealing, fishing and surviving in the arctic wild from occupational hunters. By mastering the traditional techniques the children gain confidence and awareness of their cultural background, something which may work as a band-aid in situations where the family background is blurry or messy.¹⁹

The new leader at the Hunting & Fishing School strives to alter the hunter and fisherman situation by on one hand indigenising and at the same time modernising this particular education. Today, the reputation of the trades of hunters and fishermen is poor and they are termed as careers with few options. The trades therefore attract much fewer young Greenlanders than need be.²⁰ Himself a Greenlander with much sealing experience and knowledge, Larsen fears that if the situation is not taken seriously enough, the numbers of occupational hunters will soon dwindle even further to insignificant numbers, and he fears that his fellow Greenlanders will realise too late how important this part of their cultural heritage is.²¹

1.1.3 Important terms and place names

Throughout this thesis, I will be using a range of terms which I will define in order to prevent misunderstandings.

When referring to the Greenlandic term *atuarfik* (directly translatable to the Danish *folkeskole*) in this paper, the subject concerns the first 10 obligatory years of schooling; i.e. what is also often referred to as Primary and Lower Secondary School. In Greenland, these 10 years are closely connected, within one school, namely the *atuarfik*, although students from hamlets generally have to finish 7th-10th grade in larger villages or towns as these grades are not offered in less populated areas.

¹⁸ Interviews Children's Home Staff 1-2, Ole Jørgen Hammeken.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Interview Ole Larsen.

²¹ *ibid.*

Kulturfag refers to the newly introduced course (translatable into *Culture*) which as from August 2012 is taught as an obligatory 6 hour per week during the first semester on the Greenlandic high-schools, such as GU Aasiaat.

GU Aasiaat refers to the only high-school in the county of Qaasuitsup, covering the whole North Western coast of Greenland from Kangaatsiaq by the Arctic Circle in the county's southern end to Qaanaaq in the north, stretching 1600 km along the coast and covering altogether 660,000 sq. km, or about a third of the country's total area.²² In Greenland today, there are altogether 3 regular high-schools, one technical-oriented high-school and one business-oriented high-school.²³

Children's Home Uummannaq will henceforth be referred to in this thesis as the Children's Home. This name is the orphanage's own English rendition of their Danish name 'Børnehjemmet i Uummannaq'. Founded in 1929, the Children's Home has gone through various transformations and extensions.²⁴ Today, the Children's Home houses more than 30 children, of which there are always some on excursions, trips or overnight stays away from the actual Children's Home.²⁵

Hunting & Fishing School will from this point onwards in my thesis mostly be referred to as *HFS* for practical reasons. HFS is a vocational school, founded in Uummannaq in 2009, which trains young men and women from the age of 18 to 35 in a range of courses and topics related to sealing, whaling, and fishing, and also the selling of the products.²⁶

Greenland Self-Government is henceforth referred to as the Self-Government. According to the homepage of the Prime Minister's Office, the Greenland Self-Government authorities consist of a democratically elected assembly, Inatsisartut (translated to 'Greenland Parliament') as well as an administration led by Naalakkersuisut (translated to 'Greenland Government').²⁷ To avoid confusion, I will in this thesis therefore refer to these two bodies in unison as *the Self-Government*.

Sealing will in my thesis function as an example of traditional Greenlandic knowledge and not only be the actual acts of seal hunting, but, at times, too refer to the processing of the sealskin and seal meat. Furthermore, seal hunters in present day Greenland cannot sustain themselves and their families merely on sealing, but in

²² Mathiassen 2012.

²³ Namminersorlutik Oqartussat 2012.

²⁴ *Børnehjemmet i Uummannaq* 2007.

²⁵ Interview Children's Home Staff 1.

²⁶ Interview Ole Larsen.

²⁷ Statsministeriet 2013.

addition need to perform other types of hunting as well as fishing and whaling when seasons allow for these types of hunting. As I primarily will focus on sealing, the word 'hunting' will therefore in my thesis mainly refer to seal hunting although I acknowledge that the term usually refers to hunting a range of different animal types.

Throughout my thesis, particular referencing to Greenland will be divided into two entities, namely *North* and *South Greenland*. This choice of referencing has been made on the basis on how my various informants have been stressing differences between especially the capital Nuuk and their own northern region. These differences manifest themselves not only in distances, climate and distribution of particular wildlife, but consequently also in lifestyles as well as relationship to nature and to fellow human beings. It appears to me from my informants and casual conversations as if although Greenland is now practicing self-rule, there are still such wide differences between rural and urban Greenlanders – differences which one could also trace in a North-South sense of division of Greenland – that we are in fact dealing with two different groups, of which southern Greenlanders living a distinctly industrialised life are those in political power. I will elaborate on this discussion in Chapter 4. The division roughly follows the same lines as the county borders (see 'Image 1' on pg. VI) which means that most urbanised areas, such as Sisimiut, Qaqortoq, Nanortalik, Narsaq and of course Nuuk, all belong to the south.

1.1.4 Previous research

Possibly due to the cross-disciplinary manner of my study, I have not found any previous research taking up the focus of this thesis. There has, however, been research in a range of related issues of which I have been taking the following into use during this thesis.

Liv Margit Arntzen published in 2011 her Master Thesis in Social Anthropology by University of Tromsø. This thesis bearing the name *'The Sustainable Inuit'?: A study of hunters in Greenland*,²⁸ deals with the challenges faced by hunters in Eastern Greenland township Ittoqqortoormiit, especially in regards to a changing environment and political restrictions. This thesis will provide me with a wide foundational knowledge on sealing and the present quota-issues related to this. Although it focuses

²⁸ Original title: "Den bærekraftige inuitt"? Et studie av fangstfolk på Grønland. My translation from Norwegian to English.

on a township in Eastern Greenland, there are mentally and politically many similarities to the Northwestern Greenland area of my focus despite the ecological differences.

Similarly, *Saqqaq: An Inuit Hunting Community in the Modern World* by Jens Dahl deals with an all-round analysis of the hunting community of Saqqaq, located in the north of Disko Bay. This research will provide me with a description of hunting life in a community which is by geographical measure closer to Uummannaq. It offers insight on government politics and the political challenges. Based on fieldwork over a 17-year period between 1980 and 1997, this work from 2000 does not, however, give me a completely up-to-date image of the community.²⁹

Frank Sejersen's *Local Knowledge, Sustainability and Visionskapes in Greenland* will offer me analytical thoughts on traditional Greenlandic knowledge as well as how they relate to the government politics carried out. Although this work deals mainly with hunting of beluga whale, much of the analysis could be transferrable to sealing, in my point of view.

Thomas J. La Belle's critiques of views on education, respectively informal, nonformal and formal education provides me with various tools for analysing the ways in which Greenlandic youths learn sealing.

Finally, social anthropologists and ecologists, such as Kalland, Stevenson and Lewis, identify various layers of traditional knowledge in a range of different distinctions.³⁰ In his *Sacred Ecology*, ecologist Fikret Berkes' identification considering traditional knowledge as in four interrelated levels will provide me with a means of analysing sealing as a traditional knowledge on various planes, namely:³¹

²⁹ Dahl 2000: vii.

³⁰ Kalland, Stevenson and Lewis paraphrased in Berkes 2012: 17.

³¹ Berkes 2012: 17.

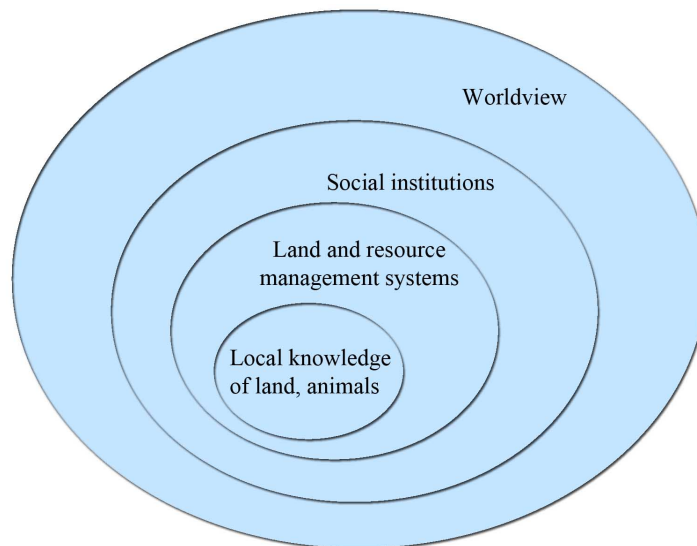


Figure 1: Berkes' levels of analysis in traditional knowledge and management systems³²

Berkes describes the local layer (first level) as that which includes species identification, population estimates, and behaviour. The second level, the resource management systems, he describes as that which uses the local knowledge and applies an appropriate set of practices, tools and techniques, based on an understanding of ecological processes. The third level he describes as the social organisation which interdependent hunters, fishers, or agriculturists use to function effectively in coordination, cooperation, and rule-making processes. Finally, the fourth level is the worldview which shapes people's environmental perception and on how the three other levels are directed.³³ Using this division of layers as an inspiration, I will analyse sealing as an expression of traditional Greenlandic knowledge on four different levels.

Theoretical perspectives apart from the above will be presented along the way when I will take them into use throughout the following three chapters.

1.1.5 Methods

Prior to arriving at my fieldwork destination, I had decided to opt for collecting my data through qualitative research, since I wished to answer questions such as 'how do Greenlandic youth today learn about sealing?' and 'in which ways can learning sealing be a strengthening factor for their sense of identity?' This qualitative research was initially to be based on individual interviews with students and teachers at *GU*

³² Berkes 2012: 17.

³³ *ibid.*: 17-18.

Aasiaat, teachers at one or two *atuarfiks*, as well as students and teachers at *HFS* in Uummanaq. However, shortly before my arrival, the principle at GU Aasiaat said that he could also arrange for me the possibility to hand out questionnaires to all the approximately 130 first year students. I accepted his offer and therefore quickly prepared two-page questionnaires for the high-school students and accordingly altered my intended interview questions so that these would stem from the questionnaire enquiries but elaborate on the topics of seal hunting as well as expressions of Greenlandic identity, and responsibilities of an education system.

To a certain degree, I also got information on the sealing situation through casual conversations I had with hunters and various people I met throughout my period of fieldwork. However, as these were not recorded and have merely been noted down afterwards, they cannot be used to produce data to the same extent as the planned interviews. They do, however, influence on what I refer to as *my impression of Greenland during my fieldwork* and will to some degree be taken into account despite their casual origin and way.

Thus, it is through the personal interviews that I obtain more thorough information, both on the ways and extent in which seal hunting is taught and on how learning traditional Greenlandic knowledge is a strengthening factor for the individual's awareness of being Greenlandic. Thus before starting my fieldwork, I was aware of the fact that the interviews with students and teachers were to be my main priority for collecting information.

Nevertheless, due to the fact that I base my research primarily on very few interviewed informants, this thesis will mainly represent *their voices* rather than be representative of all Greenlanders (further debated in 1.2.3 'Representativity and validity').

1.1.6 Data

During my three-week long fieldwork period, I collected five interviews with high-school students,³⁴ three with high-school teachers, two with Children's Home staff members, one with a project manager connected to the Children's Home, and one

³⁴ Of these, three were girls and two were boys. During the individual interviews, several gender-specific statements are made, and thus I find it valuable to keep distinction between genders among these student informants. Due to the quantity of first-year students at GU Aasiaat, I have judged it unnecessary to anonymise their gender and approximate geographical background. See Appendix A for further information.

with the leader of the HFS. All of these interviews were conducted with prepared questions as a foundation for a casual style of conversation, even though it was tape-recorded. Furthermore, I had casual, unrecorded conversations with various Greenlanders, including other teachers and staff at an *atuarfik* and a biologist from Nuuk. Finally, I collected 111 two-page questionnaires among the first-year students at GU Aasiaat.

My various kinds of data require different methods in processing and analysing and will be used in different ways and to provide specific answers. **Quantitative** data such as questionnaires requires processing in a way to show not just *how many* out of the total number of informants say a particular thing, but also how the answer may be influenced by a certain factor which varies from informant to informant. This factor may be such thing as gender or age, or in my case also place of origin/*atuarfik*.³⁵ However, as stated above in the ‘Methods’ section, I have prioritised not to spend energy on age or origin, as these two factors are not directly a part of my research questions. Finally, more than with qualitative data, the quantitative data calls for attention to its representativity. This issue is debated in the ‘Representativity’ section, subsequently in this chapter.

My **quantitative** data in the shape of questionnaires will provide an overview of the students’ own estimations of *how much* and not least *how* they have learned about seal hunting.³⁶ Moreover it will give a general picture of *whether* Greenlandic children today learn about seal hunting and other aspects of traditional Greenlandic knowledge by means of respectively *informal learning* or *formal education*. However, my quantitative data will primarily provide me foundational knowledge upon these matters. Qualitative data will function as my main source of data, supported and challenged by theories and previous research as well as my qualitative data.

Qualitative data such as interviews requires a process of transcribing before finding the useable parts and finally extracting them for meaning through analysis without losing their individual context. In the analysis, it is of utmost importance to ask *why* certain answers are provided as informants may wish to highlight certain points and hide others.

In line with David Silverman’s thoughts on how to choose between qualitative and quantitative research methods, I have acknowledged that my *how-* and *in which ways-*

³⁵ Questionnaires collected at GU Aasiaat.

³⁶ *ibid.*

questions primarily relate to qualitative research such as the mode of interviewing.³⁷ However, as I would still like to acquaint myself with possible tendencies which these particular student voices are a part of, I will take the opportunity of collecting questionnaires as secondary data and thus use quantitative research as supportive data. Rather than focusing primarily on thorough statistics answering questions such as ‘how many ...’, my choice of focus lies on the *point of view* and *stories* of my relatively few informants. By giving them *voice*, my thesis becomes *one* expression or answer out of many possible ones, albeit a more reflected and detailed, subjective expression than that which a purely quantitative research method could offer.³⁸ This choice of balance between the two types of data highly influences the degree to which it represents Greenland; for more information on this particular matter, see 1.2.3 ‘Representation and validity’.

The interviews I did with the students at *GU Aasiaat* will through transcribing, extraction, and analysing provide details and answers on different matters, namely *informal learning* through upbringing and *formal education* through schooling. Seconda, they will provide various points of view on the importance of learning traditional Greenlandic knowledge and of the conflict between ‘the traditional’ and ‘the modern’ (for more on these two terms, see section “‘Traditional’ versus ‘Modern’” later on in this chapter).

The interviews I had with the teachers of *Kulturfag* at *GU Aasiaat* on the other hand will bring different answers to two of the same three things, although those on informal learning will be scarce in comparison to in the interviews with the students. These particular interviews will rather focus more on the importance on learning traditional Greenlandic knowledge, perceived from the point of view of educators, on a different level than that of the students. It appeared to me that the educators, perhaps due to being adults with more life experience, valued learning traditional Greenlandic knowledge more than the teenage students.³⁹

Through interviews with staff members at Children’s Home as well as Ole Jørgen Hammeken, who organises many of the longer trips that the Children’s Home takes, I gain an insight on the informal education in traditional Greenlandic knowledge provided here. These informants offer examples of what people who were previously

³⁷ Silverman 2010: 5-15.

³⁸ Silverman 2010: 6-8.

³⁹ All interviews.

children of the Children's Home say that they have learned of traditional Greenlandic knowledge and what they have gained from this learning. However, as these particular pieces of information have been provided by the very people⁴⁰ whose work they indirectly evaluate, their accuracy has to be viewed very critically.

1.2 Dilemmas and choices

1.2.1 Reflexivity and ethics

At all stages of this thesis, I have had roles with expectations attached to them. Some of these roles have been voluntary; other roles have been assigned to me by other people, against my wishes.

During my fieldwork, from initial contact and until my return to Tromsø, certain expectations influenced on the way people behaved towards me and the answers that I was given by informants, similar to Gerald Berreman's experiences during his fieldwork.⁴¹ First of all, I am a **young woman**, and although this surely has affected behaviour and answers it was not something which I clearly noticed. Possible examples of this, such as extensive explanations of the basics of sealing given to me by several informants and locals, are perhaps even better explained by the fact that I am a **Dane** than that I am a young woman. Due to the fact that this Dane was visiting Greenland for the first time, my role was expected to clearly be that of an *outsider* or *alien* (cf. Erving Goffman 1959, Gerald Berreman 1963, Rappaport 2008), expected not to know much about sealing nor was I expected to know any Greenlandic language which is possibly due to the large number of previous Danish visitors and temporary residents who had a similar lack of knowledge on these matters.⁴²

These expectations paired with those affiliated with me as a **scholar** – possibly possessing an attitude of knowing things better than the locals – lead for several Greenlanders to give me the impression that they feared that I could potentially be paternalistic and use the information that they would give me against them. During colonial times in Greenland, while carrying out an assimilating Danification of the Greenlandic people, the Danish officials used paternalistic approaches towards

⁴⁰ Interviews Ole Jørgen Hammeken, Children's Home Staff 1.

⁴¹ Berreman 1963.

⁴² Goldbach 2000: 261-263, Langgård 2001.

Greenlanders.⁴³ In line with social anthropological observations conducted in Norwegian Sámi context by respectively Sidsel Saugestad and Bjørg Evjen,⁴⁴ it is therefore often anticipated that Danish researchers today will follow suit rather than be objective, respectful, or even emphatic.⁴⁵ As Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson describe, field researchers are in general ‘frequently suspected, initially at least, of being spies, tax collectors, missionaries, or of belonging to some other group that may be perceived as undesirable.’⁴⁶ Both when approaching informants and locals, I experienced numerous times that I was at first taken in with a cautious and slightly suspicious attitude until I had portrayed sufficient proof of being humble and supportive of Greenlandic matters and traditional knowledge while not revealing any tendency towards essentialism. In order for me to obtain any information valuable to my thesis, I thus had to show that while striving not to take sides, I could *be trusted* with their information. Furthermore, by deliberately revealing that I did possess some knowledge on particular precisely selected matters such as sealing, the importance of traditional knowledge and other indigenous issues, I instead of clearly being fully an *outsider* showed some traits which could be considered belonging more to an *insider* in this particular social context. Hereby, without attempting to fully become an insider, I moved about the border between being an insider or an outsider; a border which Goffman and Berreman, according to Hammersley & Atkinson, and which furthermore Rappaport describe as fluid, socially constructed, and varying.⁴⁷ Albeit always an outsider to the Greenlandic society, the attitudes I showed fostered *trust* to me from my informants and the locals which in turn meant that they would share information with me.

Finally, while in the field I suddenly found myself very clearly put in a role which I had not anticipated: a representative of Master of Indigenous Studies. Of course, I presented the name of my university and study each time I presented myself in detail. But at GU Aasiaat, I was asked not merely to shortly present my thesis and study but even if I would share knowledge on the indigenous situation and challenges in Australia, New Zealand and Sápmi, according to what I have learned during my

⁴³ Goldbach & Winther-Jensen 1988: 262, Madsen 2009: 14-15.

⁴⁴ Saugestad 2001, Evjen 2009.

⁴⁵ Rud 2009; Madsen 2009: 18-29.

⁴⁶ Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 63, Rappaport 2008: 12-21.

⁴⁷ Goffman 1959, Berreman 1963.

studies.⁴⁸ This way, I became a representative of what kinds of studies *Kulturfag* could possibly lead into in the future for some of these first-year high-school students.

My roles upon analysing my data, writing my thesis, and publishing are to some extent similar, yet they differ from the above from the fieldwork period. I am still a Dane which will inevitably lead to subconscious along with deliberate comments and perspectives, revealing the hardly avoidable distance and different perspective due to being an *outsider*, perceiving the situation from a distance rather than from within. This status as an outsider will be emphasized by the fact that I am a scholar, trained to think in a different and academic way in comparison to many of my informants. Furthermore, my role as a representative of Master of Indigenous Studies highly influences on the processing of the interviews, questionnaires and impressions: the analytical view which I take to process this data is shaped in a push-pull effect in the sense that it is pushed by how my views have been affected by years of schooling in this direction, and pulled by how I strive to live up to the expectations of being a such student.

Finally, my role as a scholar is in line with Anita Maurstad's thoughts on the attached responsibilities an influence on my processing of the data.⁴⁹ Maurstad chose, although having been granted permission by the fishermen, not to publish data which she judged could potentially be used by others against the fishermen and harm their livelihoods. Hereby, she portrays how she as a scholar has to estimate the risks at the level where her information is published and to take precautions, although these may be against the wishes and thoughts of the informants. The informants *trust* that their information is safe in the hands of the scholar although they may have little knowledge of the rules of the game played in this particular field. The informants trust that the researching scholar will watch their backs, and this goes hand in hand with their trust in that the scholar will not use the information that they provide against them. The informants trust that they will not be put in a bad light or that they will be misrepresented. Therefore, an analysis must be done very carefully and precise so that I will not put words into their mouths that are completely wrong. Of course, I cannot be completely inside their heads, but I have to strive, against my prerequisite status as an outsider, to not misread my informants.

⁴⁸ Sápmi refers to the region traditionally inhabited by Sámi people, across what we now know as the northern parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland as well as the north westernmost part of Russia.

⁴⁹ Maurstad 2002.

1.2.2 Virtues

I will try not to fall into the pitfalls of portraying reality with a set of *harmonising*, *romanticising* or *patronising* goggles on. The danger of harmonising is in this case if I fail to notice and acknowledge differences between various Greenlanders and between different groups of Greenlanders, such as e.g. the division between North and South Greenland. Thus if I select only statements which fit together or if I simplify statements from various informants, then I unfortunately diminish differences and make Greenlanders seem too homogenous as compared to how they are in reality. Simplifications done in this thesis should as much as possible not compromise on the expressions of diversity in the Greenlandic society.

Similarly, if I ignore negative sides of e.g. seal hunting I am *romanticising* this traditional Greenlandic livelihood and so some extent creating a false image of sealers being Greenlandic versions of ‘the noble savage’ (cf. discussion in 4.4.5 ‘Critiques of teaching sealing in schools’). If not romanticising to *this* degree, then I still have to watch myself to not argue too much with teaching sealing in schools but rather strive to be objective in my analysis of the benefits of doing so.

In line with the risk of romanticising, I am equally in danger of *patronising*. The particular situation around which my thesis evolves may lead me to patronise in a double and rather reversed fashion: I might be arguing as if Greenlanders could be separated into two groups; one ‘clearly’ indigenous, i.e. people practicing sealing and other traditional livelihoods, and one ‘less’ indigenous, i.e. the Self-Government politicians, and as if the sealers are doing the right thing and the politicians are doing things all wrong. This way, I would be practicing a kind of reversed patronisation, where I would be arguing that the indigenous people have gotten things right while the non-/‘less’ indigenous have gotten things wrong. Nevertheless, the politicians cannot be argued to be less indigenous; merely they express their indigeneity in a different way (cf. 4.3.3 ‘Varying indigeneity in rural and urban Greenland’). Therefore if insinuating that the politicians have gotten it all wrong, I would be patronising them.

All three of the above are very potential pitfalls for my thesis. One choice, which I have made in order to minimise the enormous amounts of possible data to include, was to focus on those who are not heard as often, namely the sealers, and not give

much voice to politicians or administrators, apart from through the conversation with the seal biologist mentioned in Chapter 4 and through scholars' voices in the previous research. This way, I am not letting both sides be heard equally, and I therefore have to be careful to be critical to that side which I do let be heard in order not to fall into any of the above-mentioned pitfalls.

1.2.3 Representation and validity

With qualitative research, namely interviews, my methodology of choice, certain questions must be asked of all informants regarding representation. Whether consciously aware of this or not, informants shed a *particular* light on a case. This is firstly due to the fact that they are not asked to be objective but rather state what *they* think and feel, and the matter will therefore be described from *their point of view*.⁵⁰ Secondly, it is rather extensive if not impossible work to describe all aspects or facets of a case belonging to soft science, as opposed to hard science such as the natural sciences. Rather than attempting to make my data fit into the category of being objective, I have chosen, in line with student examples in Silverman's *Doing Qualitative Research*, to let my informants' voices come forth in this thesis, regardless of whether they, individually or together as a group, can be representative of or provide valid answers on behalf of the Greenlandic people as a whole.⁵¹

Rather, when extracting knowledge from the data, scholars should ask not just *how* do the informants describe the particular case but also *why*. To answer the latter question, it helps to know the background of the informant as this might explain how the informant has gotten to this particular answer or what the informant may wish to gain from answering a certain way. Perhaps the informant wishes to portray him-/herself in a more positive light than that which 'reality' or other people would offer. Perhaps the informant has personal reasons to dislike a particular person or institution and s/he therefore represents this in a particular way.

Additionally, as Silverman argues, a qualitative researcher should ask him-/herself which types of people were excluded from the sample and why.⁵² In my case, all informants volunteered and though I contacted the majority of my informants, the five students came to me on their own initiative once I had introduced myself and my

⁵⁰ Silverman 2010: 6-8.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² *ibid.*: 269.

topic. This means that in the case of the students, the informants all have an interest in the topic of sealing and thus could be more positive towards various aspects of sealing than some of their peers. I will hold up their statements against the expressions of the questionnaires, which show the attitude of their peers. However, the mere fact of participating as informants on own initiative makes this part of my data possibly skew towards a more pro-sealing attitude rather than be against it.

Furthermore, regarding the quantitative data in form of questionnaires additional questions must be asked in relation to representativity. This regards firstly how the number of informants relates to the number of total possible informants fitting into the criteria. In my case how big a portion of students of a particular year returned questionnaires. Approximately 546 young Greenlanders out of a year-group consisting of 1140 people begin a high-school level education in Greenland today.⁵³ This means that with my 111 questionnaires collected, I have responses from approximately one-fifth of all first-year students at the high-school level educations nationally, and one out of ten Greenlanders in their year-group which means that my numbers *in theory* can provide statistically representative numbers.

Nevertheless, I find it important to stress that this national representation only is *in theory*, as primarily, my questionnaires have only been collected among students in Northern Greenland and to my judgement there are likely to be substantial regional differences (see 1.2.4 ‘Reasons for choice of focus and locations’ section below). Secondly, this representation furthermore depends on how seriously the students have taken answering the questionnaire in an honest way. Some seem, in my eyes, to have merely plotted in random answers, perhaps to finish faster or because they failed to concentrate on each question. Others might have misunderstood questions, or failed to understand certain questions and not cared to ask for explanation or translation. As an example of contradictory answers on individual questionnaires, I noted that several answered initially that they had not learned much about sealing from neither their parents, neighbours, others, nor in school, but later on in the questionnaire they claimed that they know a lot about sealing. The fact that answers seem contradictory

⁵³ 1180 children were born in 1993, 1139 in 1994, and 1101 children were born in 1995, and these would be old enough to start a high-school level education in 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively. 527 began a high-school level education in 2009, 526 began in 2010, and 584 started in 2011. Numbers for 2012 are not yet available. Disregarding the fact that many do not start on their high-school level education straight after finishing their *atuarfik*, in average, this means that roughly 546 out of roughly 1140 people in a year begin a high-school level education in Greenland today. All numbers are acquired from Statistics Greenland 2013a and Statistics Greenland 2013b.

despite being from the same person questions the validity of all the answers in question.⁵⁴ Finally, a small amount of questionnaires were sparsely answered, and some had skipped certain individual questions; an action which I do not have explanations for.

1.2.4 Reasons for choice of focus and locations

In relation to the question of representation of my data lies my choice of locations. I chose to focus on Greenland due to its connection to Denmark, my native country, and due to my previous lack of knowledge on this distinctive, arctic country and its people. Traditional knowledge and their challenges with the educational systems have long been an interest of mine and therefore a natural choice of focus for my thesis. As an anthropologist specialised in Inuit cultures, Jean L. Briggs speaks of cultural traits as matters we usually take for granted until they are contrasted by the presence of others' traits. Furthermore, Briggs argues that when our worlds feel to be endangered, 'then "traits" may turn into "emblems": emotionally charged markers which we can use as mirrors to show ourselves that our [lives are] real'.⁵⁵ In this way, Danish historian Søren Rud agrees with Goldbach that traits such as the ability to speak Greenlandic and to hunt seals turn into emblems of Greenlandicness, as opposed to signs of Danishness.⁵⁶ Similarly, Birger Poppel concludes for his Arctic research survey SLiCA⁵⁷ that factors important to Greenlandic identity include work, language, perception of nature, eating Greenlandic food, upbringing, and hunting and fishing among others.⁵⁸ Of these, I would argue, the large majority relate to sealing directly or indirectly. Furthermore, sealing is connected to other Greenlandic traditions such as *kaffemik*: a common Greenlandic celebration used for marking special events such as birthdays and when a child's first seal has been caught. 'Half of town is invited,'⁵⁹ and the hosts serve either a range of Greenlandic foods such as different dishes prepared from seal, whale and polar bear (the so-called *big kaffemik*) or a range of cakes (*a small kaffemik*).

⁵⁴ Silverman 2010: 275-278.

⁵⁵ Briggs 1997: 228.

⁵⁶ Goldbach 2001: 263-264, Madsen 2006: 2, Rud 2009: 35.

⁵⁷ According to their homepage, SLiCA aims to examine living conditions among indigenous peoples in Greenland, Norway, Sweden, Russia, Canada, and Alaska by means of 1,200 interviews conducted in 2006. *SliCA* 2006.

⁵⁸ *Ilisimatusarfik* 2009.

⁵⁹ Interview Student 1.

When I decided to focus primarily on sealing rather than any other traditional knowledge of Greenland, it to me seemed logical to pay attention HFS in Uummannaq as this institution provides the one and only official and institutionalised training for being a seal hunter in Greenland. Their expertise on not merely sealing but also the situation of sealers I expected to become a foundational source of data for my thesis.

Due to limited funds and time, I had to plan my itinerary and book flights beforehand. Rather than attempting to get a picture of Greenland as a whole, with its vast distances and varied ecological conditions, I chose to focus on Northwestern Greenland and collect the interviews for my data in the region where HFS was situated. As I wished to explore young adults' experiences with sealing and how they learn about sealing, and approximately half of a Greenlandic year-group of youths commence a high-school degree (see 1.2.3 'Representation and validity' section above),⁶⁰ I chose to conduct some of my interviews at GU Aasiaat, the closest high-school geographically to Uummannaq. My thesis should therefore be seen as offering a glimpse of the sealing situation in the Uummannaq-Disko Bay region than of Greenland as a whole.⁶¹

1.2.5 Informants and my choice of anonymity

In total, I made 12 formal interviews with various informants throughout my fieldwork. In addition, I had numerous conversations with various locals, some of which I am familiar with their names, others not. Finally, 111 of the first year students at the high-school GU Aasiaat answered my questionnaires.

In my thesis, most of my informants will appear anonymously. I have as a scholar chosen to keep the informants who are students anonymous. This choice I have made in line with that of Maurstad,⁶² as even though my informants are convinced the information they give me is harmless, I choose not to reveal their identity. This choice is based on the fact that third parties may dislike certain pieces of information. The information student informants provide me and especially as Greenland is a small society of merely 57,000 people, could have personal or professional consequences for the students later on. It is my responsibility as a scholar to evaluate the situation

⁶⁰ Based on numbers from Statistics Greenland 2013a and Statistics Greenland 2013b. See footnote 53.

⁶¹ Aasiaat is situated in Disko Bay.

⁶² Maurstad 2002.

and the information my informants provide, and thus I have made this choice regarding the student informants.

My other informants have all been asked their personal opinion regarding anonymity and all but two wished to appear anonymously in my work. The two who wished not to be anonymous are furthermore both public figures. The one is Ole Larsen, the leader of HFS, who in his job position is publicly known. Furthermore, Larsen has a range of intentions regarding the HFS's relation to its local setting in Uummannaq as well as for the role of HFS in the future of seal hunting as a profession. The other informant who will not be anonymous is Ole Jørgen Hammeken who is the leader (or one of several leaders) of projects at Children's Home such as the longer trips onto the inland ice. Hammeken not only is a public figure and well-known persona in Uummannaq, he has also been featured in numerous documentaries about the Children's Home and has stated his opinions in articles as well as academic texts.

1.2.6 Greenland's unique indigenous situation

There is no official international definition of the term 'indigenous people'.⁶³ The renowned ILO Convention (No. 169), a legally binding international instrument dealing with the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples, states no exact definition of who is an indigenous person, but rather bases this on *self-definition* and lists some criteria which are generally met by indigenous peoples whom the Convention wishes to protect.⁶⁴ These criteria are among others: 1) traditional lifestyles, 2) 'culture and way of life different from other segments of the national population', 3) 'own social organization and political institutions', and finally 4) 'living in historical continuity in a certain area, or before others "invaded" or came to the area'.⁶⁵

On a similar note, the most frequently cited definition of indigenous people, i.e. that of José Martínez Cobo from his study in 1986 when he was the UN Special Rapporteur, known popularly as the Martínez Cobo Report:

[indigenous peoples have] a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their own territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in

⁶³ Anaya 2009: 27-29.

⁶⁴ International Labour Organisation 2013.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity,⁶⁶

At the core of the Martínez Cobo definition is equally the matter of *self-definition*. Nevertheless, this definition states that indigenous peoples are *not* the dominant people of a country but rather are ruled by people, ethnically different from themselves.

While Greenland *has* been colonised by Denmark, officially lasting from 1721 onwards,⁶⁷ Greenland has since made a transition to presently practicing Self-Government, effective from 2009. This means that the Government of Greenland now controls all areas except ‘the Constitution; nationality; the Supreme Court; foreign, defence and security policy as well as exchange rate and monetary policy.’⁶⁸ If/when Greenland through a general election chooses complete independence, critics would likely question whether they can henceforth be labelled as an indigenous people as they would then no longer be ruled by another ethnic group as other indigenous groups are. Rather, Greenlandic Inuit would be the ruling majority and therefore Greenland would ‘become the first independent country of indigenous people in modern times,’ as United Nations Regional Information Centre (UNRIC) for Western Europe states.⁶⁹ Despite this unique situation of Greenland, I nevertheless argue along the lines of UNRIC that Greenlandic people continue to be eligible for and free to label themselves indigenous as they please.

‘First peoples define themselves in terms of their cultural struggles against foreign cultural forces,’⁷⁰ Sissons argues. For many years, this foreign cultural force was Danish. Although the politicians ruling Greenland from its Self-Government are now ethnically Greenlandic and living in Greenland, some of my informants and locals argued through comments and criticism that these southern Greenlandic politicians are still of *foreign culture* in comparison to themselves, Greenlanders of the North; claiming that they live ‘in the *real* Greenland’.⁷¹ The level of autonomy in Greenland is therefore already today creating power balances which are different from those in other nations with an indigenous population, or rather *minority*. In these nations, the

⁶⁶ Martínez Cobo quoted in Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2004: 2.

⁶⁷ Fleischer 2003: 20.

⁶⁸ Statsministeriet 2013.

⁶⁹ United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe 2013.

⁷⁰ Sissons 2005:13.

⁷¹ Interviews Ole Jørgen Hammeken, Ole Larsen, Children’s Home Staff 1, casual conversations.

government is largely consisting of members from a non-indigenous majority population. In the Greenlandic context, this means differences in attitudes among government politicians and members of rural population can no longer be attempted explained on the basis of non-indigenous versus indigenous backgrounds. Rather, this calls attention to the fact that there is myriad expressions of indigeneity among an indigenous population.⁷²

1.2.7 Knowledge compared: ‘traditional’ versus ‘Western’ versus ‘indigenous’

‘[K]nowledge is experiences stored in a collective memory bank’, Marianne Lykke Thomsen states in a tangible way.⁷³ Definitions of ‘traditional knowledge’ will vary enormously in different contexts and from different perspectives. First there are generally different perceptions of the term ‘traditional’ as in opposition to ‘modern’, ‘Western’, ‘scientific’ or other contrasting terms.⁷⁴ Second the definition depends on from which gender the point of view is defined, and furthermore, it can be either from an ecological or a cultural point of view. Third the point in time determines the definition of *traditional knowledge*, due to the fact that cultures, rather than being static, change continuously.⁷⁵ Finally, the definition will vary greatly depending on the people (and whether indigenous or non-indigenous) from which the point of view is made. In this thesis, I will primarily focus on the traditional Greenlandic knowledge in which sealing and sealskin processing can be seen as expressions. ‘Biologists and fishermen are embedded in different knowledge traditions, have different success parameters and different perceptions of what constitute interesting and valuable knowledge’,⁷⁶ Danish anthropologist Frank Sejersen explains of the clash between knowledge systems of scientists and users such as fishermen and hunters.

Though at first, it may seem as if this particular part of traditional Greenlandic knowledge stands opposite to academic knowledge and thus to the education system. In fact the borders between these today are blurry. Nevertheless, Western/scientific knowledge versus traditional Greenlandic knowledge prove key issues to deal with in this thesis (see ‘Indigenising the school’ in Chapter 4). Cf. the discussion above and

⁷² Sissons 2005.

⁷³ Marianne Lykke Thomsen (1993) paraphrased in Sejersen 2002: 18.

⁷⁴ Olsen 2007: 79, Madsen 2006: 4-5+16+20, Bleie 2005: 24.

⁷⁵ Sissons 2005; Feit 1994.

⁷⁶ Sejersen 2002: 9.

in the previous section ('Greenland's Unique Indigenous Situation'), Western knowledge and indigenous knowledge can not be neatly separated from one another as the border and differences between these two entities are rather blurred. Rather, I will attempt to provide traits which are more common for one than the other. According to D. M. Warren, indigenous knowledge is a local knowledge, unique to a certain community or culture.⁷⁷ It is passed down from generation to generation, often through word of mouth. Indigenous knowledge contrasts with the international knowledge systems which are generated from universities, research institutions and private companies.⁷⁸ Warren clarifies how such indigenous knowledge is not merely valuable to its particular culture but also for others as well as for scientists and planners who strive to improve conditions in various rural communities.⁷⁹

Some scholars of Indigenous Studies believe that Western and indigenous knowledge can be separated into two individual entities and fixed in time and space as something stationary and static.⁸⁰ However, as political scientist Arun Agrawal points out, the two can never be thus separated or fixed as they have influenced on one another over the last several centuries and have each gone through variations and transformations and are marked with a heterogeneity among various elements.⁸¹

Agrawal does acknowledge that there are both substantive and methodological or epistemological differences between the two kinds of knowledge. Of the substantial differences, Agrawal describes how indigenous knowledge is 'concerned primarily with those activities that are intimately connected with the livelihoods of people rather than with abstract ideas and philosophies. ... Western knowledge, in contrast, is divorced from the daily lives of people and aims at a more analytical and abstract representation of the world.'⁸² Hereby, Agrawal points to the respectively tangible/practical and intangible/theoretical levels which the two kinds of knowledge mainly operate on. Among the methodological or epistemological differences, Agrawal draws attention to how indigenous knowledge tends to claim its expertise in being localised, specialised in one particular community or culture from which it

⁷⁷ Warren (1991) in Agrawal 1995: 416.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Smith 1999: 29-37.

⁸¹ Agrawal 1995: 421-422.

⁸² *ibid.*: 422.

originates, and sometimes merely applicable in a certain time period, whereas western knowledge claims to be universally applicable and timeless.⁸³

In line with Agrawal, I wish to stress the importance of moving away from a rigid dichotomy between indigenous and Western knowledge.⁸⁴ Not only does this entail recognising their connections and similarities but also to acknowledge differentiations within each of the two. By doing so, we can initiate a dialogue which is more productive and beneficial for the interest of the disadvantaged, as Agrawal concludes.⁸⁵

1.2.8 'Traditional' versus 'modern'

Whether a particular culture, or knowledge, can be considered 'traditional' or 'modern' immediately presents itself as a complex question to answer. It instantly calls for other questions such as: what could a certain culture be considered traditional or modern as opposed to? And how could anyone be objective in judging *which culture* is more modern than the other, as every human being has his own cultural background which will influence his judgement? Indeed, merely a definition of the two terms proves rather difficult when dealing with culture.

Sissons, Feit and other social anthropologists argue that all cultures evolve constantly, be they indigenous or non-indigenous.⁸⁶ New trends have their bloom, and old traditions may be taken up again after a period of neglect. Subsequently, it becomes rather difficult to consider any culture as more traditional or more modern than the other, as all cultures differ in how they are currently transforming. On the other hand, when comparing a culture to itself – at two different points in time – it is not merely possible to see the transformation and perhaps changes of the culture, it also gives you an option of perceiving one point as so-called 'traditional' and another point as so-called 'modern'. In the case of Greenland, this transformation is perhaps most visible in contrasting 'pre-industrialisation' Greenland lasting roughly until 1953 with present time 'post-industrialisation'.⁸⁷ Without going into further debate on this issue and in order to keep matters rather simplified, I will in this thesis refer to

⁸³ Agrawal 1995: 425.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*: 433.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Sissons 2005, Feit 1994, Bhabha 1988.

⁸⁷ Fleischer 2003: 62-69.

practices and knowledge deriving from ‘pre-industrial’ times as *traditional* and to other ‘post-industrialisation’ practices as *modern* although I simultaneously wish to stress that such simplification is rather impossible as reality is far from this easy to label as borders between the two categories are blurred.

1.3 Chapter overview

To answer my main research question, I will first answer each of the supportive additional questions one-by-one. Furthermore, each chapter will relate to an individual level of Berkes’ model (see Figure 1, pg. 8). Chapter 2 will therefore deal with the innermost circle of the model: the local level. It will provide an analysis of the role which *informal educators*, especially parents and Children’s Home staff members, play in strengthening the identity of Greenlandic youth through sealing knowledge. In this chapter, I will first discuss the differences between informal learning and formal education. I will define what sealing is and explore how much my student informants estimate that they have learned from informal educators such as these. Finally, I will discuss why it could be important to learn sealing in regards to the individual Greenlander.

Chapter 3 will, on the other hand, move to the next level of the model and focus on the role which *formal education* has on strengthening the identity of young Greenlanders through sealing knowledge. Thus, this chapter will explore if and how, in different ways, the education on offer at respectively the *atuarfik*, the high-school GU Aasiaat, and at the HFS teaches the students about sealing. Finally, this chapter will deal with the collective level and how, based on my informants, learning sealing strengthens the collective level of Greenlandic identity.

Chapter 4 will consist of a further analysis and discussion of the possible tension between the notions of being *traditional* and *modern*, which portrays itself in how Greenlanders, to my impression through interviews, find it difficult to possess traditional knowledge and at the same time live as a modern people. This chapter furthermore deals with both the administrative/governmental level of the Greenlandic society as well as a world-view perspective on learning about sealing. The administrative/governmental level is primarily dealt with through discussions on what is the role and responsibilities of the administrators and government politicians in order for Greenlandic sealing to have a future. The world-view perspective, on the

other hand, is debated through discussions on modern indigenous expressions of identity and indigeneity as well as whether the lack of representation of sealing in the *atuarfik* is an example of indigeneity being *silenced out* among a people.

Chapter 5 will provide a conclusion on the four preceding chapters together and thereby answer my research questions. This thesis will show ways in which traditional Greenlandic knowledge such as seal hunting, as it appears from my informants, strengthens the identity of present day modern Greenlanders. This takes place in both symbolical and practical ways, and includes: giving suggestions of cultural heritage, common background and of how the individual belongs to Greenland; functioning as a tool to understand other cultures and handle cultural clashes, as a practical alternative to academic learning, as a self-confidence booster, and finally, as cultivator of empathy across socio-economical layers.

Following Chapter 5 will be appendices and reference list:

A: Presentation of Informants

B: List of Figures and Images

2. Informal learning: the individual level

*That which ought and can best be taught inside the classroom
should there be taught, and that which can best be learned
through experience dealing directly with native materials
and real life situations outside the school
should there be learned.*

- Julian Smith 1943: 363.

2.1 Introduction to chapter

This chapter will first give a brief theoretical discussion of the differences between informal learning and formal education (of which the latter in regards to my topic will be assessed in chapter 3). Second, sealing in practice is described through my interviewed student informants from GU Aasiaat. Third, I will through interviews and questionnaires assess how much Greenlandic children themselves estimate that they learn about sealing from their relatives today. Finally, I will discuss why it could be important on the personal level for the individual to learn about traditional Greenlandic knowledge such as sealing.

2.2 Informal learning versus formal education

As Thomas J. La Belle says in his article for the *International Review of Education*: '[A]ll individuals are engaged in learning experiences at all times, from planned, compulsory and intentional to unplanned, voluntary and incidental'.⁸⁸ Through Coombs and Ahmed, La Belle describes how education (equated with learning) can roughly be separated into three entities: *informal*, *nonformal* and *formal* education. Formal education is described as “institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured educational system, spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of the university”.⁸⁹ Informal and nonformal learning appear to a greater degree to be similar to one another:

[I]nformal education is ‘the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from

⁸⁸ La Belle 1982: 1.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*: 4.

daily experiences and exposure to the environment’; nonformal education is ‘any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children’.⁹⁰

In line with Coombs and Ahmed, La Belle differentiates between informal and nonformal education as daily experiences versus spare time activities such as e.g. sports training and voluntary classes in arts: ‘A major difference between these two processes rests with the *deliberate instructional and programmatic emphases* present in nonformal education but absent in informal education’⁹¹ (My italics). Where I do agree with La Belle that there is a difference between informal and nonformal learning in their degree of being organised and programmatic, I argue however that the two are highly similar in other aspects. When parents bring their children on a fishing trip to teach them about fishing, sea animals and nature in general, I argue that there is an obvious amount of *deliberate instructional learning* involved in these experiences.

As this thesis deals with how Greenlandic children learn about sealing inside versus outside their schooling, I will therefore not differentiate between informal and nonformal learning, but rather focus on the differences between *formal education* (i.e. inside schooling) and *informal learning* (i.e. outside schooling). Whereas La Belle and Coombs & Ahmed agree that learning and education are the same, I, oppositely, do not agree that *learning equates education*⁹². Rather, in this thesis, education as a term in itself will be considered a rather formal term for learning.

Coming back to the arguments for not differentiating between nonformal and informal learning, La Belle argues that the different modes of learning may happen concurrently at one location, but emphasis is placed by the observer on one mode.⁹³ Using a classroom as an example, La Belle mentions how informal learning happens as peers interact *while* the teacher is performing formal teaching of the curriculum.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, as emphasis *is* placed, I argue since ‘school based learning is most likely to be valued to a greater extent than nonformal[/informal] education’,⁹⁵ emphasis therefore ends up to the benefit of the more formal one of the modes in question. Thus, my example above with parents teaching their children about fishing would probably

⁹⁰ Coombs and Ahmed (1974: 8) quoted in La Belle 1982: 3-4.

⁹¹ La Belle 1982: 4.

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ *ibid.*: 5.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*: 14.

be considered as a variation of nonformal learning rather than informal learning if we were to consider the two as separate and distinct entities.

According to La Belle, informal/nonformal education has yet to be appreciated and valued as highly as formal education. By the introduction of the term 'nonformal education' in the late 1960s, lessons learned outside school became more acknowledged and the importance of these community resources of teaching and learning got more attention than previously.⁹⁶ Unlike formal education from primary school through to university, informal/nonformal learning should be assessed throughout life,⁹⁷ and since the 1970s these modes of learning have, especially in Third World countries, become a more frequently used alternative for those children and adults who are 'either unserved or poorly served by schools, or who needed to supplement the schooling they already received.'⁹⁸ These modes fall more in line with non-industrialised ways of living; as La Belle admits, 'simpler societies' have often taught skills and knowledge at the very place where they 'are to be applied, rather than in programs removed from everyday life.'⁹⁹ He continues arguing:

In these traditional contexts there is considerable reliance on demonstration and practice. Young people often spend the major part of their period of maturation at the side of adults or siblings, who guide their behaviour by offering appropriate instruction, demonstration and practice in the learning of new information and behaviour.¹⁰⁰

This connectedness between learning and doing works as an easing and simultaneously a strengthening factor not merely in the learning process, but also in the following usage of the lessons learned. However, '[a] major difficulty with transferring these anthropological lessons is that more complex societies are divided structurally and culturally, and are integrated politically and economically at the national level,'¹⁰¹ as La Belle paraphrases Cohen's thoughts. He elaborates describing how schools in most societies today function as the major surrogate institution for the learning and teaching which previously was done within the family or with other members of the community. La Belle argues that the family is now merely requested to support rather than take the primary role, and that 'learning becomes synonymous

⁹⁶ La Belle 1982: 2.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*: 7.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*: 2.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*: 13.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Paraphrased Cohen (1971) in La Belle 1982: 13.

with schooling. Jobs and status are conferred on those who have achieved more schooling, and what is valued becomes the *more universal and abstract knowledge that can be demonstrated inside classrooms.*¹⁰² (my italics) Thus, this hierarchy of learning inside and outside the school setting, considering that access to schools is rarely completely equal for all citizens, favours the individuals who meet the cultural criteria of being among the more powerful group within the society and grants these better opportunities to eventually participate in the political and economic system.¹⁰³

If we return to how La Belle paraphrases Cohen, he subsequently continues in line with postcolonial ideas about power balances and submission of indigenous peoples around the world: ‘The nation often supplants community control and identity to focus on the dominant group's cultural heritage, and the school becomes a major institution for the transmission of national and often international perspectives and goals.’¹⁰⁴

2.3 Sealing in practice

As long as humans have been settled in Greenland, these Greenlanders have been hunters, living on the land and available sea wildlife, among them the seals.¹⁰⁵ Due to these sea mammals’ frequency as well as nutritiousness, sealing and whaling are therefore considered central hunting methods, and their produce equally as parts of a typical Greenland diet. Hunters have always been hunting not merely one kind of wildlife, but focused on particular types of prey as the seasons and weather change. Furthermore, it has traditionally been normal that hunters supplement their hunting with fishing. In the industrialised Greenland however, an increasing number of hunters turn toward commercial fishing to pay their bills.¹⁰⁶ This thesis will nevertheless focus on sealing, although taking into consideration that no Greenlandic hunter solely hunts this particular animal all year.

As mentioned above, seasons vary and so too do the specific methods as well as the frequency of seals versus other types of prey. ‘We mostly go hunting seals in the summer. We only rarely go in the winter,’¹⁰⁷ one student told me. Neither he nor his

¹⁰² La Belle 1982: 14.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Paraphrased Cohen (1971) in La Belle 1982: 13.

¹⁰⁵ Lidegaard 1991: 7-19, Dahl 2002.

¹⁰⁶ Interview Ole Larsen.

¹⁰⁷ Interviews Student 3.

four peers whom I interviewed have fathers who are occupational hunters. Through Gretel Erlich's narrative *This Cold Heaven*, Jens Danielsen, who nevertheless is an occupational hunter in Qaanaaq, describes a hunter's year as this:

'In spring we hunt walrus and the seals that are lying out on the ice. In summer we hunt mostly narwhale and bearded seal between ice floes using kayaks. In autumn we start to catch seals again and when the new ice comes, that is the best time for hunting walrus. In winter, the dark time, we catch seals under the ice using nets. Before there were shops, we followed the animals.'¹⁰⁸

My student informants on the other hand all said that they only hunt seals as a hobby.¹⁰⁹ The students mentioned how their families used meat for making what they termed *Greenlandic foods* themselves, but that the meat would also serve for feeding their dogs, or in some instances just a single dog.¹¹⁰

Among the five students I interviewed, the experiences and frequency of experiences varied. As Student 5 admitted: 'In the winter, you make a hole in the ice. And then you wait. I haven't tried this. I am from [a large town in South Greenland]. There, we don't know that much about seals.'¹¹¹ Student 2, however, has been out with his father and uncle many times and in all kinds of weather. In the winter, he explains, hunters go to a good spot on the ice and make two holes. They tie a net so that it goes from one hole to the other under the ice, and every third day, they return to check for captured seals.¹¹²

In the spring, the seals come up through their breathing holes to sunbathe. Then the hunter uses a technique where he, hidden behind a piece of white canvas stretched on a frame attached to his gun (traditionally, a crossbow), silently crawls and snakes himself forward on the ice towards the seal until he is close enough to hit the seal before it hears or sees the hunter and slides back into the water. When the seal is hit, the hunter rushes as fast as he can run to the seal as, although shot, it may still be able to escape through its breathing hole.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Erlich 2003: 174.

¹⁰⁹ Interviews Students 1-5.

¹¹⁰ In the old days, every family would have a pack of dogs for their sled. However, Greenlandic sledge dogs fare poorly on dog foods consisting of other than what has traditionally been available in Greenland, such as seal, fish, whale, polar bear etc. From what I could observe, Greenlandic families who do not hunt regularly today choose merely to have one or few dogs as semi-domesticated pets.

¹¹¹ Interview Student 5.

¹¹² Interview Student 2.

¹¹³ *Ice School*, 2001.

Finally, as Student 2 explains, there is the open-water method used in summer. Here, the boat is left to drift on the ocean, and the hunter looks around everywhere on the surface of the water with his binoculars. If the hunter spots a seal, the gun is grabbed and a single or a couple of shots are fired.

When they shoot, we quickly sit down and then we rush to where they shot. Either the seal floats there because it is dead, and then it sinks. Or, we did not get it. If we missed it then we have to be on guard, as it will come back up for air. It was too frightened to get enough oxygen before it dove, and then you can just wait for it.¹¹⁴

Here, Student 2's family members have passed down their experiences and how *patience* is a key word when sealing. Patience is not everything though, because as the student explains, luck and inventiveness equally play a role: 'Sometimes the seals are curious for sounds, and then you whistle a bit or knock on the side of the boat. Other times, you sit completely still in anticipation.'¹¹⁵ It may be that the hunters have reasons why they try these things at particular occasions, but these do not appear from my interview with the student. Regarding weather and water conditions, one student explains how they would go out in any kind of weather, but that they of course would prefer when the water is completely glassy as then the seals are easier to spot.¹¹⁶

'When my paternal grandpa has caught a seal, we go into the house and cut it up,'¹¹⁷ Student 4 told me. Others explained how the seals were cut up on a rock, close to where it was caught. Every part of a seal, walrus or whale can be put to use, and people living on the traditional Greenlandic diet do not need to take vitamin pills or eat vegetables as they obtain the same nutrients from the meaty diet of wildlife that they can hunt or catch in their vicinity.¹¹⁸ According to Erhlich's narrative, '[t]he old people say that if the meat of a seal is "alive" – still quivering – while it is being flensed, it means another seal will soon be caught.'¹¹⁹ Raw seal meat is considered a delicacy, especially the eyes of a freshly caught seal. However, being unaccustomed to the taste and texture of raw seal meat, these students appear to generally prefer seal

¹¹⁴ Interview Student 2.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Interview Student 4.

¹¹⁸ Erhlich 2003: 225.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*: 171.

meat when it has been boiled: ‘I don’t like the taste of the blood,’¹²⁰ Student 3 comments.

When it comes to using the sealskin for clothing and boots, the students gave varying answers. Some have mothers and grandmothers that make use of the skins of the seals caught. Others give away the sealskin for others to use.¹²¹ The processing of sealskin is generally considered a woman’s job among these students. However, seal hunting itself is mostly a hobby for boys, the students seem to think. One girl states directly that it is a boys’ thing, but that her father also brought her along and that she loved learning both about hunting, cutting up the seal and how to use the skin. In her family, it had been her father who had learned all the processes and, although handling the skin was usually a woman’s job, he was also the one teaching her this particular task.¹²² All the other four students also spoke of the men of their families as the ones to go seal hunting. Through our interviews, it appeared that the women of the families would only go along as the children would go along occasionally – sometimes, even merely for the sake of taking care of the youngest toddler coming along on the hunting trip. Erlich mentions the situation of the wife of Jens Danielsen in Qaanaaq: ‘Strong-faced, savvy, and bold, she preferred to go out on the ice with Jens, but had been forced to take a job in Qaanaaq to pay the bills. That was the reality of a hunter’s life these days.’¹²³ Not even the occupational hunters’ wives are therefore used to assisting their husbands any longer. Similar process has taken place within other indigenous communities around the world, e.g. among Sámi reindeer herders in Norway.¹²⁴ For more information regarding sealing in practice in Greenland, see Jens Dahl’s accounts in *Saqqaaq*.¹²⁵

2.4 Amount learned from their families

As we can see on the above descriptions of sealing procedures, these students at GU Aasiaat generally have obtained a fair amount of knowledge on sealing from their relatives (parents/grandparents/uncles/brothers/cousins). ‘I wouldn’t say that I know a

¹²⁰ Interview Student 3.

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² Interview Student 1.

¹²³ Erlich 2003: 228.

¹²⁴ Eira 2012: 22-26.

¹²⁵ Dahl 2000: 144-154 + 223-228.

huge amount, but I know the basics,’¹²⁶ one female student tells me and describes in detail how to cut open a seal. Since none of my student informants have occupational sealers as fathers, they learn about sealing merely on a hobby level. Nevertheless, as there is not much room for mistakes when hunting seals, you basically get it right or you do not get to eat seal meat. Thus, I would argue that Erhlich’s descriptions of the harsh hunter’s life in the northernmost parts of Greenland still bear some truth to them, even to a certain extent in regards to sealing on a hobby plan: ‘Those who were weak-minded and physically awkward didn’t last long in a place where one or two mistakes or missteps meant death.’¹²⁷

Since my student informants all had a certain interest in sealing and volunteered for the interviews, they cannot represent the variety of all their peers. From the questionnaires, I learned that of the 111 students on GU Aasiaat’s first year, 60 students (i.e. 54%) estimated themselves that they had learned *a fair bit* or *everything* about sealing, seals and sealskin processing from their parents or other family members.¹²⁸ The other half, however, assessed that they had learned *nothing* or only *a little bit* about seal matters from their relatives. Explanations for these amounts are to be found in the individual families. Although one could start guessing that this is because children spend an increasing amount of hours in institutions in comparison to spending it with their parents, this would merely be a hypothesis. Offering explanations why is a matter which I will not deal with further.

The above numbers do nevertheless correspond to the comments that I received when speaking casually with sealers and folks of the older generations whom I met when strolling around town in Aasiaat, Uummannaq, Ilulissat and Qeqertarsuaq: ‘Greenlandic youths nowadays do not have the same amount of knowledge on sealing as we did when we were their age.’¹²⁹ Danish anthropologist Frank Sejersen agrees: ‘Young people – especially in bigger towns in South Greenland – tend to go sailing alone or with friends. Hunting as a complex and a shared space where the parents are able to be together with their children and transmit practices, knowledge and values are thus eroding.’¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Interview Student 3.

¹²⁷ Erhlich 2003: 227.

¹²⁸ Questionnaires collected at GU Aasiaat.

¹²⁹ Casual conversations with unidentified locals and occupational sealers in Greenland.

¹³⁰ Research by Susanne Dybbroe paraphrased in Sejersen 2002: 16.

2.5 Why it would be important for the individual

When looking at why it matters that the Greenlandic youths learn about sealing and other traditional ways of living, the answers will be separated into two sets: the personal ones and the collective ones. The former mainly refer to the individual, i.e. seen from a personal perspective. The latter however mainly relate to the people as a whole; in other words, from a collective perspective. This collective perspective will be discussed in Chapter 3, when you will see how the two perspectives do share similarities, merely on different levels.

2.5.1 Traditional knowledge as a tool to handle cultural clashes

The remoteness and fierce arctic nature of Greenland has always been a significant factor in the migrations to this Arctic land.¹³¹ In periods of varying intensity, trade between Greenland and Denmark and other European countries meant that especially the central part of the West Greenlandic coast was acquainted with visitors of European descent throughout the past 400 years.¹³² Trade then was monopolised by Denmark. Although today this monopoly in theory has been dissolved, the few flights in and out of Greenland are still merely shared among two carriers, namely Air Iceland and Air Greenland serving international flights respectively to Iceland and Denmark.¹³³ Transportation is costly in this region, and thus relatively few travel here in comparison to other places.¹³⁴ Export is largely limited to fish products, amounting to 1.9 billion DKK per year.¹³⁵ As the fishing business mainly occupies local Greenlanders, it is rather the currently blooming oil drilling and mining business which will cause foreigners to visit or live as guest workers throughout Greenland.¹³⁶ Oil drilling and mining businesses are rapidly growing¹³⁷ and it is too soon to predict where and how Greenlandic communities will be affected by an increase of foreigners among the population.

Nevertheless, the mere fact that the number of guest workers will increase means that there is a potential for more clashes between the different cultures. This could be

¹³¹ Lidegaard 1991.

¹³² *ibid.*: 47-70

¹³³ Air Iceland 2013, Air Greenland 2013.

¹³⁴ Almasy 2012.

¹³⁵ Economy Watch 2010.

¹³⁶ Interviews Teacher 1, Ole Jørgen Hammeken, *MINING.com* 2012, *MINING.com* 2013.

¹³⁷ Economy Watch 2010.

avoided to a certain extent if the general Greenlandic public become more aware of their own culture in comparison to others' cultures. As a high-school teacher explained to me: 'The better you know your own culture and previous histories, the better you will also understand other cultures.'¹³⁸ The way in which the Children's Home handles this issue is largely through travelling themselves:

A very important part of our work with their culture and identity is that we travel a lot with our children. E.g. when we travel somewhere in the world, like now where we are going to Washington on [Inuit Studies Conference], then it is not merely because we want experiences and be on holidays ... to a large extent it is also in order to learn about your own culture and your own background.¹³⁹

At this particular conference, the children experience not only a range of other cultures, but also a variety of Inuit cultures with whom they can compare and contrast themselves. A staff member explains to me how the Children's Home believes that when you *experience* other cultures then it is easier to see the difference and similarities to your own culture.¹⁴⁰ This is one of the main reasons why the Children's Home brings their children on travels. The staff member elaborates on the fact that they simply do this 'to open [the children's] eyes to the facts that the Greenlandic culture – the nature which they live in and the ways that they live – is it really something special, and there are probably not many other places where people live this way.'¹⁴¹ This uniqueness stressed by the staff member furthermore appears through the fact that they make the children understand that when they travel, they *represent* Greenland. They actively (re)present Greenland through performing Greenlandic music and songs, bringing photos, and displaying slideshows and the films which they have made through the years.¹⁴² The staff member describes how things are better remembered if the children have to present them to others because they use their own words and thoughts on the matter. This process is an important part of making the children more aware of their own identities.¹⁴³

A high-school teacher at GU Aasiaat stresses that it is also important to learn that other cultures do not always mean well. Speaking of the Chinese mining companies showing interest in starting business in Greenland, she states: 'there are many codes

¹³⁸ Interview Teacher 1.

¹³⁹ Interview Children's Home Staff 1.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

¹⁴² *ibid.*

¹⁴³ Interview Children's Home Staff 1.

one needs to decipher or understand. But I also think that it is important that you learn to understand how to *handle* Chinese people.’¹⁴⁴ Still, this teacher considers it extremely important that Greenlanders increase their *intercultural competences* in order to be even better prepared for their future in an increasingly globalising world.

2.5.2 A practical alternative to academic learning

When youth learn traditional knowledge such as sealing, both the process and the goal revolve around learning something *practical*. Standing in opposite to academic classes such as mathematics and grammar, this practical knowledge can be put to instant use in the everyday lives of the students. The ‘classroom’ is not used in the usual manner since traditional knowledge has generally been taught on site, as La Belle argues previously in this chapter.¹⁴⁵ Being ‘on location’ already in the learning process, plus the fact that the teaching method is ‘listen and observe, and then try it yourself’ or learn-by-doing, both strengthen the demonstration of usefulness of this newly acquired knowledge.

La Belle explains how the teaching methods of the education system are distant to the practical everyday lives of being e.g. a seal hunter:

The relative isolation of the school program from the community tends to support an emphasis on pedagogical practices and assessment techniques which deal with the individual rather than the group, and with paper and pencil tests rather than with other forms of behaviour that emphasize community based applications of what is learned.¹⁴⁶

Not only does the education system distance itself from practical matters of everyday life, as La Belle argues, it ignores knowledge which could be put to use from the students’ backgrounds. ‘[T]here is typically little attention paid in schools to the learning that occurs in the home and community settings that may be strengthened or built upon through the school curricula.’¹⁴⁷

This distance entails frustration and unease for some students. These students may feel that they *do not belong* in the school setting, which in turn could easily mean a lack of engagement with their education and school results. One of the staff members at Children’s Home explained to me that those of their children who struggled

¹⁴⁴ Interview Teacher 1.

¹⁴⁵ La Belle 1982: 13.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*: 14.

¹⁴⁷ La Belle 1982: 14.

learning in school generally found great relief in learning something practical with a clear connection to real life instead, as is true all over the world. Environmental scholar Michael Howes and development scholar Robert Chambers clarify that traditional knowledge varies from scientific knowledge on exactly this methodological point: it ‘is “concrete” and relies almost exclusively on intuition and evidence directly available to the senses.’¹⁴⁸ This concrete, direct appearance of traditional knowledge such as sealing is exactly what gives these children comfort.

2.5.3 Practical knowledge becomes a self-confidence booster

The Children’s Home staff member continued explaining that when they had been on trips to the inland ice, the children would return more self-confident and ‘some would even start teaching younger children how to do the different things.’¹⁴⁹ As an example, s/he mentions a young boy who has participated on the trips for four years and despite his young age is now able to handle a hunting rifle. S/he describes how the change is visible on the children both on the inside and the outside: ‘You can see how they dress differently and eat differently, and they start thinking more deep thoughts about their families and the future.’¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, the trips mean that the children bond with each other, the staff, and the occupational seal hunters on the trip in a more intense way than during daily life at the Children’s Home. Occasionally, the children get really close to one of the hunters, looking up to them as if they were their fathers.¹⁵¹ S/he explains how this increased self-confidence through learning about sealing, fishing and surviving in the Greenlandic wild, meant that the children would generally be more patient and emotionally equipped for regular schooling, and ‘this is why we do this,’¹⁵² s/he said. Again, this indicates the potential benefits of a further collaboration between the modes of informal learning and formal education, cf. La Belle’s discussion of the two. Thus, nonformal or informal learning touches people to whom academic learning does not seem to appeal, and nonformal/informal learning provides opportunity to obtain skills which may seem more practical in their daily lives and not least boost the individual’s self-confidence.

¹⁴⁸ Howes & Chambers in Agrawal 1995: 417.

¹⁴⁹ Interview Children’s Home Staff 2.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*

¹⁵² Interview Children’s Home Staff 1.

2.5.4 Empathy across socio-economical layers

Although the individual can obtain a variety of skills through informal and nonformal learning, the passing of these kinds of knowledge are generally done within each socio-economical or cultural group rather than across the various layers, La Belle argues.¹⁵³ Thus, '[t]he value of nonformal, as opposed to formal, education for access to the opportunity structure for low socio-economic status populations is also questioned because of the greater legitimacy typically associated with schooling.'¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, I argue that although the individual might not experience any change in their socio-economic status, informal/nonformal education can improve self-assurance and in turn therefore lead to enhancing the individual's will and eagerness to accept more demanding challenges within formal education.

Receiving informal or nonformal learning does not merely benefit those who are less apt for an academic school or those who lack self-confidence. Speaking of the skills which books are unable to teach, La Belle states, 'nonformal education experiences for the more politically and economically powerful in society (who are already well schooled) may provide considerable socio-economic benefits.'¹⁵⁵ In other words, social and creative skills can be nurtured through informal/nonformal learning. He continues, '[i]n effect, nonformal education may offer only skills for the unschooled whereas it may provide both skills and legitimacy for the schooled.'¹⁵⁶ An exemplary group of individuals who could possibly have earned more legitimacy had they learned more about sealing would be the politicians in Nuuk: Several of my informants in Uummannaq frankly criticised these academic Southerners for making unqualified decisions regarding sealing as neither they nor the scientists from whom they received numbers and estimations knew much regarding the intricate life of hunters, especially those residing in the far north of the country.¹⁵⁷ Another example of the general convenience of knowing at least the basis of traditional Greenlandic knowledge stands out from the stories of those previously residing at the Children's Home: 'One who has become a midwife in reserve in the hamlets, she tells us: "Oh, I am so happy that I went on these journeys [surviving in the wild on the inland ice] – it

¹⁵³ La Belle 1982: 1.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*: 16.

¹⁵⁶ La Belle 1982: 16.

¹⁵⁷ Interview Ole Jørgen Hammeken, casual conversation with local fisherman.

really helps me in my work here!”¹⁵⁸ Staff Member 2 at the Children’s Home continues by saying: ‘Everything we teach the children is connected. Even though it doesn’t suit their education ... You can always find an aspect where it helps to have this knowledge.’¹⁵⁹ Thus, learning sealing and other traditional knowledge will, besides the practical use lay a foundation for an understanding of fellow citizens and possibly a sense of *empathy* despite differences in lifestyles or livelihoods.

2.5.5 Offering possible answers to the question of ‘who am I?’

Seen from an adult’s perspective, informal learning may add knowledge in the range of practical, creative and social areas. In some instances, this informal learning to a certain extent fills a void that some children, to the impression of the adults, seem to battle with. Knowing their cultural heritage may in some cases fill an inner void in these particular children’s sense of belonging and knowing their roots. A Children’s Home staff member expressed the situation of some of their children as such: ‘Our children come from families where things have really gone wrong ... They do not know who they are. While they have been growing up they have continuously been told that they are no good’.¹⁶⁰ Thus, besides possibly being unsure of their family background and their role as children in the family, these youths’ self-confidence has often been torn down. All these matters, separately and in connection to one another, are things which the Children’s Home has to work on. The staff member explains:

Therefore, it is very, very important to us to construct a kind of ‘identity’ for these children while still paying respects to the fact that they are different persons and that they shouldn’t be identical – we shouldn’t standardise our children. But we need to provide them with an ‘identity’ and a sense of belonging, and you could say that the Greenlandic culture is something that they have in common.¹⁶¹

By stating that the Children’s Home works on *constructing an ‘identity’* for their children, the staff member does not imply that an identity is an object which can be granted to or provided for the children. Rather, through working with the Greenlandic culture, the Children’s Home seeks to offer these particular children a range of *possible expressions of identities*. Noting an example, the staff member tells me about

¹⁵⁸ Interview Children’s Home Staff 2.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Interview Children’s Home Staff 1.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*

a boy who started rowing a kayak a couple of years ago, and he became number two or three at the Greenlandic Cup the first time he participated. Just the day before my interview with this staff member, this boy had signed up for working at the board of the local kayak club,¹⁶² a fact which I judge as a sign of success in getting the boy engaged with others, his community, and a pastime.

Critics may argue that Children's Home who handles some of the worst off children in Greenland is an extreme. Although, a Children's Home staff member states that their children generally do tend to come from extremely bad family situations in Greenland, s/he argues that many Greenlanders could to some extent lack an awareness of being Greenlandic:

I really do believe that this goes for many Greenlanders; not merely for the children but also youths and adults today, that their identity is not clearly defined. They do not know exactly where they belong. ... Major changes have happened in Greenland over such a short time that some people haven't been able to keep up.¹⁶³

In other words, as the transition period from traditional, pre-industrial society to institutionalised, industrial society has happened within the last two generations,¹⁶⁴ family matters such as daily rhythms, traditions and giving the new generation a steady foundation to build their future upon can be disturbed or hindered.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, responsibility for upbringing is generally put more on the shoulders of institutions such as kindergarten and school, rather than taken care of among the family.¹⁶⁶

Apart from providing people with suggestive answers on the question 'who am I?' acquiring various kinds of traditional knowledge also reveal what the individuals *can do*. Thus, a person learning the skills of sealing may realise that s/he is able to do something useful. Although they may not necessarily take to this as an occupation, it stays as knowledge to fall back on – as a safety net of something that they could do if everything else fails. Nonetheless, acquiring informal/nonformal learning develops the individual 'as a participant in society.'¹⁶⁷ It is a socialisation tool, originating in 'the interaction between an individual and those who seek to influence that

¹⁶² Interview Children's Home Staff 1.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Fleischer 2003: 58-67.

¹⁶⁵ Goldbach 2000: 265-266.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ La Belle 1982: 7.

individual',¹⁶⁸ but furthermore clarifying and stressing to the individual how s/he fits in as an indispensable piece of the puzzle that a society is.

2.6 Conclusion to chapter

Although sealing is today only the occupation of a few people, it is still an important pastime for many of my informants from Northern Greenland. Half of the first-year students at GU Aasiaat assessed that they have learned *a fair bit* or *everything* about sealing from their parents and other relatives through informal learning. Getting familiar with sealing and other traditional Greenlandic knowledge through informal learning means that the young Greenlanders are introduced to learning where distance between theory and practice is typically smaller than for subjects of formal education such as mathematics in class and in real life. Learning sealing helps Greenlandic youth to know their cultural heritage better and become equipped with tools to handle misunderstandings and cultural clashes when encountering other cultures. Knowing traditional knowledge such as sealing can also help answering questions such as 'who am I?' and prove a safety net of knowledge if other knowledge acquisitions fail to provide for what the individual considers a meaningful occupation. Furthermore, acquiring these kinds of traditional knowledge can possibly improve the individual's self-esteem instantly. Finally, Greenlandic youth learning sealing can gain an insight in fellow Greenlanders' lives and thus increase their understanding of these and become more emphatic towards these fellow Greenlanders. Learning sealing is thus not merely about the *practical* execution, but also the *symbolic value* of carrying it out, as it strengthens the awareness of being Greenlandic.

¹⁶⁸ La Belle 1982: 7.

3. Formal education: the national level

Those who would like to learn [sealing] should learn about it.

I mean, it shouldn't be something forced upon you.

*But if you wish to learn about [sealing],
then it is almost as if you have a right to learn it too.*

– Interview, Student 2, 2012.

3.1 Introduction to chapter

In this chapter, I will focus on sealing on a slightly higher level, namely the educational/institutional level. In addition, I will look at Greenland *as a people* rather than as individuals, which we did in Chapter 2. During this chapter, I will explain and discuss the ways in which Greenlandic children learn about traditional Greenlandic knowledge such as sealing within various modes of schooling. First, I will account for how pupils in the *atuarfik* learn about traditional Greenlandic knowledge and how extensive that learning is. Furthermore, I will display the students' wishes regarding teachings in sealing in school. Second, I will debate the way in which high-school students are now taught *Kulturfag (Culture)*. Third, I will discuss the role of HFS in equipping today's Greenlandic hunters. Finally, I will discuss the ways learning traditional Greenlandic knowledge such as sealing could be important as a strengthening symbolical factor for the identity of Greenlanders as *a people*.

3.2 Sealing taught in schools

3.2.1 To what extent do children learn about sealing in school?

Out of my five interviewees among the students at GU Aasiaat, no one thought that they had learned anything about sealing in their *atuarfik*.¹⁶⁹ According to the questionnaires which I received from the first year students of GU Aasiaat, approx. 70 % (77 students out of 111 in total) thought that they had learned nothing or very little about sealing, seals, and sealskin processing during their school years. 17 % thought that they had learned *some* about sealing. Each of the five students that I interviewed had learned all they knew about sealing, seals and sealskin processing from relatives

¹⁶⁹ Interviews Student 1-5.

and friends. Out of the 111 students on GU Aasiaat's first year, 60 students (i.e. 54 %) said that they had learned *a fair bit* or *everything* about sealing from their parents or other family members. On the contrary, regarding what they learned in school, one informant says that she and her classmates merely looked at a couple of photographs in a book during some *Greenlandic* classes,¹⁷⁰ and other informants express that they have learned about Greenlandic nature in general during *Biology* and *History* classes.¹⁷¹

The extent ways children are taught about traditional Greenlandic knowledge vary from one school to the other as well as from the *atuarfik* in general to high-school in general. Since August 2012, the high-school curriculum of Greenland contains a specific class related to this issue, but the Greenlandic *atuarfik* is free to decide *how* they will teach their pupils about traditional Greenlandic knowledge. I will now lay out some current approaches to the issue of teaching children traditional Greenlandic knowledge.

3.2.2 One approach: culturally based teaching

When looking at the schedules in the Greenlandic *atuarfik*, it appears to be just like that of any other country, except that the pupils are taught Greenlandic as their mother-tongue, Danish as the primary second language, and English as a third language.¹⁷² Based on experiences and conversations during my fieldwork in Greenland, on the surface there seems to be little indication that the *atuarfik* is educating indigenous children in a country where the large majority of the population is indeed indigenous.

Rather cultural sensitivity to the indigenous Greenlandic background appears in the education as a *feature* which occasionally is brought into the teaching setting. Several *atuarfik* and high-school teachers that I spoke to during fieldwork explained how they are required by their various curricula to conduct *culturally based teaching*, i.e. that they in their teachings in Greenland should make for example gymnastics class have a Greenlandic twist such as kayaking and Inuit Games, and mathematics relate to the size of traditional turf huts. Although this *culturally based teaching* method surely makes all students at least *acquainted* with traditional Greenlandic ways of living, I

¹⁷⁰ Interview Student 1.

¹⁷¹ Interviews Student 4-5.

¹⁷² Ilinniarnermik Ilisimatusarfik 2011: 29-32, Pedersen 2009: 12-14, Goldbach 2000: 265.

argue that this way of conveying traditional Greenlandic knowledge in the school setting is merely an easy, popularised way to ‘pay respects to the indigenous background’ of the students. The fact that this merely makes students acquainted with pre-industrial Greenlandic life surely works better in Nuuk, of all places, where a larger amount of the population works in the service sector. However in places such as Uummannaq where the majority is involved with fishing and hunting,¹⁷³ this emphasises the difference between school curriculum and real life, and arguably to some extent alienates the students’ daily lives.

Even with the best intentions of recognisably placing the individual class within its Greenlandic setting, Greenlandic schools face another challenge in the fact that a large amount of their teacher workforce is foreign. In the *atuarfik* setting, approximately nine out of ten teachers are Greenlandic speakers,¹⁷⁴ but at the high-school level, it is difficult to recruit Greenlandic teachers. According to teachers at GU Aasiaat, many graduates from the University of Greenland prefer the better paid administrative jobs rather than working as high-school teachers upon finishing their studies.¹⁷⁵ Therefore the majority of high-school teachers are foreigners, among them a substantial amount are Danes, who are typically only teaching in Greenland for a couple of years before returning home.¹⁷⁶ A high-school teacher explains to me about the Greenlandic high-schools: ‘It is a “revolving door” kind of school ... where people just come and go, and in the worst cases, you can have three to four different teachers of Danish in three years.’¹⁷⁷ Teachers who have only spent a short while in Greenland may find it difficult to display a broad and deep knowledge of pre-industrial Greenlandic life and may struggle to incorporate a significant amount of *culturally based knowledge* naturally into their teaching.

¹⁷³ Interview Children’s Home Staff 1.

¹⁷⁴ Ilinniarnermik Ilisimatusarfik 2011: 57.

¹⁷⁵ Conversations with various teachers at GU Aasiaat.

¹⁷⁶ Email correspondence with Rector Flemming Guntofte Nielsen 30th of January 2013 confirms that currently there are 34 teachers at GU Aasiaat. Of these 6 are born in Greenland, 24 are born in Denmark, and 4 are born in other foreign countries.

¹⁷⁷ Interview Teacher 1.



Image 14: One pupil at *Gammeqarfik* here receives one-on-one teaching about the intricate beadwork of the national costume. Making the entire beadwork for a costume takes numerous hours for an experienced woman, but during her feature week this pupil will manage to draw and make a little 5x5cm patch of her own pattern while learning about the rest of the national costume as well.

When my student informants answer, as portrayed in the above section, that they did not learn much about sealing and hardly anything regarding other specifically Greenlandic matters in their *atuarfik*, these answers indicate that *if* students generally do receive this teaching in indigenous knowledge it is done in such way that actual results seem to vanish, at least according to the testimonials of these high-school students.

3.2.3 Another approach: feature weeks

At *Gammeqarfik* *Atuarfik* (from now on referred to as *Gammeqarfik*) in *Aasiaat*, pupils are taught about various aspects of traditional Greenlandic knowledge during a feature week rather than throughout the year.¹⁷⁸ During this week, the 4-7th

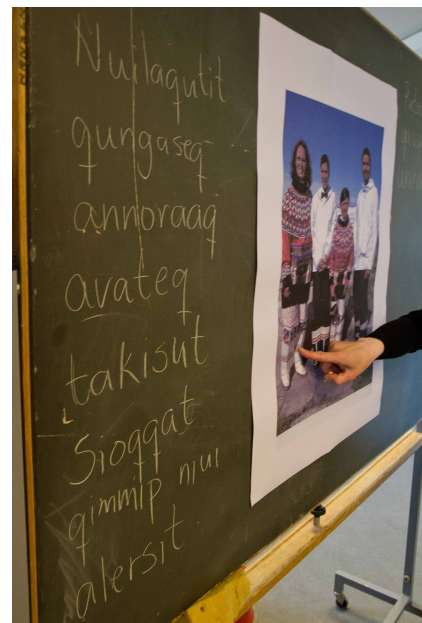


Image 15: Pupils at *Gammeqarfik* are learning the individual names for specific features on their national dresses. By practicing this every day, by the end of the week, they have among them memorised the majority of the names.

¹⁷⁸ Conversations with various teachers at *Gammeqarfik*.

grade pupils are taught in groups across the age groups about a particular topic. Depending on the theme, they will produce features to be presented and exhibited for their peers on the last day of feature week. As the feature week is a yearly scheduled part of this school's plan, the individual pupil will specialise in a new topic of their preference each year between 4th and 7th grade. Among the topics available in 2012 were: Greenlandic national costume, hunting tools, games, foods, myths/tales, historical timeline, toys, and finally kayaking.¹⁷⁹

Since the individual pupil is able to influence on which topic s/he will learn about during feature week, it is to be expected that the pupils will have an increased interest in learning as much as possible from what is on offer. As I listened to the pupils talking and watched them act and interact, it seemed, however, that this eagerness for learning traditional Greenlandic knowledge varied greatly from group to group and that for some pupils, this seemed merely a week of being exempted from regular classes. Since this particular feature week has only been introduced at Gammeqarfik in 2008, I unfortunately have no accounts of the learning results of these from informants at GU Aasiaat as the informants all attended 4-7th grade in their individual *atuarfik* before 2008.

3.2.4 What do the students themselves want?

Student 1 explains to me that it is really important that she and her peers learn about sealing. She thinks that there is no specific age which is more optimal for learning about sealing than other ages: 'I think all [grades]. I just think that we should learn about it! ... Just going out with a hunter and get to try it yourself. It could also improve by reading books.'¹⁸⁰ Although this could border on taking an activist's role, I proposed to her an idea of a class in 'Greenlandic Knowledge' where pupils could learn about traditional Greenlandic crafts such as sealing, seal skin processing, kayaking, making kamiks (seal skin boots), the national costume and foods, and learning how to survive on the inland ice. She liked my idea and said: 'I think this would be very interesting. ... It is who we are. And if it disappears then it will never return, uff. ... Life would be different then.'¹⁸¹ Interpreting this statement, it appears that to her, traditional Greenlandic knowledge is a solid part of being Greenlandic and

¹⁷⁹ Conversations with various teachers at Gammeqarfik.

¹⁸⁰ Interview Student 1.

¹⁸¹ Interview Student 1.

a loss of this as a people would not only be irreparable but also mean a different way of living.

Student 2 thinks that it is more important that students get to decide themselves if they wish to learn about it in school: ‘Those who would like to learn [sealing] should learn about it. I mean, it shouldn’t be something forced upon you. But if you wish to learn about [sealing], then you almost have a right to learn it too.’¹⁸² Apart from the right to choose whether they themselves wish to learn about sealing, he points to the issue that people at the governmental and administrative levels should respect these wishes and make sure that they are fulfilled. Regarding teaching sealing knowledge in schools, he has his doubts though: ‘In school, I don’t know. You can’t really do that – you can’t get out and experience it if you are with your school. You can’t hang out with others in school and then just flense a seal like that.’¹⁸³ He elaborates saying: ‘I mean, school is a bit rigid in that sense. But when you are out hunting with family and friends, then you’re often allowed to try.’ He explains how in school learning is a rather passive action where students do not get to try things themselves but rather watch someone else or merely have things explained. ‘It could be a bit of a bonus though in school. Then there wouldn’t be as many books, haha. ... But to learn about it in school – well, I might be a bit rigid too, but an education in seal hunting... There is not really anything you could use this for.’¹⁸⁴ He thus reveals that he, despite his deep interest in sealing, has no knowledge of the HFS, nor does he see the reason for it to exist.

Nevertheless, Student 2 does think that sealing is an important practical part of Greenlandic identity. It is just too bad though for those who do not have any relatives who can teach them sealing, he says. Student 3 disagrees with him:

I think that you should learn more about it in school. Because I think that there are many who don’t really know what it is today, the culture I mean. ... [Those whose relatives cannot teach them regarding sealing] should also have an option of learning about it in school and go out with a hunter.¹⁸⁵

Student 3 thus seems to think that everybody should have the option of learning sealing, at home and/or in school. Nevertheless, she stresses that there is a challenge

¹⁸² Interview Student 2.

¹⁸³ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Interview Student 3.

regarding teaching it in school as she too thinks that school often uses too passive of ways of learning:

People learn things in different ways. You can be a visual person ... E.g. I don't learn if I just read something, but if I *see* it or *hear* it then I learn more than by reading it. ... To watch [sealing] on TV would also be a good idea. Documentaries about how it is done.¹⁸⁶

In line with Student 2, Student 4 and 5 both state that sealing is not something you should learn in school. Rather, if you do not have relatives who can teach you, and you wish to learn, then they think that it is better if you learn about it from friends.

These attitudes are comparable well with the spectrum of attitudes that appear though the questionnaires from GU Aasiaat first year students in general. 63 girls out of 79 and 27 boys out of 32 think that sealing should be learned from parents.¹⁸⁷ However, the students responding to my questionnaires were allowed to give multiple answers on this question, and some, primarily girls, expressed that they would also like to learn about sealing in school, mainly through books, films/documentaries and excursions. Only two boys indicated an interest in learning about sealing in school at all. This is nevertheless not an indication that these students do not wish to learn about sealing altogether, as half of the students ticked off that they were *Mostly satisfied with what [they had learned] about sealing so far, but that [they wished] to learn more*, and only 1 out of 10 was *Fully satisfied* at this point in time.

It is worth noting that out of the 10 girls and 2 boys who expressed that they were fully satisfied, 6 expressed that they had little or no knowledge about sealing which means that these were happy to not know sealing and had no intentions of changing this fact. Teacher 1 expressed how s/he was aware of how prestige and being looked up to by their peers could easily affect how the individual student more or less publicly expressed an attitude towards traditional knowledge such as sealing.¹⁸⁸ I will debate this further in Chapter 4.

¹⁸⁶ Interview Student 3.

¹⁸⁷ Questionnaires collected at GU Aasiaat.

¹⁸⁸ Interview Teacher 1.

3.2.5 Kulturfag

Approximately 48 % of a year group in Greenland starts a high-school level education.¹⁸⁹ The age of the first year students vary greatly as students are accepted even after having spent years working or doing other things rather than going straight to school.¹⁹⁰ When time had come to reform the curriculum for the Greenlandic high-schools, two new courses were introduced: *Kulturfag*, *Science* and *Study Methodology*, to be started in August 2012.¹⁹¹ *Kulturfag* has been inspired from its Danish counterpart introduced as a course or as an elective at various upper secondary schools in Denmark as early as 1991.¹⁹² In Greenlandic high-schools, *Kulturfag* is introduced for the first year students from August 2012 as 6 weekly classes during the first 6 months of their high-school degree, followed by an oral exam in January if their particular class wins the *Kulturfag*-exam draw.¹⁹³

Teachers of this course are required by the curriculum to focus on four or more examples of cultures together covering all of the following three categories: *National* (Greenlandic pre-industrial culture), *Western* (e.g. Danish), and *non-Western*.¹⁹⁴ At the core of the course is the fact that the students have to comprehend the concepts of *egocentrism*, *stereotypes*, *cultural relativism* and most importantly *intercultural competence*.¹⁹⁵ Mastering these concepts, the students are believed to be better equipped for the miscommunications during cultural encounters or clashes they could experience, either when facing Westerners such as the Danes if they move to study or work in Denmark, or if facing Chinese engineers coming to Greenland to work.

It is up to the individual teacher *how* s/he ensures that the students learn these key concepts. Equally, apart from the obligatory Greenlandic culture, the 4 or more cultures that the individual class will work on during their semester of *Kulturfag* are to be decided by the teacher, or if s/he wishes, by the students.¹⁹⁶ There is no set reading list or number of pages for the course, and therefore, as long as each teacher makes sure that the students acquire the above-mentioned competences, s/he has a

¹⁸⁹ Roughly 546 out of roughly 1140 people begin a high-school level education in Greenland today. See Footnote 53, Chapter 1 for further details. All numbers are acquired from Statistics Greenland 2013a and Statistics Greenland 2013b.

¹⁹⁰ Field conversations with Rector Flemming Nielsen at GU Aasiaat.

¹⁹¹ Interview Teacher 2.

¹⁹² Ministry of Education 2001.

¹⁹³ Interview Teacher 1-2.

¹⁹⁴ Interview Teacher 2.

¹⁹⁵ Interview Teacher 1.

¹⁹⁶ Interview Teacher 2.

freedom of choice regarding teaching methods.¹⁹⁷ A teacher at GU Aasiaat deeply involved with *Kulturfag* as a course explains:

Since it is a completely new course, there are different understandings of what it is to contain because no one has any experience with it yet. ... [T]here are somewhat different interpretations of how much or how little of the Greenlandic culture, the course is to contain.¹⁹⁸

S/he explains how these different interpretations derive from the fact that some think that this course is to promote the Greenlandic culture, whereas others think that it should investigate the *concept* of culture. The curriculum merely says that *Kulturfag* should contain the Greenlandic culture, a Western and a non-Western culture, but as there are no percentages given, there are different understandings of *how much* of each part it should contain. Thus the ways the individual *Kulturfag*-teacher will handle the course varies extensively from teacher to teacher.¹⁹⁹ S/he furthermore explains that this course is meant as an *investigative* course where students are sent out to ask questions themselves of various informants or of other sources.²⁰⁰

Exactly this freedom to weigh the various parts as the individual teacher and students wish means that there naturally will be a significant difference in the results between classes with a History, Social Science, or Language teacher, and in regards to whether the teacher is of Greenlandic or non-Greenlandic background. A teacher of Greenlandic descent told me that s/he at first only regarded the course as a means to make sure that the students knew their own cultural background, but s/he has now realised that the course also deals with ‘the world around us’.²⁰¹ Nevertheless, s/he says: ‘we would also like to prioritise the oceans of options in Greenlandic culture which we can use as a starting point’, and explains how s/he sometimes catches him-/herself thinking: ‘We *are* in Greenland. And we *are* Greenlanders. And *the students* are Greenlanders. So why all this fuss?!’²⁰² S/he thinks that the main difference why Greenlandic and non-Greenlandic teachers generally focus differently in regards to *Kulturfag* lies in ‘how you perceive Greenlanders. If you have the perception of Greenlanders that they are stupid and that they are unable [to succeed], then of course

¹⁹⁷ Interview Teacher 2.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*

²⁰¹ Interview Teacher 3.

²⁰² *ibid.*

this also reflects on the students.²⁰³ S/he criticises the attitude that all students should strive to and expect to start a university degree in Denmark afterwards: ‘... not all the students are good [enough]. Many do other courses as an instructor at the teacher’s collage or another semi-long education. This is very normal. Not everyone is going [in the direction] of the university.’²⁰⁴ S/he disapproves of how students are expected to live up to these standards as they, in reality, go in all different directions afterwards.²⁰⁵

According to her/him, it is important that *Kulturfag* teachers should not perceive the Greenlandic students as not intelligent enough to see beyond the end of their noses and debate on abstract, intangible issues. Neither should they treat the students as if they were all going to enrol at a university in Denmark. Rather *Kulturfag* should emphasise and cultivate knowing one’s own culture. S/he stresses the need for the students to be able to really recognise and realise themselves: “‘Why am I acting like this, and why are the others acting like that? What *is* the difference?’”²⁰⁶ S/he thinks that *Kulturfag* should not just be dealing with oneself nor just dealing with others: ‘we have to meet midway.’²⁰⁷ Teacher 1 is worried about whether s/he and her/his fellow teachers manage to find and stay in balance with this midway line: ‘Often people tend to navel-gaze too much and think that your own is good, that actually it’s the best. [Rather, the students] should travel and get alienated and live in an alienated world to find that home is within themselves.’²⁰⁸ Nevertheless, s/he then addresses a challenge related to moving away or travelling: that those who return to their hamlet may then feel alienated from their home place after having lived a different way in the city or in another country: ‘[There are too many who believe] that you can go traveling, attend high-school and get cultivated and educated, and that you can perhaps study in Nuuk or in Denmark and *then* return to your hamlet’. Not only does Teacher 1 here stress the fact that the student may feel alienated and frustrated with the different opportunities of life in a hamlet as opposed to in a city. S/he furthermore points to the fact that other inhabitants may no longer understand the student and clashes may occur. This is where, s/he thinks that *Kulturfag* could provide tools for solutions to students’ future possible challenges: ‘If you perhaps return home and encounter

²⁰³ Interview Teacher 3.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *ibid.*

²⁰⁸ Interview Teacher 1.

problems in regards to having returned, then if you're conscious about it then it is never as bad, because then you know [why you react].²⁰⁹ According to Teacher 1, self-awareness is the first step to solve these challenges.

S/he sums up *Kulturfag* as a course which should work as a tool for the students to begin to understand themselves better 'from a Greenlandic perspective and in a Greenlandic perspective. Even though it is said that you should be able to expand the identity concept and understand your own identity in a global context.'²¹⁰ Contrary to others, who argue that students should learn about their Greenlandic cultural background during their *atuarfik*, s/he argues that the Greenlandic society is moving so fast nowadays that you cannot expect all children to keep up with their own development while growing up as human beings.²¹¹

While the Ministry of Education in the Self-Government is trying to find the right outline for the Greenlandic version of *Kulturfag*, some teachers of Greenlandic background are worried that this is another Danish invention inflicted on Greenlanders, regardless of whether the Self-Government is conscious of this or not. S/he is very critical to the fact that the Danish variant has been such an influence or at least inspiration for the Greenlandic *Kulturfag*:

When 'Mother Denmark' changes, then 'the child' Greenland also has to be changed. ... Should we continue to whine that we are postcolonial – a synchronised culture? Or that we are new, that we can accomplish things ourselves, and that we want to do it ourselves? We use all of these questions in *Kulturfag*.²¹²

Here, s/he first offers a critical view of what s/he perceives as the reason for the introduction of *Kulturfag* in Greenland. Then, s/he uses this argument to provoke Greenlanders to change their view point in look within themselves, and rediscover themselves as a people rather than to continue to 'be postcolonial' as expected, perhaps more by Greenlanders themselves than by others.

3.2.6 Hunting & Fishing School

A school in Greenland, which to my judgement stands out as remarkably Greenlandic as opposed to Danish, is the vocational HFS in Uummannaq. Here, each

²⁰⁹ Interview Teacher 1.

²¹⁰ *ibid.*

²¹¹ *ibid.*

²¹² Interview Teacher 3.

year, two classes of seven students each go through a two-year education programme which prepares them for lives as occupational hunters and fishermen.²¹³ Although they usually come straight from the *atuarfik*, the students do range from 16 to 40 odd years, but HFS considers age differences when they select the students for each cohort and prioritise younger students.²¹⁴ The vast majority of students are male, and among the first-year students of 2012-2013, only one student is female.²¹⁵ Students come from all over the country, mainly from hamlets and smaller towns and, as Larsen, a Southern Greenlander himself, explains, ‘most often, the students we get here are some who are not doing so well in the *atuarfik* in the theoretical courses, but it also often is students who are more interested in getting out into the open and get to use their hands.’²¹⁶

The current structure of HFS is that the school year is separated in periods of two-and-a-half months, interchanging between a theoretical period at the school and a practical period in the workshop and out hunting or fishing.²¹⁷ Throughout the two years at HFS, the students also have periods of practical experience where they are paired with a hunter/fisherman and follow him in his work. This periodical division of the education does, however, not succeed to keep up with the weather conditions, which, apart from an on-going climate change, vary from year to year. This is a problem which we will debate further in 4.4.6 ‘An indigenised future version of the Hunting & Fishing School’. It is relevant to mention that HFS was recently established in 2009, along with another vocational school named *Kvindeskolen* (translatable into *Women’s School*) in Sisimiut in early 2010 where they teach seal skin processing and fabrication of the national costume,²¹⁸ in order to, according to Larsen, keep aspects of the traditional Greenland going.²¹⁹

The courses they are taught in HFS are all related to either fishing or hunting of both land and sea wildlife, and rather than focusing on its local setting, HFS works as a national school, taking local types of prey into the teaching no matter if they only frequent the landscape near Qaanaaq in the high north or near Qaqortoq in the deep

²¹³ Interview Ole Larsen.

²¹⁴ *ibid.*

²¹⁵ *ibid.*

²¹⁶ *ibid.*

²¹⁷ *ibid.*

²¹⁸ Kalaallit Nunaata Radioa 2010.

²¹⁹ Interview Ole Larsen.

south of Greenland.²²⁰ As Larsen points out, neither HFS nor the students themselves can predict where the students will settle down in the future so the teaching should optimally prepare the students for hunter and fisherman life anywhere in Greenland. The location in Uummannaq in the middle between the Qaanaaq and Qaqortoq is very good, according to Larsen, as it allows for 8 months of open-water fishing and hunting and 4 months of ice-covered fjords and the animal variety is greater here than other places in Greenland.²²¹

HFS not only teaches actual hunting methods, but also fishing net making, maintenance of tools and weapons, hygiene, and cooking of dishes with all kinds of catch. ‘The youth of today do not really care to make food. But then they find out that they actually *can* do it and that it is much better to exchange the minced beef with a mix of reindeer and musk ox meat,’²²² Larsen says, ‘and then we are making lasagne, beefsteak mince and burger with musk ox, instead of the rubbish you can buy readymade in the stores.’²²³ Larsen explains how it is important that the school shows the students that it is not just old-fashioned kinds of food which can be made from a Greenlandic catch, but that hip international kinds of cuisine can be made cheaply with locally available types of prey. This way, the students are familiarised with the possible products of their labour and the hunting and fishing trade shows that it keeps up with the times.

3.3 Importance for Greenlanders as a people to learn sealing

When looking at why it matters that Greenlanders, and youths in particular, learn about traditional ways of living, we have been separating the answers into two sets: the personal ones and the collective ones, the latter being those dealing with Greenlanders as a people. Now, we will look at the implications for the people as a whole; in other words, from a collective perspective. These two perspectives do share similarities, merely on different levels.

²²⁰ Interview Ole Larsen.

²²¹ *ibid.*

²²² *ibid.*

²²³ *ibid.*

3.3.1 Sense of common cultural background

Having the same foundational knowledge of your country's background and history can provide the individual with a feeling of having something in common with his/her countrymen. Despite differences in livelihood, location, lifestyle, hobbies, political affiliations etc., Greenlanders can find a common history, cultural heritage and an explanation of how they are *as a people*; an explanation of what is typically Greenlandic. This common cultural background lays a foundation for the *sense of belonging* which can make the individual feel that s/he fits in within the mass of Greenlanders, and that these actually form a group distinct from others; i.e. that they are of Greenlandic nationality and therefore stand out from other nationalities with their similar backgrounds, despite their dissimilar daily lives. This sense of nationality is what social anthropologist Benedict Anderson describes in his renowned book *Imagined Communities*. '[R]egardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each [country],' Anderson states about these nationwide group formations, 'the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.'²²⁴ Anderson argues that the notion of this comradeship and national community is illusory and even to a certain degree invented as a tool for nationalism to get the country's people to unite. Nevertheless, despite the fact that it is merely an *imagined* community, it *is* a strong power which unifies the people. Thus, as sealing is generally seen as a typical Greenlandic matter,²²⁵ I argue that it works as a unifying factor, and that this unison of Greenlanders would become stronger if the common knowledge on sealing rose to higher levels. Student 1 said to me: 'I think we should definitely learn more about sealing. It is our culture. I don't want it to disappear. ... It would be sad [if it disappeared]. ... It is what makes us who we are.'²²⁶ By this statement, this student stressed the importance of learning sealing *for her people* rather than for her as an individual. She underlined how sharing knowledge on sealing was one of the things which strongly shaped Greenlanders as a people and thus unified them.

3.3.2 Globalisation dissolving Greenland's previous remoteness

A relatively high number of Greenlanders choose to move away from Greenland for a period of time or for good; many of these to Denmark. According to the

²²⁴ Anderson 1983: 7.

²²⁵ As dealt with in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

²²⁶ Interview Student 1.

Greenlandic newspaper *Sermitsiaq*, as of January 2010, approximately 15,000 people born in Greenland, by Greenlandic or Danish parents, are now living in Denmark.²²⁷ Furthermore, through media such as television, film, music and the internet, expressions of foreign cultures, predominantly Danish and American ones, influence the Greenlandic youth.²²⁸ Although as mentioned in Chapter 2, tourism is still relatively low in Greenland in comparison to other countries, the amount of tourists is now increasing with the climate change and an increase in international ecological and environmental attention on the Arctic, and Greenland in particular.²²⁹ According to Anders la Cour Vahl, a senior consultant at Greenland Tourism and Business Council, Greenland annually now receives 30,000 cruise tourists, which is four times as many as merely ten years ago, and 35,000 visitors by plane.²³⁰ Although many of these primarily visit Ilulissat for its accessibility to the world-renowned icefjord by the same name, tourist agencies arrange a range of tours ‘to the real Greenland’ and ‘to get close to the Greenlanders’.²³¹

Thus the average individual Greenlander will encounter more foreigners from an increasing number of different nationalities. Seen on a collective level, Greenlanders may like to consider how they wish to be perceived by and to behave around this increasing number of foreign visitors. Similar issues arise when receiving the many foreign workers which a boom in the number of oil drilling and mining businesses will create.²³² From 2005 to 2011, the number of mining exploration permits granted rose from 33 to 75.²³³ Largely non-European nationalities represented among the mining companies, Greenland is expecting to receive thousands of Chinese guest workers before long.²³⁴

With the relatively large and increasing number of foreigners within the small population of approximately 57,000 Greenlanders, the people as a whole may have to actively work to maintain cultural traits and the sense of their cultural heritage and of their identity as a people. When I asked Student 3 whether Greenlanders who do not know much about sealing are less Greenlandic, she answered: ‘In a way, yes. Our

²²⁷ Redaktion 2010.

²²⁸ Langgård 2001: 41-42.

²²⁹ Almas 2012.

²³⁰ la Cour Vahl quoted in Almas 2012.

²³¹ *Official Tourism Site of Greenland*.

²³² Economy Watch 2010.

²³³ Global Data 2012.

²³⁴ Els 2013; Halskov & Davidsen-Nielsen 2012; Oehlenschläger 2012.

culture disappears so fast, I think. For example in Nuuk, there are so many Danes and foreigners ... It is probably where there are most “Danish Greenlanders”.²³⁵ By terming them, boys especially, ‘Danish Greenlanders’ she indicated in a saddened tone that they *behaved* almost as if they were Danes rather than Greenlanders.

3.4 Conclusion to chapter

This chapter has dealt with a second level: the educational level. Aspects have been dealt with regarding Greenlanders *as a people* rather than as individuals, which as a topic was dealt with in Chapter 2. From my experience, largely through interviews and questionnaires, pupils generally learn nothing or very little about sealing in the *atuarfik* today. Various modes of teaching the children traditional Greenlandic knowledge is carried out in different schools. Some schools choose *culturally based teaching* where matters and livelihoods prevalent in Greenland in pre-industrial times are brought into everyday teachings, such as kayaking lessons in *Gymnastics* and calculating turf hut sizes in *Mathematics*. Other schools have *feature weeks* where these teachings are placed within one week’s schooling, focusing on certain themes in an intensified way. Although the vast majority of students though my questionnaires expressed that they wished to learn about sealing from their parents, only few thought that sealing would be good or even possible to learn within the school setting. This, however, I argue is due to their current perception of respectively sealing and the school system.

In the first year of high-school, the newly introduced *Kulturfag* with a curriculum rather open for the individual teacher’s interpretation leaves teachers of various scholarly and ethnic backgrounds with conflicting opinions on what exactly the purpose is for this course. HFS equips young Greenlanders in order for them to become occupational hunters and fishermen. Nevertheless, learning sealing could be useful for Greenlanders as a people in general as it can work as a unifying factor in regards to their *imagined community* and to remember who they are as a people while the numbers of tourists and guest workers continue to grow.

²³⁵ Interview Student 3.

4. Administrating a modern people with traditional knowledge

*Today the most interesting task
is to preserve the roots and traditions of Greenland
and to incorporate new technology and values.
The choice is neither for tradition nor innovation. It is both.*²³⁶
– Ib Goldbach 2000: 270.

4.1 Introduction to chapter

Learning sealing seen in relation to the administrative/governmental level as well as on a worldview level is the focus of this chapter. First, I will discuss whether indigenous knowledge is silenced out of the present day school system. Then, I will discuss the frustrations that the individual and the Greenlandic people may feel due to being both traditional and modern at the same time. Finally, I will discuss how the school system could be indigenised and the future of sealing as a trade in Greenland.

4.2 Silencing out indigenous knowledge

As we saw in Chapter 3, high-school students at GU Aasiaat give a clear impression that sealing, seals and sealskin processing are not matters which are dealt with in the Greenlandic school system. ‘In our school, we didn’t learn anything about hunting,’ Student 2 tells me. The large majority of my student informants do not feel that they have learned anything or perhaps only a very little bit about these aspects of traditional Greenlandic knowledge during their years of school. On the other hand, if one had asked the individual school principles or the teachers carrying out the lessons, these might have given a different answer; possibly one about how traditional Greenlandic knowledge *is* included in the education. The problem is that there are no measurable results. Despite all the good intentions from the administrative and the educative levels, on the local level – among the youths – there are, according to my data (cf. Chapter 3) no visible effects regarding traditional Greenlandic knowledge. Rather, the Greenlandic school system appears to lack a visible presence of traditional

²³⁶ Goldbach 2000: 270.

Greenlandic knowledge in course lists and syllabuses to an extent that I would argue that it is as if it had been *silenced out*.

Silencing out matters completely has been done before in other countries where an indigenous population is governed by a non-indigenous majority. One example, well-known in circles of Postcolonial Studies, is Australia, where the Aboriginal viewpoints and to a large extent presence was silenced out of the Australian History books until the 1970s and 1980s when Australian historians and other scholars started an lengthy debate on Australia's history, referred to as *The History Wars*.²³⁷ 'The easiest and most "natural" form of racism in representation,' Australian indigenous scholar Marcia Langton argues, 'is the act of making the other invisible.'²³⁸ Thus, by omitting certain topics from the school curricula – practicing what Australian anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner terms as a 'cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale'²³⁹ – it was believed that this would over time be completely forgotten.

In a similar way, sealing could be believed to become a forgotten livelihood in Greenland if left unnoticed in the school curricula while generations of Greenlandic youths spend more and more time on schooling rather than with their families. By making Greenlandic youth spend such large parts of their time within the classrooms, the Greenlandic Government, whether conscious of this or not, eliminates the spare time Greenlandic youth need to learn the knowledge of sealing. This knowledge is necessary to be a successful hunter that can live on their hunting skills. If the Greenlandic Government at the same time makes sure to omit sealing knowledge from the school curricula, then it is *silencing out* sealing from the educations of the new generations of Greenlandic citizens.

This *silencing out* of sealing, practically and symbolically, is in between a conscious act and a subconscious side effect. Nevertheless it can be perceived as a mental devaluation of an indigenous way of living, not practiced by a non-indigenous counterpart. In this situation (cf. the discussion in 'Greenland's unique indigenous situation' in Chapter 1) it is actually done by a certain part of the indigenous population of the country: the Greenlandic politicians.

Thus, this is not solely an indigenous issue but a class issue. As Indian literary theorist and philosopher Gayatri Spivak indicates in her essay 'Can the Subaltern

²³⁷ Reynolds 1999, Carter 2006: 69, Stanner 1974: 23.

²³⁸ Langton 1980-81: 24 .

²³⁹ Stanner 1974: 25.

Speak?’,²⁴⁰ the voices of the lower classes are ignored in acts of *epistemic violence*, i.e. their knowledge are dismissed as irrelevant or unimportant. In this context, the classes which I wish to focus on are academics (such as teachers and politicians²⁴¹) versus non-academics (such as hunters and fishermen). The enemy of the lowest classes in Greenland is no longer of foreign heritage but rather of their own nationality and culture; often different from them in regards to growing up a city in the south rather than in a hamlet in the north. Thus, in the Greenlandic context, not only do the voices of the indigenous ways of living in Greenland need to be represented in the Greenlandic school system, they need to be the voices of sealers themselves and not merely the voices of sealers translated and represented by school teachers and academics.

It is the politicians who are Greenlandic themselves who from a governmental and administrative level perform acts of *silencing out* indigeneity in the Greenlandic school system. It likewise is teachers, who are also Greenlandic, who by omitting symbolic Greenlandicness from their teachings in a sense make their students more ‘Danish’, or at least more ‘non-Greenlandic’, in the end. Why do these Greenlanders themselves silence their own people’s indigeneity? Is it merely explained by the fact that the Self-Government practices a very centralised fashion of government, which gives little space for regional decision-making or influence, as both Sejersen and Dahl term it?²⁴² Or is it that there is a lack of understanding between the Self-Government and the local communities, as Arntzen indicates in her master’s thesis?²⁴³ I argue, based on my impressions during my fieldwork, that the answer is also connected to frustrations that may come with a dual sense of identity inherited from the development of Greenland as a country, which means that its people live in ways of both traditional and modern expression at the same time.

²⁴⁰ Spivak 1988

²⁴¹ I am aware of the fact that not all politicians have an academic background, but for the sake of simplicity I choose to generalise this here.

²⁴² Sejersen 2002: 8, Dahl 2000: 234-242

²⁴³ Arntzen 2011: 43-45

4.3 Frustrations with dual identity: traditional and modern at the same time

From time immemorial, Greenlanders have lived as seal hunters and fishermen, living on Greenlandic nature. Since the 1960s, the industrialisation has developed and escalated,²⁴⁴ and today, Greenland is a modern society with large imports and exports as well as all the service tasks which being a modern industrialised nation entails. Nevertheless, sealing and fishing are still clearly important trades for Greenland, being the largest market for export.²⁴⁵ However, being a modern people while practicing traditional indigenous livelihoods seem to be in paradox for many as it appears to me through my fieldwork.

From the smallest indirect comments to the clearest grand proclamations which I received from my informants or casual locals with whom I had conversations during my field work in Greenland, all of these statements on Greenlandic society and way of life seemed to underline the notion that you cannot practice traditional knowledge and be a modern Greenland(/-er) at the same time; that there is no room for this duality. This notion brings us back to the discussion of the connotations of the words ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ (see Chapter 1), where ‘traditional’ may be perceived as ‘backward’ and other negative things. Thus, naturally, no one wishes to be perceived as ‘backward’ by others, and therefore individuals may choose to downplay, hide, or even deny knowledge they may have on sealing and other traditional livelihoods.

4.3.1 Others perceiving the status of the individual

Since it matters to many how others perceive them, and since knowing about sealing and fishing is seen as traditional and to an extreme example as ‘backward’, individuals may choose to downplay, hide or deny their knowledge on these trades. Denial of one’s indigenous background is unfortunately a common feature among a range of indigenous peoples. E.g. among Norwegian Sámi, Social anthropologist Harald Eidheim points out how people ‘attempted to hide their Sámi identity because social ambitions were directed at an apparently mono-cultural Norwegian society where Sámi cultural skills were of no use.’²⁴⁶ This denial of indigenous background

²⁴⁴ Fleischer 2003: 62-68.

²⁴⁵ Economy Watch 2010.

²⁴⁶ Eidheim in Olsen 2007: 79.

and specific knowledge such as that on sealing may happen as well among adults as among school children. Regarding the latter, one of my teacher informants expressed that s/he felt that this denial of knowledge was taking place among his/her students during *Kulturfag* classes: none of them would reveal any special knowledge on sealing when encouraged to do so, as it was not ‘in’ among the students to know about these ‘old-fashioned’ livelihoods.²⁴⁷ Anthropologist Jens Dahl claims that sealing gives more prestige as opposed to working for a salary.²⁴⁸ However, I would argue that this tendency may have shifted completely between his fieldwork period of 1980-1996 and now, as well as between the sealer informants of one generation and my high-school student informants of another generation. When it is not considered ‘cool’ to be a nerd regarding sealing or fishing, this corresponds well with current trends of materialism. The fact that sealing and fishing are trades with low income currently, it logically is therefore not ‘cool’ to hint that your family is involved with these businesses.

Equally, how the individual believes foreigners to perceive his/her status also affects his/her relationship to his/her own knowledge on sealing. Based on my fieldwork, the previous state as a colony of Denmark and the stamp as a traditional country still sticks in the minds of the Greenlander. The individual will typically constantly work to disprove these connotations. Thus, to prove especially to foreigners that Greenland is a modern country, it is perceived that dealing with traditional business should be downplayed and rather modern activities should be stressed. Many Greenlanders whom I talked to during my fieldwork added the phrase ‘Greenland is a modern country’ sometime during our conversation resulting in my impression that perhaps it was a phrase which could not be stated too often.

4.3.2 Perception of identity as one-sided

In the above examples, a certain perception becomes clear, namely that an individual (and country alike) can only have *one identity*, and therefore not portray indications of being both traditional and modern at the same time. In fact, this perception of identity as one-sided is of Western origin. Oxford English Dictionary describes identity as a ‘distinct impression of a single person or thing presented to or

²⁴⁷ Interview Teacher 1.

²⁴⁸ Dahl 2000: 135-136.

perceived by others’, the ‘sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances’, ‘continual sameness, lack of variety, monotony’ and ‘oneness’.²⁴⁹ Nonetheless, many have now come to the conclusion that identity is multifaceted, and thus the opinion that it is not possible to be traditional and modern at the same time could arguably be seen as a non-indigenous perception which has subtly been imposed upon Greenlanders by Danes or other foreigners.²⁵⁰

Equally, it could thus be seen as a Western perspective which has been imposed on the indigenous people of Greenland when high-school students tell me that sealing lessons would not fit into the school system. This simply shows that the school system as it is currently appears too rigid and conservative in its framework to make room for indigenous knowledge such as sealing. This is the case to such an extent that to even *think* of fitting traditional Greenlandic knowledge into the system is impossible for some of my student informants. ‘School is a bit rigid in that sense. When you are with your friends and family, you get to try yourself, but when you are in school often ... you are not allowed to try. Not very often at least,’ Student 2 says.

Obviously, learning about sealing extensively would not be something students could do solely by reading books and watching documentaries in the classroom. Learning sealing and other traditional Greenlandic knowledge would require practice, just like craft classes or music classes, and practice would from a certain point onwards need to take place far from the school buildings and be out on the sea/ice. I argue, however, that a substantial amount of the practice could also take place in the school as hunting practices, e.g. sneaking in on a sunbathing seal on the ice, could be simulated and practiced in the school yard for precision before the next step would be real life hunting. Furthermore, shooting ranges could be arranged for in the school basement, and computer simulation games could imitate the open sea for which to look for seals popping on the surface somewhere on the 360 degree horizon. (I will get further into details on alternative modes of teaching sealing practically and symbolically in schools in the ‘Levels of indigenising the school’ later on in this chapter.)

Possible obstacles therefore would not be regarding the *actual acts* of fitting sealing knowledge into the Greenlandic school system, but rather the immediate

²⁴⁹ Oxford English Dictionary 2013.

²⁵⁰ For further debate on a dichotomy of Western vs. Greenlandic and indigenous vs. non-indigenous see Chapter 1.

obstacle of people's *perceptions* of sealing and of education. What is interesting in this case is that it is not a colonial power whose mind would need to be altered, it is the mind of indigenous people themselves. Through my interviews and observations during my fieldwork it seems that the attitude of the Greenlandic people towards an education system has become assimilated to Danish perceptions of an education system. From an outsider's perspective, it may be perceived as if Greenlanders do not realise how they in a sense are excluding their own indigeneity from the school system and thereby running a school so 'Danish' in its appearance that it could arguably be situated in Denmark rather than Greenland.

Instead of perceiving indigeneity and traditional knowledge as something which would function as an obstacle for being a 'modern' person, I would argue that it should be embraced as *complimenting* rather than *compromising* conditions. To be thinking that an indigenous background cannot fit in a modern world would be a narrow-minded view of reality. Postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha describes modern postcolonial nations as hybrids in themselves as 'the modernity of Western national society is confronted by its colonial double'.²⁵¹ Thus, Greenland is confronted by different images or faces of herself: one modern as the Western countries she mirrors herself in, and one traditional and indigenous in her livelihoods, mentality, art expressions etc. Greenlanders as a people, and equally as individuals, should acknowledge their own hybridity in this sense and therefore its various *identities*. The particular expression of an identity will be highlighted depending on the situation and issue. Similarly, Greenland could start 'recognizing the fluid and contextual nature of all identities, including Indigeneity'.²⁵²

4.3.3 Varying indigeneity in urban and rural Greenland

As social anthropologist Jeffrey Sissons states, no culture is completely homogenous, neither are indigenous cultures.²⁵³ On the micro level, among peers growing up in the same hamlet, there are wide differences in people's perceptions on and expressions of culture and indigeneity. Naturally, perceptions and expressions vary too between Greenlanders living in either rural or urban areas, and due to Greenland's physical distances and environmental differences also between the North

²⁵¹ Bhabha 1988: 221.

²⁵² Oxenham et al. quoted in Paradies 2006: 276.

²⁵³ Sissons 2005: 30-33.

and the South of Greenland. Sissons points to the fact that '[d]ifferences between the daily lives of urban and rural indigenous people can be as great as the lives of indigenous people and others living within the post-settler state.'²⁵⁴ Now, keeping in mind that Greenland is a different indigenous nation (cf. 1.2.6 'Greenland's unique indigenous situation' in Chapter 1) where merely few non-Greenlanders live, I would rather like to highlight the fact of the different ways of living. Urban Greenlanders live in industrialised societies of which a majority are situated along the south-western end of Greenland. Rural Greenlanders, on the other hand, such as in Uummannaq generally live in communities where fishing and hunting are the main occupations, although often supported by a wife's income from working in the public sector as e.g. a teacher or a nurse.²⁵⁵

Sealing is a typical indigenous Greenlandic matter and, based on my conversations and interviews with rural Greenlanders, urban Greenlanders in places such as the capital Nuuk do not practice sealing to the same extent as their rural counterparts. However, I do not argue that urban Greenlanders are less indigenous than rural Greenlanders. Rather, these Greenlanders are expressing their indigeneity in different ways.

Sissons describes a problematic 'out-of-place'-label which is put on urban indigenous peoples by others as such: 'Indigenous people are expected ... to be primitive, to live simply and close to nature. Urban indigeneity is, therefore, regarded as an anomalous condition for indigenous people. When indigenous people make new lives in towns and cities they become people out of place.'²⁵⁶ Thus, others may judge them as 'impure' and 'inauthentic' people who have 'sold out to the West'.²⁵⁷ These *others* could be both foreigners such as Danes as well as their rural countrymen, and thus the urban Greenlanders end up as 'an excluded middle'.²⁵⁸ The ironic thing is that by excluding urban Greenlanders from the notion of indigenous Greenland, the rural Greenlanders actually fall into a trap dug by the colonialists who once occupied their country, because as Sissons stresses: 'the *very question* of indigenous authenticity has deep roots within colonial racism.'²⁵⁹

²⁵⁴ Sissons 2005: 34.

²⁵⁵ Interview Children's Home Staff 1.

²⁵⁶ Sissons 2005: 39.

²⁵⁷ Sissons 2005: 40, Patrick Wolfe paraphrased in Sissons 2005: 39.

²⁵⁸ Patrick Wolfe paraphrased in Sissons 2005: 39.

²⁵⁹ Sissons 2005: 42-43.

Rather, as stated above, I argue that urban Greenlanders find alternative ways and arenas to express their indigeneity; an indigeneity which they most likely regard differently than their rural-based countrymen. Among the James Bay Cree in Canada, anthropologist Harvey A. Feit explains, a religious ceremony connected to hunting, called ‘The Shaking Tent Ceremony’, has changed numerous times over the years in connection to a changing hunting environment and not least to the tools which the hunters have used.²⁶⁰ Feit argues that when in certain periods the hunters did not need the ceremony to give them luck in hunting, then the frequency of the ceremonies declined.²⁶¹ This was, however, not an abandonment of traditional practices, but rather that the particular *expression of culture* was put aside for a while when it was not needed.²⁶² Feit furthermore points to the importance of keeping in mind the processual changes which constantly take place in all cultures, and that re-interpretation of traditional practices are common.²⁶³ As anthropologist Tim Ingold reminds: ‘Just because people are doing things differently now, compared with the way they did them at some time in the past, does not mean that there has been a rupture of tradition or a failure of memory.’²⁶⁴

4.4 Future of sealing

4.4.1 Important also for urbanised Greenlanders

Depending on who is offering a prediction of the future of sealing as a trade, the question is answered in varying ways. Critics of sealing as an important Greenlandic trade could ask questions such as: When fewer and fewer people today live in these areas and work with sealing and fishing, why should we see it as something we typically do? Indeed, none of the five students whom I interviewed have fathers or grandfathers who work as occupational seal hunters. However, the number of private fishermen and hunters have declined with the tightening rope of policies and quotas,²⁶⁵ not merely by themselves. Equally, depopulation of the hamlets and remote

²⁶⁰ Feit 1994.

²⁶¹ *ibid.*: 304.

²⁶² *ibid.*: 289.

²⁶³ *ibid.*: 306-309.

²⁶⁴ Ingold 2000: 147.

²⁶⁵ Interview Ole Larsen.

districts is happening not just naturally with the passing time but rather as a result of urbanisation politics implemented by the recent governments.²⁶⁶

Nevertheless, just because an increasing number of Greenlanders live in larger towns and cities, and fewer people work as occupational hunters, this does not mean that sealing symbolically has lost its importance as a Greenlandic trait. ‘It is just so us,’ as Student 1 said to me. Sissons argues that indigeneity is not lost nor forgotten once the person leaves the place where indigeneity has usually been practiced or carried out in daily life. Neither is it a question of loss or abandonment of traditions, but rather that these find new ways to be expressed in the altered setting and it is therefore rather a *relocation* of indigeneity.²⁶⁷ Thus, sealing practices need not necessarily be abandoned, neither physically and especially not mentally, merely because Greenlanders choose to move to the city.

4.4.2 Decolonisation of the mind

Nevertheless, as argued previously in this chapter, it appears, through my interviews, conversations in the field and visits at various museums, that sealing is perceived as something of the past; of a romanticised past and not of a tangible present. Accepting the presence of sealing even symbolically as an important part of today’s Greenland may seem too big a mouthful to swallow for some, those who indeed feel themselves removed from the romanticised image of the past which they have in their minds.²⁶⁸ In my view, it is as if the academia of Greenland relates to their own people’s past as a distant matter and as if sealers were a stone age people living thousands of years ago. They are described as a people that could be described and displayed in museum (such as in Knud Rasmussen’s House in Ilulissat), with barely anything to do with the current ways of living. It is as if, they perceive sealing as a *static* thing of the past, rather than as an equally dynamic part of their culture today.

Sissons, an advocate of how all cultures are dynamic and none can be completely static, describes how indigenous elites who had been educated in Europe then, following their countries formal independence, ‘embarked upon projects of “modernization” and “development” that targeted their “backward” fellow

²⁶⁶ Interview Ole Jørgen Hammeken.

²⁶⁷ Sissons 2005: 63.

²⁶⁸ *ibid.*: 9.

citizens.²⁶⁹ Although Sissons here speak about peoples mainly throughout Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East, I would argue that Greenland to a certain extent could be experiencing the same thing. During colonial times, while practicing a ‘danification’ of Greenland, Greenlandic school children were forced to go to Denmark as a part of their schooling.²⁷⁰ Throughout the world, indigenous children have been imposed to assimilative schooling, as Sissons explains: ‘Children became the particular targets of assimilative separation with the introduction, in the nineteenth century and early twentieth, of forced education programmes.’²⁷¹ To some indigenous children, this imposed schooling meant forcible removal from parents and placement in boarding schools or missions far away from their homelands. To others, it ‘merely’ meant denial in the use of their indigenous languages and learning just non-indigenous practices and teachings.²⁷²

To this day, Greenlandic academics often receive substantial parts of their education in Denmark as the University of Greenland has only offered a limited amount of degrees,²⁷³ and just within the last couple of years started offering more than certain bachelor degrees.²⁷⁴ Due to this widespread practice of receiving education in Denmark, Danish mentality can be expected to have influenced the minds of Greenlandic academics and their perception of their own indigenous culture. As Sissons explains, ‘[o]ne of the founding beliefs of settler nationhood was the assumption that indigenous cultures were less advanced,’²⁷⁵ and since ‘[c]ivilization implied the disappearance of indigenous cultures, either through a “natural” dying out of indigenous peoples or through their absorption by the new culture’,²⁷⁶ I argue that either consciously or subconsciously the Greenlandic academia has believed that the traditional and ‘backward’ aspects of Greenland would simply disappear over time.

Greenlandic children growing up in hamlets are today forced to move from their parents to towns which may be large distances from their hamlet to attend the last 4 years of their obligatory *atuarfik*-schooling. This way, the politicians consciously or subconsciously prevent children from learning sealing to a satisfactory extent from

²⁶⁹ Sissons 2005: 21.

²⁷⁰ Rud 2009: 29.

²⁷¹ Sissons 2005: 86.

²⁷² *ibid.*: 85-112

²⁷³ Langgård 2001: 38-39, Interview Teacher 1+3.

²⁷⁴ Woodard 2008, *llisímatusarfik*.

²⁷⁵ Sissons 2005: 28.

²⁷⁶ *ibid.*

their parents. Forcible removal of children has, especially in the past, had a rather explicit impact in many indigenous communities throughout the world. Some governments have acknowledged this and officially apologised, as Prime Minister Kevin Rudd did to the *Stolen Generations* in Australia in 2008.²⁷⁷ Although the explicit removals may have come to an end, I argue, however, that implicit and indirect removals of indigenous children still take place. When you leave parents with no other choice than to send their children to far away towns e.g. in order to complete obligatory schooling, is this not an indirect forcible removal? Speaking of past forcible removals of indigenous children in general, Sissons says:

The loss of children from indigenous communities was often physical and symbolic; physical, in that the children were abducted by state authorities or forced to attend distant boarding schools, and symbolic, in that children became culturally alienated from their families and home communities. The dispossession of children was intentionally aimed at limiting the inter-generational reproduction of indigenous cultures.²⁷⁸

This may be an effect which the Self-Government is not aware of, i.e. as Ingold said about administrations: ‘It did not occur to them that such displacement might rupture the continuity of tradition or cut the people off from their pasts.’²⁷⁹

Therefore, the first step in the process, if rural and urban Greenlanders should be reconciled, would be to *become aware of* and *acknowledge* these indirect consequences of current policies. As I perceive the present situation, the biggest challenge lies in the vast physical and mental distances between rural and urban Greenland: ‘when we compare rural with relocated indigeneity we are not contrasting the static with the dynamic. We are, instead contrasting locations – both physical and social’, as Sissons argues.²⁸⁰

A next step would be to actively start *thinking otherwise* and ‘viewing the world through a lens of indigenous ways of knowing, rather than reading about and thinking about [it], from the position of the observer.’²⁸¹ Furthermore, it is to accept that sealing and traditional Greenlandic knowledge and ways of living are all a part of present day Greenland. This would not be to return to the past in any regard, rather it is cultural reappropriation and in other words an example of what Sissons terms as

²⁷⁷ Rudd 2008.

²⁷⁸ Sissons 2005: 28-29.

²⁷⁹ Ingold 2000: 147.

²⁸⁰ Sissons 2005: 65.

²⁸¹ Grieves 2008: 308.

‘reimaginings of the future.’²⁸² The politicians of the Self-Government would need to find ways of connecting to and maintain alliances with rural Greenland, other than merely being their fellow countrymen and democratically elected political representatives. By doing these things, rural and urban Greenlanders together would find or create new ways of expressing Greenlandicness.²⁸³

4.4.3 Indigenising the school

In the process of creating new ways of expressing Greenlandicness, upon *thinking otherwise* and connecting rural and urban Greenlanders, a next step, one crucial one, would be to indigenise the school system.

If the aim is to bring in sealing knowledge, practically or symbolically, into the school system, let us first sum up the differences between *indigenous knowledge* such as sealing and *scientific knowledge* that are the foundation of other subjects in school. Agrawal categorises three major differences, namely: *substantive*, *methodological/epistemological* and *contextual*.²⁸⁴ The *substantive* difference lies in sealing knowledge’s direct and obvious close connection to its practical use, in comparison to that of other subjects. In the *methodological and epistemological* difference, Agrawal points to the different ways biologists and e.g. sealers understand, collect and react to seal population numbers. Finally, in *contextual* difference, Agrawal refers to how indigenous knowledge is more deeply rooted in and interconnected with its context than scientific knowledge is. Nevertheless, we must remember as we saw in 1.2.7 ‘Knowledge compared: “traditional” versus “Western” versus “indigenous”’ that the two kinds of knowledge are not that distinctively different from each other due to years of influence of one another.

Although sealing neither practically nor symbolically may at first glance appear to ‘fit’ into a school system, I argue that this would be possible if people on the governmental and administrative levels would be willing to listen to sealers, *think otherwise* and work towards reaching a compromise which suits both sides equally. In the fourth paragraph of the above section 4.3.2 ‘Perception of identity as one-sided’, my simple suggestions could work as examples of such compromises. In reality, the school system today would be flexible enough to incorporate sealing if the

²⁸² Sissons 2005: 11.

²⁸³ *ibid.*: 82

²⁸⁴ Agrawal 1995: 418.

governmental and administrative people would prioritise this enough and, equally important, earmarked the necessary money for this endeavour.

4.4.4 Levels of indigenising the school

Nonetheless, if Greenland would indigenise its school system, there are of course several levels to which this could be done. One could be merely to ensure that *feature weeks* such as the one at Gammearfik are actually prioritised and carried out as an important part of perhaps not merely the middle years of children's *atuarfik* schooling, but also the primary years and the final years.

Another could be to introduce a course titled e.g. *Greenlandic Knowledge* throughout the ten years of *atuarfik* where everything from myths and songs, sealing, fishing, the national costume, survival in the wild, and through to debates on national identity, stereotypes, and cultural clashes can be dealt with, according to the age of the pupils. This could prepare the pupils for *Kulturfag* at high-school while giving a foundational knowledge of their cultural background for the pupils who do not continue to high-school. People at the governmental and administrative levels may argue that this is already taking place, but as I show through my interviews and questionnaires with high-school students in Aasiaat (see Chapter 3), the results are clearly missing and thus I argue that the actual implementation is not done to a satisfying extent.

Finally, beyond the introduction of a course, schools could furthermore allow for those who are interested to do elective courses on the final years of *atuarfik* where they are able to dive deeper into a certain part of *Greenlandic Knowledge* and specialise in this. Here, pupils who are interested in learning sealing with more practice could choose to do so, whereas pupils who are not interested in sealing could stick with their more general knowledge from the obligatory ten-year *Greenlandic Knowledge* course.

4.4.5 Critiques of teaching sealing in schools

During my flight from Greenland to Denmark, I was seated next to a biologist who worked with seals on a national and international level. He soon criticised my proposal of teaching sealing in schools, as he asked what would be the point of doing this? To his experience, the immediate result would merely be a high increase of seals

being wounded rather than properly killed and that this would not only be animal cruelty but also dangerous for the seal population.

Through conversations with me, several hunters, academics and individuals with knowledge on seals have, however, independently claimed that seal populations in general in Greenland are healthy and that they would not be in danger even with an increased number of occupational and pastime sealers. I will not go into specific seal population numbers in this thesis, but merely point to this as being an example of a clash between indigenous and scientific knowledge (cf. Agrawal quoted in paragraph two in the section ‘Indigenising the school’ above).

I would not argue that the biologist would be completely wrong when he predicts a possible increase in the number of seals maimed. However, I do not agree with him either that this could be the only outcome. With an increase of knowledge on seals and correct seal hunting, it is possible that the youngsters who go sealing for fun and those who know little about sealing but hunt anyway would not merely hit their targets but would actually kill the animal. To shift the outcome from the former to the latter, I argue that along with passing on sealing knowledge it would be crucial to foster respect for wildlife among the youth; in other words, to teach them ethics too rather than merely methods of hunting. Neither a Greenlander nor any other human can be expected to live up to the fantasy of ‘noble savage’; the idea of a man described by social anthropologist Arne Kalland as a ‘primitive man [who] lives in harmony with nature and only harvests the minimum to cover nutritional and socio-cultural needs, thus living a life uncorrupted by the forces of money.’²⁸⁵ This duality in learning traditional knowledge such as sealing is according to Kalland expressed by Berkes as: ‘[I]n order to secure sustainable use of resources, people must have (1) relevant local ecological knowledge with an appropriate technology, and (2) possess environmental ethics that inhibit their urge to over-exploitate (Berkes 1988).’²⁸⁶ Kalland stresses however that unfortunately experience has taught us that ‘...neither profound knowledge about the environment nor sound environmental ethics, is sufficient to prevent degradation of natural resources.’²⁸⁷

It seems to me, however, when the biologist and others criticise a suggestion for Greenlandic youth to learn more about sealing in school, that they have forgotten to

²⁸⁵ Kalland 2003: 162.

²⁸⁶ *ibid.*: 170.

²⁸⁷ *ibid.*: 171.

consider the many levels in which this could be carried out. On one hand, it could be extensive teaching where the students learn how to hunt successfully. On the other hand, it could be on the more *symbolic level* as it is intended to be today, where sealing rather than being a practical knowledge becomes a knowledge which is foundational for understanding one's cultural background.

Another critique which could follow the suggestion of indigenising the Greenlandic school is that by promoting this, I am expressing essentialism in the sense that I would be arguing that Greenlandic children should be taught along traditional lines at all costs. Rather, I wish, in line with Australian scholar Vicki Grieves,²⁸⁸ who debates the balance between essentialism and acts of defining what is aboriginal culture, to point out that it is important for the Greenlandic youth to be made aware of their cultural background: this forms a foundational understanding of how their core values and little habits are different from those of Danes and other foreigners. Meanwhile, as Grieves also points out,²⁸⁹ this is not to say that there is one amorphous mass of Greenlanders as individuals too differ from one another. Thus, it is not specifically practical sealing as such which I promote to be taught in school, but rather sealing symbolically; as a representative or an example of traditional Greenlandic livelihoods.

4.4.6 An indigenised future version of the Hunting & Fishing School

Though some might say that HFS is in itself a representative of an indigenisation of the school system, in its current state it has to change shape to be fully able to live up to the expectations there are in the school; in other words, its contents and methods as of September 2012 do not exactly fit the intentions behind the school. From its founding in 2009 and until now, it has been structured the same way as other vocational schools. This does not work as well for HFS though because practical parts of the teachings, e.g. going seal hunting or fishing, are highly dependent on season and weather. Rather than a rigid system of periods, Larsen promotes a new structure where *flexibility* is the key.²⁹⁰

From email correspondence with Larsen four months after my fieldwork, I learn that it has now been decided by the Ministry of Education that HFS will move to

²⁸⁸ Grieves 2008: 300

²⁸⁹ Grieves 2008: 300

²⁹⁰ Interview Ole Larsen

similar facilities, albeit in Sisimiut, the second-largest town in Greenland with approximately 5,400 inhabitants, situated 420 kilometres towards the south of its current location in Uummannaq.²⁹¹ This relocation, Larsen states, will be beneficial for the school as they will have even more species of animals and fish to hunt or catch, and they will be much less dependent on the sea ice to form in the global warming affected winters as Sisimiut provides more connection points with overland routes and easy access to frozen fjords.²⁹² Larsen expects that the new location will be used starting in August 2013, and that simultaneously, his reformation of the school's structure will be complete.²⁹³

Furthermore, the school is merging with the Maritime School²⁹⁴ in Nuuk which means that HFS no longer has to train their students in international regulations for preventing collision at the sea, navigation and law of the sea themselves, as the students have a maximum 2 month period of exchange at the Maritime School where these subjects will be taken care of. Rather, HFS can focus more on the practical parts regarding hunting and fishing.²⁹⁵

Larsen wishes that their students will balance hunting and fishing more so that hunting will not merely be a sideline, but a main source of income again. He plans to reach this goal by teaching people how to make profits on seals and other types of prey. A visionary and ambitious man, Larsen intends for HFS to be a role model for hunters by starting a local production of what the students capture. 'There are great possibilities for local production. They are very great. We can really get products into the stores, if we play the cards right. There is a lack of knowledge in the local communities about how to do these things ... and this is where *we* can help.'²⁹⁶ As the situation is now, hunters can sell their capture at the local stand, called *Brættet*,²⁹⁷ set up in almost all towns where some inhabitants do not hunt themselves. *Brættet* is often a simple, unsupervised, semi-open shack, where hunters can cut up their capture and sell it piece by piece or by the kilo to passers-by shortly after the hunt. With its casual feel, the hygiene and prices at *Brættet* are accordingly low; I experienced kilo

²⁹¹ Email correspondence February 2013 Ole Larsen.

²⁹² *ibid.*

²⁹³ *ibid.*

²⁹⁴ Presently located in Paamiut in the southern end of Greenland; will following the merging move to Nuuk, according to email correspondence February 2013 Ole Larsen.

²⁹⁵ Email correspondence February 2013 Ole Larsen.

²⁹⁶ Interview Ole Larsen.

²⁹⁷ *Brættet* is a unique Greenlandic term albeit giving an everyday Danish word new meaning. Translatable into English as 'The Plank' or 'The Board'. My translation.

prices of around 20 DKK. Higher levels of hygiene in themselves are a demand which is steadily growing for consumers to buy anything at *Brættet*.²⁹⁸ Larsen is hoping for HFS to grow in size and capability, and for HFS to be able to host courses for people outside the school too. By spreading knowledge on how to get your products into the stores, Greenland as a whole will be more self-sufficient regarding meat products. By starting to act locally and then moving on to a national, and perhaps one day international, scale, Larsen intends for HFS to not merely work as a local actor in the future, but to inspire and be a role model for hunters all over Greenland.

For HFS to be able to progress towards this vision at all, however, it is crucial for them to get the understanding and support of the politicians. At the present state, they even have to convince the politicians that there *is* a future for sealing as a trade in Greenland, and that HFS needs money for expanding the needed extra staff and equipment.²⁹⁹

4.4.7 'The modern hunter' improving Greenland's self-sufficiency

By turning the individual hunter into a vendor who sells his capture (most likely united with others to be able to deliver on a steady basis) to stores on a national level, hunting would change from being an individual matter into a commercialised business. According to Kalland, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) distinguishes between commercial whaling and indigenous subsistence whaling, the latter being where it is not just nutritional needs, but also other essentials such as social and cultural needs that are met through hunting. Kalland criticises this distinction between the two:

The commercial hunters are depicted as brutal and greedy. ... Commercial native hunters are creating distortions in this picture; in order to remain authentic, native hunters must be protected against the corrupting influences of money and the market. They have to remain 'uncivilised', and at the annual IWC meetings the Alaskan [Inuit] have to document that they have not sold whale products on the commercial market.³⁰⁰

Rather than perceiving indigenous hunters as someone who cannot and should refrain from thinking about profit, I agree with Kalland that we need to open up more for hunters 'in the middle': commercial native hunters.

²⁹⁸ Sejersen 2002: 15.

²⁹⁹ Interview Ole Larsen.

³⁰⁰ Kalland 2003: 170.

Paving the way for commercialised sealing would not be an example of co-management, I will argue. Anthropologist Paul Nadasdy describes and criticises co-management for among other things to be an extension of the power of the state.³⁰¹ Rather than working as an extension of the state, I argue that it introduces local actors to the scene. Although, Nadasdy does have a point when claiming that ‘these processes might instead be seen as subtle extensions of empire, replacing local aboriginal ways of talking, thinking and acting with those specifically sanctioned by the state.’³⁰² Nevertheless, in this particular context, I will argue that the locals would ‘play by the rules’ of capitalism of their own industrialised indigenous society rather than live up to Nadasdy’s description of altering one’s indigenous culture dramatically for the sake of co-management.

On the contrary, a project such as the one Larsen proposes would turn sealing into an economically benefitting business with a bottom-up approach; an approach which Nadasdy describes as rational and cost-effective.³⁰³ Rather than continuing to fight what seems like an endless battle against international lobbying organisations which persuade governments and trade organisations to prevent the sale of sealskin on the international market, sealers could instead choose this approach, a different angle on their challenges. Furthermore, this move could work as an “empowerment” of the local populations by giving them a meaningful role in planning and implementing projects that will directly affect them.³⁰⁴ Not only could seeing their own products in the supermarkets be a compliment in itself, they will also earn more money to pay their bills. Thus being a hunter would in general earn more prestige and be more favoured by future generations. On a national level, an economic difference could possibly also be felt, as Larsen explains: ‘And suddenly, we have a bigger income from the capture and a better consumption, and an import-reducing consumption. We have so many resources which are not being used, and many which can be used much more efficiently.’³⁰⁵ In addition to the strict quotas on all wildlife apart from seals, which the Greenlandic government and international alliances are responsible for, Larsen thinks that sea and land animal populations should not be a hindrance for a possible increase in the number of sealers. On the contrary, he points to the mindset of

³⁰¹ Nadasdy 2005: 223-225.

³⁰² *ibid.*: 228.

³⁰³ Nadasdy 2005: 216-217.

³⁰⁴ *ibid.*: 217

³⁰⁵ Interview Ole Larsen.

the people. The Greenlandic people would need to change the way that they perceive the hunting practice and the people working as hunters. As Larsen philosophically concluded our interview: ‘I think that a rise [in the number of sealers] is very possible, as commercial hunters. The modern commercial hunter. The modern hunter.’³⁰⁶

I myself agree with Larsen that the number of occupational sealers could possibly go up in the future if certain conditions would be met: 1) the mind of the Greenlandic people would be decolonised in the sense that they start perceiving sealing as an occupation on level with other professions in the modern Greenland rather than a relic from the past. 2) The Greenlandic politicians would prioritise supporting and cultivating sealing through HFS and through ensuring higher income possibilities for hunters by a) higher prices offered for sealskins, b) more accurate population estimates ensuring fairer quotas, and c) though advocating for Greenlandic hunters internationally so international quotas are fairer and not least so that Greenland could export of seal meat and seal skin products. 3) Finally, those Greenlandic hunters who wish to actively work for a higher income themselves may have to become ‘the modern commercial hunters’ which Larsen is referring to, namely hunters which sell their products not just at the local *Brættet* but in stores nationally and internationally.

4.5 Conclusion to chapter

In this chapter, we have dealt with the two outer rings of Berkes’ model (see Figure 1, pg. 8): the administrative/governmental level and the worldview level. As it appears in Chapter 3 based on my interviews and questionnaires, sealing and other forms of traditional Greenlandic knowledge are currently left out of the school system. In other words, indigenous Greenlandic knowledge is *silenced out* of the school system as an act of *epistemic violence*. This thesis has not focused on whether this is being done as a conscious act or if it happens indirectly as a subconscious side effect due to heavy inspiration from the Danish school system. Rather, I stress the importance of realising this, and acknowledging how these acts of silencing out can be connected to the frustrations the individual and the collective Greenlanders seem to have from being both traditional and modern at the same time. Built on the belief that identity is one-sided, it appears to me that to some Greenlanders it seems a paradox

³⁰⁶ *ibid.*

and to some extent an impossible duality to be a people who *both* hunt in traditional ways, albeit with the latest technology, *and* at the same time live as a modern people with democracy, school system, bills, internet etc. I argue that it would mean a positive development if the mind would be decolonised regarding sealing so that it is not perceived as a static thing of the past. It would also be positive if politicians would ensure possibilities for higher incomes for sealers so sealing as an occupation is not looked down upon as livelihood connected to poverty.

Furthermore, for Greenlandic youth to know their cultural heritage, they could be familiarised with sealing and other traditional knowledge through their schooling since this is where a large part of their time is spent. Indigenising the school system can be done to various extents, but in order to reach all, it is important that both high-schools, HFS, and not least the *atuarfik* would be indigenised individually, according to the conditions and needs of the individual type of school. It is equally important, however, to not merely teach the youth about methods of hunting but also ethics regarding seals and sealing. To avoid falling into the trap of perceiving indigenous people as naturally being ‘noble savages’, it would be important to foster respect for wildlife when hunting is being taught.

I argue that sealing as a profession does have a future in Greenland *if* it is being allowed to change into an alternative and more commercial form and *if* it is being prioritised mentally and economically by Greenlanders at the governmental and administrative levels.

Finally, I stress how it is crucial to distinguish between various ways and extents of teaching sealing to Greenlandic youths, e.g. a detailed and practically oriented level and on the other hand a symbolic level. Rather than having an essentialist’s goal of making Greenlanders stay indigenous at all costs, I argue that it is important that Greenlandic youths at least have a foundational knowledge on their cultural background and that this could be ensured through e.g. learning about sealing.

5. Concluding remarks

Throughout this thesis, a range of topics and dilemmas have been explored, all relating to sealing, traditional knowledge, identity, education and learning, being ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’, and indigeneity in Greenland today. These issues were relevant to deal with to answer my main research question, namely:

In which ways is learning ‘traditional’ Greenlandic knowledge such as seal hunting a strengthening factor for the awareness of being Greenlandic today?

The symbolic strengthening of identity and awareness of cultural heritage by means of learning traditional Greenlandic knowledge generally appears as though it can be seen as a result of actions and attitudes on four levels similar to those Berkes lists in *Sacred Ecology*.³⁰⁷ His model (see pg. 7) thus works as a tool to explore and analyse the answers to my research question and subsequent questions at various levels and perspectives of the Greenlandic society. For the purpose of this study, it would appear as such:

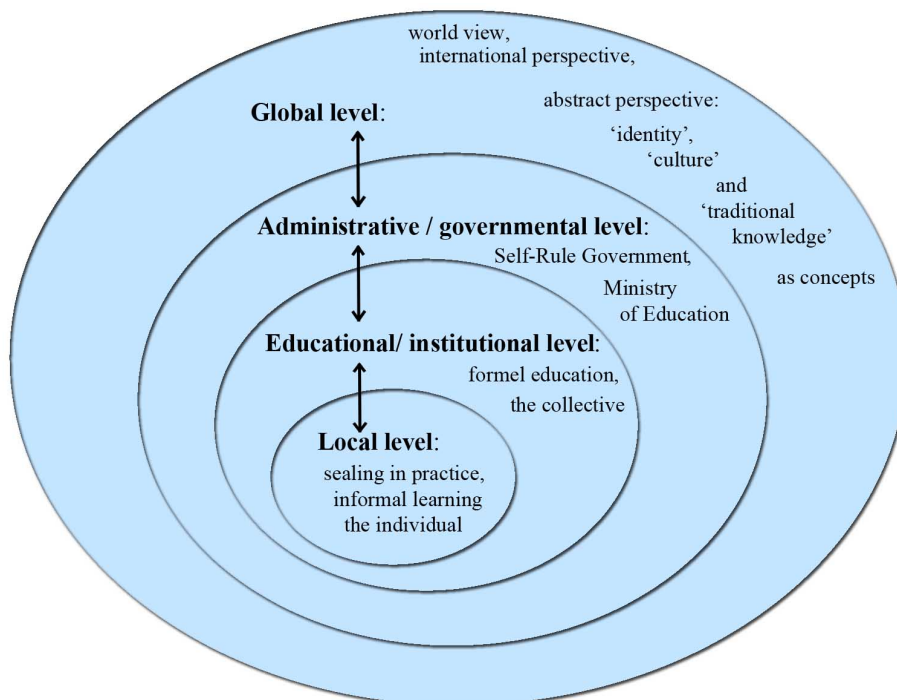


Figure 2: My rendition of Berkes’ model on traditional ecological knowledge

While the four levels influence each other greatly, they also depend on each other and to some extent share similarities. The questions asked in this thesis tend to relate primarily to one or two levels rather than all four.

³⁰⁷ Berkes 2012: 17-18.

The Greenlandic youths' knowledge of sealing and traditional Greenlandic culture is situated on the local level where the youths are influenced by informal learning through parents or parental substitutes such as the staff of the Children's Home. Technically, the Children's Home is an institution and therefore to be placed on the second level of the model, but in this thesis I have chosen to regard them rather as parental substitutes than as an unaffected and mechanised institution.

The local level is to a great extent influenced by the education system (at the second level of the model) through schools as these occupy much of the time which children previously spent with their families. This level is what I term as *the collective level*; the level regarding the Greenlanders *as a people*. On the third level, administrators as well as the Ministry of Education and other Self-Government politicians in turn control the education system. They are, nevertheless, influenced by the current worldview (fourth level) and attitudes of other governments on a global level. This fourth level furthermore deals with how matters such as sealing, traditional knowledge, indigeneity, and being a traditional and a modern people are perceived on an abstract or symbolic level, as well as how local attitudes towards these can influence on an international or global level. Thus, the influence from one layer to another also goes the other direction and the levels can be seen as highly interrelated.³⁰⁸ As we see, the interviews I made with teachers at *GU Aasiaat* would belong on the second level in the diagram above where the interviews with students would belong on the first level. The interview with HFS's leader Ole Larsen, the leader of HFS, provided answers on the same areas and level as the interviews with the high school teachers, albeit from a different perspective.

5.1 Why focus on sealing in present and future Greenland?

Sealing has along with other types of hunting of sea and land wildlife as well as fishing been a vital livelihood for Greenlanders from time immemorial up until modern times' imports of food and industrialisation.³⁰⁹ Sealing, and whaling, are both practiced in very few countries across the world today and the large majority of my informants expressed that these two are still today considered 'typically

³⁰⁸ Berkes 2012: 17.

³⁰⁹ Fleischer 2003.

Greenlandic'.³¹⁰ As one of many kinds of traditional Greenlandic knowledge, sealing is therefore the focus of this thesis as one of the expressions of traditional knowledge which are continuously important both on a *practical* and on a *symbolical* level. Sealing today is practiced merely as a hobby for most Greenlanders, and residents of larger towns, especially Nuuk, may not consider sealing as an important part of their identity or Greenlandicness. However, in provincial areas such as Uummannaq sealing is an important part of life, both on a tangible and an abstract level.³¹¹ A range of ceremonies revolve around sealing, an example being how a child's first seal caught is celebrated with a *kaffemik*, and furthermore sealing as a symbol expression of Greenlandicness could be argued to live on in a subtle way in a range of emblems such as kamiks, the *uluk* (knife), and jewellery and decorations with seal features despite a possible lack of practical expression. Finally, as Feit and Sissons argue (see pp. 67-68), traditions and practices are more or less practiced in various periods, and the changes in frequency and expression does not mean that the practice in question dies, but rather that it alters with time.

Sealing as a practical matter too can change continuously, depending on a range of factors such as the development of tools, the economical conditions and quotas which are controlled by the politicians and international organisations, and not least what the young generations learn about sealing.

5.2 How much do children learn about sealing today?

Greenlandic children are in theory able to learn about sealing both through informal learning (i.e. on a local level) and through formal education (i.e. on the educational/institutional level). Of my five student informants, all five expressed that they know at least the basic knowledge of sealing and all five have either caught a seal themselves, often assisted by their fathers/uncles, or have participated in processing the seal.³¹² Although none of their fathers work as occupational hunters, sealing trips have been a substantial part of these five Greenlandic youths' growing up.³¹³ Among their peers at GU Aasiaat's first year, slightly more than half estimated

³¹⁰ Interviews Students 1-5, Children's Home Staff 1-2, Ole Larsen .

³¹¹ Interview Children's Home Staff 1.

³¹² Interviews Students 1-5.

³¹³ *ibid.*

themselves that they had learned *a fair bit* or *everything* about sealing, seals and sealskin processing from their parents or other family members.³¹⁴

In contrast, regarding sealing as taught through formal education, none of my five student informants think that they learned anything about sealing in school.³¹⁵ Similarly, 70 % of the first year students at GU Aasiaat agree with them that they have learned *nothing* or *very little* about sealing during their schooling. Only 17 % feel that they have learned *some*.³¹⁶ The staff at Children's Home too concur that it is in their experience that the children there learn hardly anything related to sealing during school. Rather they learn these things on the weeklong trips in the wild that the Children's Home arranges every year.³¹⁷

Thus, although Greenlandic youth today may learn much less about sealing than generations before them, the ways in which they do seem to learn about sealing is by joining their families (or the Children's Home) on sealing trips.

5.3 How and why is sealing a strengthening factor for the identity?

Fluctuating between being purely symbolical or done in rather practical way, learning sealing is a strengthening factor for the identity of young Greenlanders both as individuals and as a collective group. Learning about sealing along with all other traditional Greenlandic knowledge, gives Greenlandic youth an awareness of their cultural heritage, a foundational to their individual identities. They gain explanations of the ways in which they differ culturally from other peoples around the world. Their culturally-inherited habits, sense of humour, lifestyles, pride of catching their first seal, traditions such as *kaffemik* etc. can potentially cause a feeling of cultural clash when meeting Danes or other foreigners, either in Greenland or internationally. If they *know* their cultural heritage and how their background differs from that of others, this awareness can assist them in coping with the frustrations which the experience can cause.³¹⁸

³¹⁴ Questionnaires collected among GU Aasiaat's 111 first year students.

³¹⁵ Interviews Students 1-5.

³¹⁶ Questionnaires collected among GU Aasiaat's 111 first year students.

³¹⁷ Interviews Children's Home Staff 1-2, Ole Jørgen Hammeken.

³¹⁸ Interviews Teacher 1-3.

Second, if knowing their cultural heritage by obtaining awareness about traditional Greenlandic knowledge such as sealing helps answering questions such as ‘who am I?’, especially in instances when the family background is complicated or unknown by the individual.³¹⁹ Many of the children at the Children’s Home come from families where things have gone wrong, and knowing sealing and other kinds of traditional Greenlandic knowledge does in some cases help in filling a void in the children’s sense of belonging.³²⁰

Third, learning sealing and other traditional knowledge offers a self-confidence boost for Greenlandic youths. At the Children’s Home and HFS, many youths are not among the best learners of academic knowledge, and their struggles in school may bring them down. Learning something tangible, practical and instantly useful such as sealing can give them more self-confidence.³²¹ The practical perspective and method of learning sealing furthermore present an alternative to the academic learning in school and would assist as a balancer for these students.

Fourth, those who do not put their knowledge of sealing into further use during their adult lives can still benefit from possessing this and other kinds of traditional Greenlandic knowledge as it provides them with insight to traditional Greenlandic livelihoods which in certain areas of Greenland today too are common ways of life or play a prominent part in these. Here, an awareness of traditional Greenlandic knowledge nurtures an understanding and empathy which would be useful in a range of different jobs, be they as midwives, teachers, police officers or politicians.³²²

Furthermore, learning sealing and other kinds of traditional Greenlandic knowledge would offer a sense of a *common background*, despite difference in present lifestyles, political views and location. This sense of common background, consisting among others of common history and common cultural heritage would offer examples and expressions of how Greenlanders are *as a people*. This awareness of their country’s *Greenlandicness* could, in line with Benedict Anderson’s theories on *imagined communities*, assist as a support as Greenland becomes an independent and international actor.³²³

³¹⁹ Interviews Children’s Home Staff 1-2, Ole Jørgen Hammeken.

³²⁰ *ibid.*

³²¹ *ibid.*, Ole Larsen

³²² Interview Children’s Home Staff 2.

³²³ Anderson 1983.

Finally, Greenland's tourism as well as booming oil, mineral and rare earth industries are bringing an increasing amount of foreigners to Greenland.³²⁴ This does not only mean that the individual Greenlander will meet more foreigners on Greenlandic soil, but also that Greenland as a nation has to increasingly take into consideration how it as a country is being perceived by others.

5.4 Why learning sealing is important based on a global and academic indigenous perspective

In the past, young Greenlanders in general learned traditional Greenlandic knowledge through informal learning from their families and others. Today, young Greenlanders spend much of their time in school rather than with their families. Furthermore, Greenlandic youth now learn less about sealing and other traditional knowledge than previous generations. These two trends could be related while depending also on other factors. Indirectly denying young Greenlanders the possibility of learning sealing and other traditional Greenlandic knowledge by making them spend much time in a school and making it undesirable for Greenlanders to be occupational hunters would be an action which could be regarded as *silencing out indigeneity*. This policy of *silencing out* could be somewhere inside the blurry middle area between being a conscious act and an unintentional side effect. Nonetheless a mental devaluation of an indigenous way of life, this policy is not practiced by a powerful non-indigenous group within the Greenlandic population but by a certain part of the indigenous population of the country, namely, the Greenlandic politicians.

Learning sealing could provide the Greenlandic people with possible examples and expressions of a common cultural heritage and unite Greenlanders as a people with a feeling of national identity. Additionally it is important to set an example internationally of a modern indigenous nation, balancing expressing aspects of being a traditional and a modern people at the same time. The fact that Greenland could become the first independent indigenous country in the world today³²⁵ means that Greenland could embrace this as an opportunity of being a role model for other countries and indigenous peoples in regards to passing on traditional knowledge.

³²⁴ Global Data 2012, Els 2013, Almasy 2012.

³²⁵ United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe 2013 .

5.5 What would be the obstacles for teaching sealing in school?

As it appears today, based on my fieldwork in Northern Greenland, there would be various obstacles if the Self-Government and the Greenlandic people wished to teach a traditional Greenlandic knowledge such as sealing in school. These obstacles relate mainly to the individual level of the four mentioned above regarding Figure 2 (see pg. 82), but they also have various either connections, both strong or more indirect, to the other three levels and not least of all to one another.

As Greenlandic youths today spend much of their time in school rather than with their families, the immediate challenge of teaching children sealing and other traditional knowledge is to be able to fit it into the school frame. In this regard, the compromise calls for attention to both the physical and mental conditions. Depending on the extent to which teaching sealing is desired, i.e. rather symbolic or more towards a practical approach, the physical use of schools as they are shaped today will prove a challenge to the more practical approach of teaching sealing. To name an example, it would be much easier to teach hunting methods in a symbolic way than giving the children actual shooting experience in the current fit into the physical frame of present schools to teach hunting methods in a symbolic way than giving the children actual shooting experience. The more practical the focus, the more this teaching has to be prioritised economically in the school schedule and supported by politicians as well as school administrations.

Nevertheless, in order for this prioritising to take place, a *decolonisation of the mind* regarding the school would be needed. As my student informants conveyed to me through individual interviews, sealing does not really seem to *belong* in the school system. Rather, as one expressed, school is mostly related to reading books rather than learning practical knowledge such as sealing. Thus, if sealing were to be taught in schools people (including politicians) would first have to alter the way in which they perceive the school system in the direction of a school which is more inclusive to non-academic knowledge such as sealing and e.g. handicrafts. In turn, in order for *this* decolonisation of the mind regarding the school system to take place, a new perception of sealing would also need to take place amongst the people, including the politicians. As it appears today, based on my interviews and conversations with locals, sealing is perceived as something of the past rather than something modern.

Working with sealing and knowledge of sealing therefore seems to conflict with the self-image of being a modern people. There is thus an obvious conflict between possessing *traditional* knowledge and at the same time being a *modern* people. For sealing to have a future where it is more common and more accepted and respected as an occupation, a decolonisation of the mind would therefore be called for. Nevertheless, this possible future would also only be possible if the economic conditions for sealing as an occupation are improved through political actions.

Finally, there is the inevitable fact that there is not *one* Greenlandic wish nor *one* Greenlandic identity but rather a multitude of these. Highly varying geographical and ecologic differences between different locations in the vast Greenlandic landscape produce different people with different needs and wishes, and within the same community, these vary as well. To assume one collective wish, need or identity would be wrong. Therefore answers to all the questions in this thesis can really only represent the respective people whom I interviewed, and perhaps to some degree their communities, but not the whole of Greenland.

5.6 Conclusion

Based on my interviews in Aasiaat and Uummannaq, young Greenlanders can strengthen their awareness of sealing in the following ways. By learning a traditional Greenlandic knowledge such as sealing the awareness of personal and common cultural heritage and how Greenlanders are *as a people* can be strengthened. Furthermore, this learning can fill a void in the sense of belonging to one's locality and Greenland as a country, and provide possible answers to the question of 'who am I?' Additionally, it can work as a booster of self-confidence, especially if the individual is not suited for academic studies as such requires a balance to academic learning. Finally, learning sealing can lay the foundation for an understanding of and empathy for fellow Greenlanders, even if not directly usable as an occupation or hobby for the individual.

Returning to Berkes' model of traditional ecological knowledge, he employed his four levels as entities relating an individual to traditional knowledge in interrelated ways. My variation of Berkes' model, on the other hand, and how I put it to use, takes the four levels both as *entities* that each relate to sealing as a traditional knowledge and also as *perspectives* from which sealing can be perceived.

Levels:	Entities:	Perspectives:
Local	Children, parents, sealers etc.	Individual
Educational/Institutional	Schools	Collective
Administrative/Governmental	Government, administrators	National
Global	International organisations	Abstract

Figure 3: Levels, entities and perspectives at the various levels of the model 'Figure 2'

The individual and collective perspectives, respectively on the first and the second level, mainly deal with how learning sealing in a symbolic or a practical way strengthens the identity seen in an individual's and a collective's perspectives. Nevertheless, the individual perspective furthermore focuses on the economical aspects of sealing, as do the national perspective, merely from their respective points of view. Finally, sealing as symbolic and practical expressions is viewed as an articulation of the *concepts* of indigeneity, identity and traditional knowledge, i.e. from an abstract perspective, on the fourth level.

Apart from inspiring to more detailed explorations of economical and political aspects regarding sealing, the research and results of this thesis form a foundation for further research. A range of possible directions are hinted or formulated here. A whole study could thus be proposed for how *shame* could be connected to the subconscious or deliberate silencing out of sealing and other traditional knowledge as symbols. Similarly, shame and pride about indigeneity and possessing traditional knowledge could be studied both from a historical perspective or a social-anthropological perspective, possibly through a comparative study in e.g. Greenland, Sápmi, Australia and New Zealand. Comparative studies regarding modern indigenous identity and the possible gaps between urban and rural indigeneity could equally be done across these countries or others. Finally, this thesis indirectly suggests a comparative study of how traditional knowledge is taught (or lacking) in various countries' schooling. Rather than comparing if Danish children learn how to kill pigs and if Greenlandic children learn seal hunting, such comparative study could examine the presence/lack of traditional knowledge and how traditional knowledge such as sealing in Greenland and reindeer-herding in Norway are represented in schools. This study could further look at how non-indigenous youths that are geographically distant from traditionally indigenous lands such as children in Southern Norway and in Denmark learn about indigenous peoples and traditional knowledge.

Appendix A Presentation of Informants

Number of informants: 12.

(Number of questionnaires received from first-year students at GU Aasiaat: 111)

Student 1: Female, aged 17. From Northern village. Attended school also in Denmark.

Student 2: Male, aged 15. From smaller Northern town.

Student 3: Female, aged 17. From Aasiaat. Attended school in Denmark for one year.

Student 4: Female, aged 22. From village near Aasiaat.

Student 5: Male, aged 18. From larger Southern town. Attended school in Denmark for one year.

Teacher 1: S/he is of Danish descent and has been teaching in Aasiaat for a couple of years. S/he is a language teacher apart from teaching *Kulturfag*.

Teacher 2: S/he is of Danish descent and has been teaching in Aasiaat for a couple of years. S/he is a social-science teacher apart from teaching *Kulturfag*.

Teacher 3: S/he is of Greenlandic descent and has been teaching for many years in Aasiaat. S/he is a teacher of Greenlandic apart from teaching *Kulturfag*.

Children's Home Staff Member 1: S/he is of Danish descent and has been working at the Children's Home Uummannaq for more than a decade.

Children's Home Staff Member 2: S/he is of Greenlandic descent and has been working at Children's Home Uummannaq for more than a decade.

Ole Larsen: Male of Greenlandic descent, originally from Arsuk in the south western end of Greenland. He has been working as the leader of Hunting and Fishing School in Uummannaq since June 2012.

Ole Jørgen Hammeken: Male of Greenlandic descent, originally from the capital Nuuk. He has been living in Uummannaq since 1993 with Ann Andreasen, the leader of Children's Home of Uummannaq. He is an explorer and a social worker, and is the leader of exploration projects with Uummannaq Polar Institute and children and staff from the Children's Home.

Appendix B List of figures and images

Figure 1: Fikret Berkes' levels of analysis in traditional knowledge and management systems.
© Berkes, Fikret, *Sacred Ecology*, Routledge, New York, Third Edition, 2012: 17.

Figure 2: Fikret Berkes' model on traditional ecological knowledge rendered for the purpose of this study.
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Figure 3: Levels, entities and perspectives at the various levels of the model 'Figure 2'.
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Image 1: Map of municipalities as per 1st of January 2009.
© GHS, KMS. Retrieved 25th March 2013.
< <http://www.kanukoka.gl/kl-gl/media/2898/.jpg> >

Image 2: Map of Greenland with town indications.
© Kort- og Matrikelstyrelsen. Retrieved 25th March 2013.
< http://jm.schultzboghandel.dk/upload/microsites/jm/ebooks/pet/pet_bind14/image/s010.gif >

Image 3: Southern half of Qaasuitsup Kommunia / North West Greenland Municipality.
© Disko-Bay, city-maps. Retrieved 25th March 2013.
< <http://www.kalaallit-nunaat-gronland.city-map.dk/02050203> >

Image 4: Part of Uummannaq town.
© Sally Rosendahl 2013.

Image 5: Occupational hunters selling whale meat at *Brættet* in Uummannaq.
© Sally Rosendahl 2013.

Image 6: Feature week at Gammeqarfik School in Aasiaat.
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Image 7: Dog sledges have the right-of-way in Ilulissat.
© Sally Rosendahl 2013.

Image 8: Feature week at Gammeqarfik School in Aasiaat.
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Image 9: Part of the Children's Home Uummannaq.
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Image 10: Children are taught how to jig for halibut and cod near Uummannaq.
© Sally Rosendahl 2013.

Image 11: Patty shells with Greenlandic seafood filling – shrimps, mussels and mattak (whale skin with blubber).
© Sally Rosendahl 2013.

Image 12: The recently modernised *Brættet* in Ilulissat.
© Sally Rosendahl 2013.

Image 13: Seal meat at *Brættet* in Uummannaq.
© Sally Rosendahl 2013.

Image 14: One pupil at *Gammeqarfik Atuarfik* is receiving one-on-one teaching about the intricate beadwork of the national costume. Making the entire beadwork for a costume takes numerous hours for an experienced woman, but during her feature week this pupil will manage to draw and make a little 5x5cm patch of her own pattern while learning about the rest of the national costume as well.

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Image 15: Pupils at Gammeqarfik are learning the individual names for specific features on their national dresses. By practicing this every day, by the end of the week, they have among them memorised the majority of the names.

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