

## **A Bankrupt Spanish Baker and the Eco-Farm in Norway:**

*A micro level study of cooperation and conflict across life opportunities, in perspective of global crisis*

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## Table of contents

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>I</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>3</b>
FINDING FIELD AND INFORMANTS.....	4
BACKGROUND OF VEIGÅRD.....	7
TOPIC EMERGING IN THE FIELD .....	8
FIGURE 1. ....	10
A SCHEMATIC OUTLINE.....	11
<b>THE BROADER CONTEXT</b> .....	<b>12</b>
INTERCONNECTED GLOBAL CRISIS .....	14
FINANCIAL CRISIS .....	14
CULTURE AND IDENTITY CRISIS .....	15
<b>ANDREAS &amp; ELISABETH</b> .....	<b>16</b>
LIFESTYLE PROJECT.....	16
REDUCED CONSUMPTION .....	18
TRUE TO THEMSELVES.....	18
RECLAIMING CONTROL .....	19
MORAL RESPONSIBILITY .....	19
CREATING SYNERGIES.....	20
<b>JORGE AND MARTA</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>A LIFEWORLD APPROACH</b> .....	<b>24</b>
PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION .....	25
USING CAMERA IN THE FIELD .....	25
INTERVIEWS .....	26
TEXT ANALYSIS .....	27
<b>LIVING THE FARM LIFE</b> .....	<b>29</b>
THE FAMILY ARRIVES AND VEIGÅRD CHANGES.....	31
<b>ANALYSIS</b> .....	<b>34</b>
VULNERABILITY AND UNCERTAINTY .....	34
ANDREAS, ELISABETH AND FARMING MATTERS.....	35
JORGE, MARTA AND LANGUAGE MATTERS .....	36
MAKING “CONTRACTS” .....	37
“MESSAGES GIVEN AND RECEIVED” .....	38
RECIPROCITY- THE SOCIAL GLUE .....	38
ASYMMETRIC RECIPROCITY .....	42
SOCIAL FIELDS AND POWER ASPECTS .....	44
UNINTENDED POWER .....	45
MEETINGS.....	46
PERCEPTIONS: “WE CAME TO STAY” .....	47
<b>SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>50</b>
END-OF-STORY REMARK .....	53
<b>LITERATURE LIST</b> .....	<b>54</b>

## **Abstract**

People's different life- opportunities can come close upon us as the interconnection of world processes continues with a high speed. Crisis in environment, economy and mass-movements of people are of our time, and from different positions and corners people "on the ground" are responding to these processes. How people respond contributes to further shaping of the world's outlook. With this perspective, I do a micro level case study where I follow the process of *why* and *how* a Norwegian and a Spanish couple in contrasting life situations happens to meet up and live together on an eco- farm in Norway. The Norwegian couple responds to environmental crisis by moving from the city to the countryside for a self-sufficient farm life. They want to live out their values of an eco-friendly lifestyle. Meanwhile, the Spanish couple feel forced to leave the financial crisis in Spain by migrating to Norway. Despite intentions of a synergetic collaboration, the development of their relation comes to be an example of how asymmetric reciprocity can produce unintended power relations which they were, paradoxically, aiming to work against.



## Introduction

Where I started and where I ended up with this thesis became a very different reality than I had first imagined. As an anthropological fieldworker, you study people's lives, and people's lives are not predictable but rather unpredictable, and I got to experience that. On the one hand, in terms of physical location, the fieldwork took place as planned from the start; a single farm in Norway populated by a few people. As the social situations played out, on the other hand, I had to readjust to a new focus. To start from the beginning, my own preoccupation with global issues such as environmental crisis and mass migration led me to write a thesis, and make a film, about people who took large steps to truly address these issues. I was curious about the concept of *self-sufficient lifestyle* by people who financially didn't have to be self-sufficient, but made the choice of living this way as a response to issues they saw. In other words, I wanted to see how particular people who tried to take these challenges seriously, reflected and acted.

By self-sufficient lifestyle I mean being able to produce food from animals and plants for own consumption, but it can also be a method for creating your own income by selling homemade products. A self-sufficient lifestyle is about producing and consuming only what you need, and not for profit (Alexander 2011). It is often one of several elements connected to the concept "Voluntary Simplicity" where the goal is to have a low impact on nature and its resources; Leonard- Barton (1981) defines voluntary simplicity as "*...the degree to which an individual selects a lifestyle intended to maximize her/his direct control over daily activities and to minimize his/her consumption and dependency*" (ibid, p 244). The motivation behind voluntary simplicity is according to her, born from a strong sense of social responsibility more than out of desire to save financially (p. 248). Another definition says that; "*Voluntary simplicity is an oppositional living strategy that rejects the high consumption, materialistic lifestyles of consumer cultures and affirms what is often called "the simple life"*" (Alexander, 2011, p.2). People of this movement are accepting lower incomes and lower levels of consumption in exchange for more time to pursue non-materialistic fulfilling activities. Leonard-Barton stresses that the low consumption and low energy lifestyle is often selected by individuals who are financially able to afford a more luxurious way of living, because poorer people who already live with lower levels of consumption will associate reducing it with reduced life quality (p.244). In developed regions of the world such as North America, Western Europe, Japan and New Zealand e.t, economic growth has allowed most people in

these regions to live in relative luxury and comfort, all though the Global Financial Crisis since 2007 has to a degree, changed this picture for many people (Alexander 2011, p.1). Therefore, this lifestyle is said to mostly account for “the privileged few” who have the possibility to choose and develop such a lifestyle (Alexander p.10). In my search for people who could be seen as part of the “Voluntary Simplicity Movement”(Alexander 2011), I wanted to focus on Norwegian young adults who were about to choose lifestyle for themselves, establishing a livelihood and a place to live. I set out to know more about what it was like actually living this lifestyle, what kind of challenges they met, and how they solved them. Part of the larger context I had in mind was the more recently accepted idea of environmental issues not standing alone, but being connected to the global monetary system that are also affecting people’s lives. Anthony Giddens (2002) for example, states that

*“Climate change and its accompanying risks probably result from the intervention into the environment, and the large- scale intensified intervention into environment is logically linked to a capitalistic economic system based on growth and profit... We face risk situations that no one in previous history has had to confront- of which global warming is only one. Many of the risks and uncertainties affect us no matter where we live, and regardless of how privileged or deprived we are“*  
(Giddens 2002, p.3)

This quote stands as the essence of the perspective I had in mind when being curious about people for self –sufficiency and the current global situation. The quote’s message was of my own preoccupation and interest, affecting me in areas of my own life -from consumption patterns to the understanding of who I am and what my responsibilities are as a global citizen. I knew that this accounted for other people as well, that many people have perceptions and reactions to the interconnection of global issues. Even though it sounds abstract to say “global issues”, it accounts for the inner experiences of all the individuals living amongst them. It is not a topic only for (macro) social scientists, economists and biologists, but also for anthropologists, who meet people on the ground and get their stories and perspectives (Eriksen 2014).

## **Finding field and informants**

Since I didn’t have specific people in mind for the study I searched the Internet for communities dealing with ecological sustainability and self -sufficiency in Norway. I learned that there were many such local communities and “green movements”, like urban farming,

eco-villages, transition towns et., aiming to work together for sustainable living.<sup>1</sup> After tips from a classmate I became mostly interested in World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF)<sup>2</sup>. WWOOF is a global network where organic farmers have volunteers working at their farm in return of food and shelter. The aim is to exchange work for knowledge about organic farming and are also to create a social network where people with these same interests meet and get inspired to have an ecofriendly lifestyle. It works by getting farmers and volunteers in touch with each other through the WWOOF web- page where both hosts and volunteers can make a profile and get in contact. Jan Mosedale (2009) has focused on the volunteers, the “woofers”, in his article “Woofing in New Zealand as alternative mobility and lifestyle”. He states that the success of WWOOF is not a simplified rational transaction of labor for food and shelter, but has socio- economic aspects; He refers to Crewe (2000) who states that “...exchange is seldom simply an ‘unembedded’, material, commodity transaction. Rather, it is a richly symbolic activity which can have important emotional consequences quite apart from any material changes which may result”(ibid p. 26). These farms are about teaching skills to volunteers to exchange knowledge about ecological farming and inspire others to implement this knowledge in their life.

Several profiles were well- established farms that produced ecological products for sale. They had a lot of projects going on and a lot of people coming and going, it seemed. Many were not quite what I looked for, then suddenly I found it. The profile that caught my interest the most was the profile of **Andreas (26) and Elisabeth (24)** from Oslo who had just started organic farming with goals of becoming self-sufficient. They were young adults and had a clear idealistic approach to their decision of lifestyle, but had little experience of farming, as they explained on their profile. That was why they joined WWOOF; to get skilled volunteers to contribute in their starting process, even though the idea of getting in contact with people shared the same interests was also very important, Andreas told me. There were several reasons for why Andreas and Elisabeth caught my interest. First of all, they were positioned in the *social context* I was looking for: Privileged, young Norwegians in the establishing phase of finding their way of living. In this paper’s framing I use the word “privileged” for people growing up with rights to the Norwegian welfare system, a nation in peace and good

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.natursamfunn.no/andre-okosamfunn/norske-okosamfunn/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.woofnorway.org>



education and work possibilities. Second, their focus on *reduced consumption* applied to me, which was closely linked to “voluntary simplicity”. They emphasized the idea of building a lifestyle that didn’t require a high consumption pattern that would put pressure on natural resources and increase pollution. Third, many projects were set out in life and many were in the making, so it was the *holism* in their description of aims and goals that attracted me. It wasn’t just a farm that had ecological food products for sale on the market; they were rather in the very beginning of creating a self-sufficient lifestyle for themselves just as much as eventually being able to sell their products. It was interesting to get the chance to follow the challenges and developments of such a starting process, so this became my main focus point. Lastly, and especially interesting because it dealt with an apparently different topic, was *people affected by the financial crisis*. On their blog they expressed the idea of being a place where European labor-immigrants who were struck by the financial crisis could come to stay to restructuring their lives. Becoming integrated and getting work in Norway can be tougher than many expect, and they wanted to give a helping hand and offer a “starting point” for them.<sup>3</sup> The idea was to exchange farm labor for help to start a life in Norway. I found it interesting how their lifestyle project were stretching itself into this direction. I saw it as an example of reflexivity of their own privileged position and a wish to share it with less fortunate people. I found their ideals and ideas interesting so I wanted to see how things developed in praxis. I sent them an email about me as a master student on Visual Cultural Studies from the University of Tromsø, and my interest in writing and making a documentary about their life on the farm. They were positive to my project idea, and we communicated by email and telephone. We came to the solution that I could not be a “full time” woofer because of my fieldwork, which required a lot of writing and filming. I would compensate this by paying 3000 kr. per month in rent. It was a solution I felt comfortable with. Meanwhile I was preparing for going to this field work it would show that Andreas and Elisabeth decided go for the idea of including economic refugees from Southern Europe into their projects; A Spanish baker named Jorge had contacted them through their WWOOF-profile online, explaining that he had to close down his bakery due to the financial crisis in Spain. He wished to restructure his life in Norway together with his wife and three young children, and he had therefore asked for the possibilities of living and working at their farm as a starting point. The research got thereof a new twist which now was about studying processes where people with

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<sup>3</sup> The specifying of European immigrants was because of the Schengen-Agreement, which makes it legal to European citizens part of EU/EØS to travel and migrate freely “inside Schengen”.

very different life opportunities aimed to collaborate; a collaboration between the “privileged and the deprived”. I will briefly describe Veigård as a place before I come back to the topics emerging in the field.

## Background of Veigård

The farm Veigård is situated in the oblong landscape area called Valdres, a two -hours’ drive



from Oslo. Valdres includes six municipalities, and Veigård is situated in Sør Aurdal municipality, right beside the road E16. The local area is called Tollefsrud. Cars and big trucks are rushing by at all hours and are in a quite big contrast to the old farm that reminds us about departed times. Traditionally Valdres has been an agriculture -and logging area, but today the beautiful and varied nature becomes increasingly popular for tourism. Veigård was built in 1912 as a wedding gift to the bride. The bride lived at the groom’s farm but Veigård has stayed in the hands of the family until this day and has also been functioning as a camping resort throughout the years. Veigård is a majestic

farm, and people of high rank most likely lived here. It contains a large, white main- house with a large barn and a store- house. The store- house can be considered new compared to the other buildings. The main house bear marks of refurbishing from different decades combined with antique interior and material, like lamps still hanging on its spot since early 1900<sup>th</sup>. The



barn on the other hand was barely touched and are therefore rather unsafe, It was like going into a museum because of all the old fashioned farming tools that had been stored up there for so long, for example old horse saddles and horse wagons full of dust. Many people have come and gone in the main house, and some doors still have the room numbers

of the servants who lived and worked in the house. Except the main road, trees and thick forest surround the farm. There are some neighboring houses and farms, but you cannot see

them from through the thick vegetation. The local area has a church, school and a grocery shop nearby, but if you want to go shopping there you would have to either take the bike or the car since it is a little long to walk. When one of the family members of Veigård got too old to live there alone, they decided to rent out the farm, and they came in contact with Andreas and Elisabeth through the advertisement website FINN.no. The farm was therefore rented out to Andreas, Elisabeth and their two friends for 15 000 NOK per month and they could renovate in cooperation with the "landlord". Since they were upgrading the main house and the garden, the landlord was supporting them economically for the work because of a possible selling of the farm in a distant future. Since this barn is so old, it is considered a cultural heritage, and organizations like Norsk Kulturarv wants to save old stalls and barns and support projects with money. In the beginning when they were four people living here, 15 000 NOK was manageable for all to pay. Later however, when they were only two, the economic situation put some pressure on them to get more income. Both of them therefore applied for jobs and were planning to work other places whilst building up their own businesses and food production.

## **Topic emerging in the field**

My parents suggested that they could drive me to fieldwork because they wanted to visit some relatives living nearby Veigård at the same time. From Fusa municipality where I come from, it is about 5-6 hours drive to Valdres. We arrived to the farm and my mother had brought lunch to everybody. I jumped out of the car and saw some people on the corner of the house. They seemed to be doing some kind of garden work. I went over to greet them, and the first one was a tall young man with glasses and working clothes on. It was Andreas. The other two people were a young woman and an adult man in his thirties, it seemed. From email-exchanges I knew Elisabeth was not home right now but that she would come back tomorrow. We greeted in English, but I didn't know where they were from. Andreas started to show me around and my parents and the others followed us but came soon into talk with each other. When Andreas had given me a quick "show around" I came into conversation with the young woman of my age, and her name was Sarah from London. She had been a "woofer" at Veigård last summer and had become a closer friend to Andreas and Elisabeth as well. I couldn't avoid noticing my mother walking talking a lot to the other man in his thirties, and I heard she was talking Spanish to him (she is a Spanish teacher and loves the language and country.) Sarah noticed it and informed me; "Yes, he is here because of the financial crisis in

Spain...” I remembered what they had written on their blog about helping economic refugees. I found it very interesting that they apparently had put the idea into praxis.

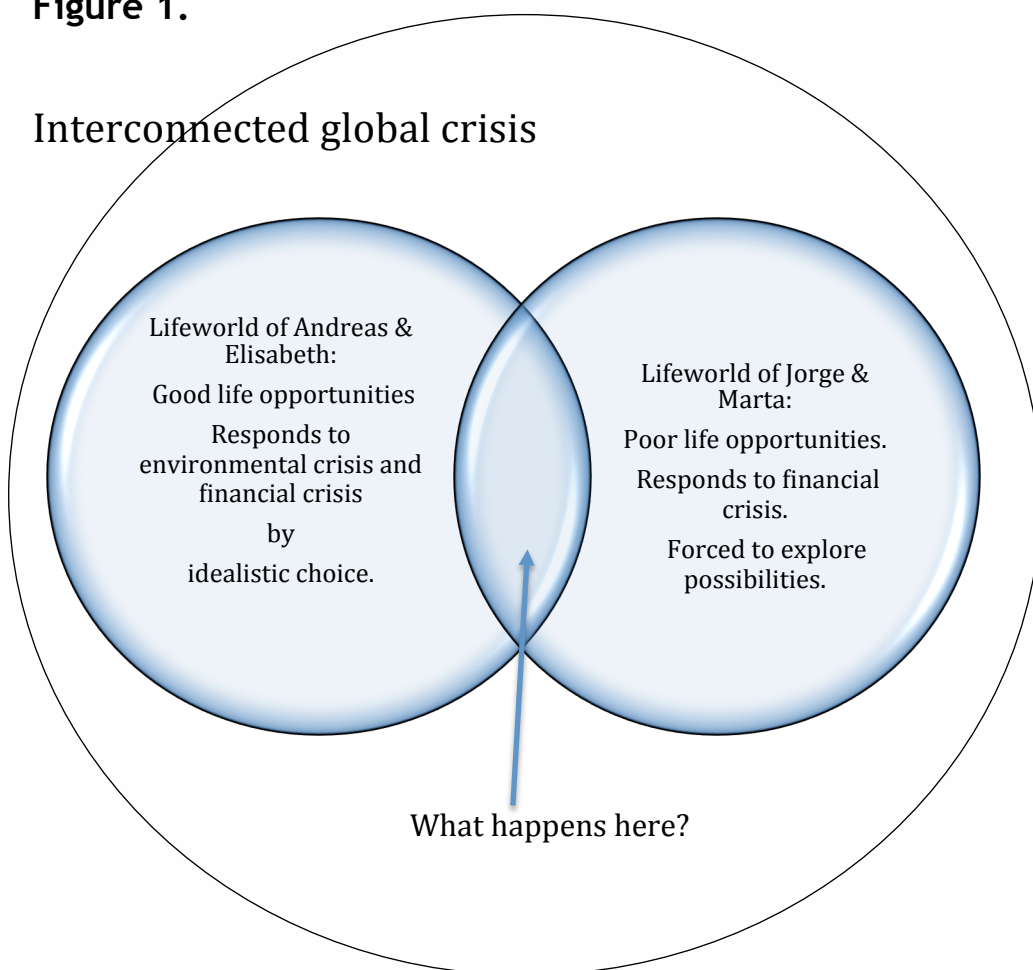
When I arrived at Veigård the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2014 the Spanish baker Jorge (37) had been at the farm a bit more than a week. It was not clear to me exactly how central Jorge would be for the film at this point, but I kept filming him doing practical work at the farm, like feeding lambs with bottled milk and baking bread every day. I imagined his role in the film and in the thesis as a “living example” of Andreas and Elisabeth’s ideals and holistic lifestyle project, while the focus still would be fully on the starting process of self-sufficient farming. Some days after Andreas told me that they had come to the agreement to let Jorge bring his wife, Marta (36) and their three young children of two and three years old. I felt how the world-happenings “out there” was coming through the doors of the house, to this hidden farm in Valdres. I realized that Jorge and Marta had to become my main informants as well. It would be very difficult to only focus on self-sufficiency and sustainable lifestyle with a whole Spanish family around, which was a new and challenging situation for Andreas and Elisabeth as well. The influence of their different life opportunities became a starting point of further curiosity. Because, from the outset, we can say that Andreas and Elisabeth is acting out of choice, while Jorge and Marta is acting out of force. What I mean is that life opportunities needs to be understood according to what potential lifestyles an individual has available, according to Giddens (1991). He points out that “*All choices are not open for everyone, independent of social position. Differences in lifestyle is connected to what Bourdieu underlines, the elementary structural aspects of the stratification existing*” (Giddens 1991, p.101). By “structural aspects of the stratification existing” I choose the following definition for understanding it: “*Social structures are very abstract entities. One can think of a social structure (such as economic structure, a social class or kinship system, or a language) as defining a set of potential, a set of possibilities*” (Norman Fairclough 2003, p. 24). Like Jorge and Marta is an example of, Giddens points out that also people with poor life opportunities are acting to change their situation, but that the motivation here is coming from frustration, and not from self-realization, like Andreas and Elisabeth could be an example of. Because of an unfortunate life situation, he or she is closer to being forced to explore other possibilities (ibid). When I use the word force in this thesis, I am therefore not pointing at force by physical violence or force by law. Rather, Jorge and Marta have the feeling of being forced by the government and the abstract economic and political system. Jorge and Marta, who was very supportive and understanding about Andreas and Elisabeth’s eco-friendly lifestyle, did

not have the capacity to deal with those issues in their position. They had to fulfill the basic needs of housing and employment for their family before anything else. The presence of these contrasting social positions so close at hand felt special and interesting, and figure 1. below illustrated the situation before me. The question I now asked myself was; “How will these individuals in such different social positions be able to collaborate on sustainable living?” It would later show that the collaboration developed into miscommunication, and a conflict made them go separate ways by the time I finished the fieldwork.

**What I study is the social processes where the different social positions have influenced the communication and their perception of each other, which eventually led to the split-up. My goal is to identify these aspects.**

**Figure 1.**

### Interconnected global crisis



## **A schematic outline**

Before going into the background of my informants, I will describe the broader context in which I see them- the interconnection of global crisis. To move towards an understanding of their social interaction in perspective of the broader context, I will continue by arguing for a “lifeworld approach” which makes my study a micro level case study. I will describe Andreas and Elisabeth’s lifeworld, and Jorge and Marta’s lifeworld before they met. I believe their backgrounds, motivations and social positions can help us understand their perceptions about each other. Further down the method chapter I will describe how I experienced living at the farm and how I carried out the fieldwork. When I started the fieldwork the collaboration project also started, then developed up to a peak and ended by the time I was finished. Therefore, the thesis will have a certain narratively revealing, which was how I experienced it. I will first describe the farm life and the collaboration process from my perspective before I will go back into particular empirical examples and analyze them.

## The broader context



*“For a perspective on the contemporary world to be convincing and comprehensive, it needs a view from the helicopter circling the world just as much as it needs the details that can only be discovered with a magnifying glass. The macro and the micro, the universal and the particular must be seen as two sides of the same coin.”* Eriksen (2007)

From the outset I was interested in how people brought their understanding and opinions about global issues into their home and how it shaped their lifestyle. The quote above is from Hylland Eriksen’s project description -paper of an ongoing research project called *“Overheating- The three crises of globalization: An anthropological history of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>4</sup>*. This Project is interested in people’s experiences to, perceptions about, and reactions to what the project has divided into three global crisis of today; These are the

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<sup>4</sup> The project is carried out in Oslo by master students, PhD- students, post-docs and professors. It aims to gather a broad specter of data on a four-year perspective.

environmental crisis, the economic crisis and a third, culture and identity crisis. Eriksen shortly describes them as following:

*”The environmental crisis is primarily about the material conditions of life; the crisis of culture and identity is about cognitive, emotional, relational and political circumstances; and the crisis of finance and economy is about the functioning of trust in abstract systems, efficacy in production, material survival and social justice. Both locally and empirically, and globally and conceptually, the three crises are connected” (Eriksen 2014).*

An important point of Overheating is the *speed of changes* that has taken place since early 1990s and even more from year 2000 (see also Kinvall 2004 cited in Harmans & Dimaggio, 2007). The speed of change are heightened and so becomes the interconnection between people, and the project is curious about how people living their daily life are coping with it: *“No matter how one goes about measuring degrees of interconnectedness in the contemporary world [cf Tilly 1984], the only possible conclusion is that many more people today are much more connected than ever before in history. There are more of us, and each of us has, on average, more links to the outside world than our predecessors, through business travel, information, communication, migration, vacations, political engagement, trade, development assistance, exchange programs and so on (Eriksen 2014)”*.

What do speed of change and interconnection has to do with my informants? Well, the two couples are having perceptions and responses to global crisis, each from different positions of life opportunities. Andreas and Elisabeth responds both to the environmental crisis and financial crisis by starting a self- sufficient lifestyle project and including two victims of financial crisis as part of the project. Jorge and Marta respond to the financial crisis by migrating away from it, but bringing with them an increased despair and mistrust to their government. Despite different geographical placement and life situation, they get connected through the Internet, very easily. They do all the communication and planning online before actually meeting. Due to the scope of this thesis I will not go into detail of the different crisis because there are so many important and interlinked elements to what is meant by the contemporary interconnected world and its crisis. I choose to give a brief overview of this context by limiting myself to some elements that are at the core of the Overheating study. One is the people’s perceptions about and responses to global crisis today, and second, how the world interconnections can be identified on a micro level between particular individuals.



Overheating is meant to be a backdrop to think in context of, because I argue that my informants can be examples of people who have clear perceptions and reactions to the crisis.

## **Interconnected global crisis**

What is meant by the overheated world of today? The metaphor of “overheating” is used to describe what happens when one rubs ones hands together, which of course is that it is getting hot. For Eriksen this represents the intensification of interconnectedness. Examples of overheating can be environmental crisis that causes forced changes in livelihood, drought or flooding, displacement or desertification. Effects of financial crisis can be people`s changed economic situation, increased commodity prices, unemployment and high migration rates. The crisis of culture and identity can be enhanced multicultural contact due to international migration that enforces clashes and frictions between different cultural groups where people are forced to negotiate identity and scarce resources (Eriksen, 2014).

## **Financial crisis**

Since late in 2007 the financial crisis hit the world economy and has had enormous impacts on the lives of millions families and individuals, mostly developed countries, but the effects spilled over to developing countries as well. (*Inci Ötker-Robe & Anca Maria Podpiera, 2013*). Examples are eroding savings and asset values, rising of prices, loss of jobs and job opportunities, and an uprising of vulnerable employments of fewer hours and lower payments. Reduction in core public services like social welfare, health care and education came along, and these impacts are still present today (ibid). Roba and Podeira explains further on that a financial crisis can develop into a social crisis because people`s wellbeing and security is turned to vulnerability and insecurity. A range of private coping strategies are being made like selling productive asset like land and livestock, reducing the quality of food intake, taking children out of school, reducing own consumption to protect the children or borrowing from relatives (ibid). “*These coping strategies can have long-term consequences for individuals and make it difficult to escape poverty traps* (ibid, p. 6) The unemployment statistics of 2015 shows that among the European countries, Spain is number two after Greece, with 22.5 % unemployed people.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.statista.com/statistics/268830/unemployment-rate-in-eu-countries/>

## Culture and identity crisis

Introductory I said that people's different life opportunities can come close up on us in our interconnected world. One of the three crisis is named as the cultural and identity crisis. What Eriksen means is that in this digitalized and globalized world, information and visual images are shared instantly across the globe, accessible for more and more people. In addition comes mass migration and movement of people causing further multicultural societies. We are in this indirect and direct way, perhaps more obtrusively than earlier, in contact with others who think differently and live differently from ourselves, and people are therefore in greater degree than before being led into questioning their identity and culture (Eriksen 2014). In other words, people are "*forced to define themselves in ways which were not necessary in earlier, less unstable and more clearly defined delineated social formations*" (p. 4). It is up to the individual to bind and connect different roles from arenas and activities that are in the modern society separated (Gullestad 1989, p. 103). A current impression is therefore that this is making many of us ask ourselves who we want to be, and what we can do about global problems in a larger degree than before. Eriksen refers to Giddens (1991) who argues that the *self* has become a *project* since many of us are no longer born into a defined role in society; We can rather reflect and choose freely who one wants to be and how one wants to live (Giddens, 1991, Gullestad 1989). Eriksen asks if not the increasing interconnections in the world is making us ask ourselves "How will this affect me and the future of my children?" when things happen on the other side of the world, like for example terrorist attacks and threats, but also in the abstract like the financial market. People might feel that their identity, culture and scarce resources are threatened by rapid changes and mass movement of people and reacts by closing in and fight against the changes (Eriksen 2014, Herman & Dimaggio 2007, p.32). An obvious example for me is the current refugee crisis creating strong reactions on both poles of those who ask "what can I do, how can I help?" and those who feel threatened by the economical, social and cultural consequences it will bring for them. Maybe some feel shuffled around in between the two poles? In my view Andreas and Elisabeth are examples of this reflexivity of one's lifestyle and privileged position, and the wish to take a stand and do something about global issues, both by living sustainably and opening up opportunities for migrants. How I see it, they can be a good example of how some people's self becomes a project. I will now go more in depth of these two couple's different lifeworlds. I will try to make sense of their motivations, emotions and actions during the collaboration by knowing their backgrounds before they met.

## Andreas & Elisabeth

Andreas and Elisabeth met at United World College and became a couple later on. They both grew up in urban areas in Oslo municipality and didn't have experience in farming and organic agriculture. Andreas' father has had a self-sufficient farm for ten years of which he later made a WWOOF-farm. This had been inspiring and educating for Andreas. He



deliberately chose not to attend higher education after college, but started instead to work different places. Elisabeth decided to take higher education, and finished her Master thesis in Organizational Psychology at BI (Norwegian business school) during my

fieldwork period. When I arrived, they had lived at Veigård for a year, but due to a long winter season, there were limits to what they had developed of agriculture yet. Anyhow, projects they had started to develop was many and varied; They had an great interest in brewing beer, and they had purchased beer brewing equipment to be able to hold beer brewing classes, and to sell their beer later on. Selling homemade crisp bread (knekkebrød) with own wrapping- paper and brand was also a project in the making. They offered short-term rental of bedrooms, and they had a profile on Air B&B (Air Bread and Breakfast), which means that private households rent out their house, apartment or rooms to traveling people. Greater projects in the making was to develop a bakery in the basement because it was an old-fashioned baker oven there that they wanted to restore and use. In connection to this they had ideas about serving food and bier like in a café or restaurant. They had chicken and sheep for own consumption, and as summer came, planting out potatoes and vegetables was of course on the schedule.

### Lifestyle project

So how did they actually end up at Veigård? One day at field work Andreas and I went with the car to Felleskjøpet. It is the greatest provider of operating funds for farmers and other consumer. We started to talk about how they lived before Veigård and what made them take the decision to move. He told me about the time when when they lived together in a “white

walled apartment” in the city center of Oslo. I was a metaphor of a “mainstream” lifestyle they did not feel they fit into. It was not the right lifestyle for them, neither was the consumption pattern they developed by working and living in the city. Andreas told me how the money flew away without notice, spent on nights on the town, beer and coffee bars while hanging out with friends. He started to reflect about what this lifestyle gave him of real meaning and also how this lifestyle kind of sucked him into a high consumption pattern and into a lifestyle that didn’t contribute to addressing environmental and social problems he witnessed. Elisabeth shared the same feelings and reflections. Similar experiences are shared by others who live by voluntary simplicity, like Alexander (2011) explains; “...*the pursuit of income and consumption can easily distract people from what is best in their lives, functioning to lock people into “work-and-spend” cycle that has no end and attains no lasting satisfaction*”.

Two other friends joined them and they moved in together in July 2013. During the first year the two other friends decided to move out due to own personal reasons. For Andreas and Elisabeth, moving to Veigård came from both a personal preference to live on the countryside, and from a growing need to take action and live out the ideals they had- not only talk and complain about the problematic they saw in society. Andreas told me that their projects and plans for living at Veigård could be called a lifestyle project. Gullestad (1989) says that “*this seeking for integrity and meaning contracts in to a larger coherence where lifestyle has become more prominent as means for expression in the whole western world*”(103.) Gullestad argues that lifestyle is a way to *communicate*, and that it is therefore a way to create identity and communicate it to others through lifestyle. She defines lifestyle as the communicative aspects, like the symbolic value by the “...*economical, organizational and cultural aspects of a way of living*”(104). In the chapter about the context around my informants I referred to Giddens (1991) who claims that the self has become a project for many the last decades. His perspective is the reflexivity about who we are and want to be and that each individual are responsible for creating answers to these questions (Gullestad 1989, Giddens 1991, Eriksen, 2014). Identity is also closely connected to values, since people usually wishes to be of value and meaning and act according to what they see as good or the right thing to do (Gullestad 1989). Living by their values was important for Andreas and Elisabeth and during fieldwork I noticed some main aspect expressing this:

## Reduced consumption

Reduced consumption was the key concept in their reasoning for self-sufficiency and sustainable lifestyle and goes hand in hand with voluntary simplicity. Through conversations and interview they underlined their view of the importance of reducing consumption for better environment. With reduced consumption they meant the material consumption coming from intensified industries that often are destructive and toxic for the environment and bad for animal welfare. Their message was that the higher consumption per household, the more waste, pollution and pressure on natural resources globally. Their way of life helped them reducing their material consumption and also the need for a high salary to pay for it.

## True to themselves

Andreas and Elisabeth underlined that they did not want to appear moralizing on others, but rather do what was right for *them* and be inspired by and inspire others with the same interests. They didn't want to appear arrogant and better than others, this was most importantly something they had to do for themselves, to be true to themselves and what they believed in, they explained. Andreas also wanted to point out that he also simply liked this way of living. For him, it was luxury. Elisabeth told me *"It is very nice to come here and be able to live our values"*. *And I also just like being on the countryside better than the city. For me it is stressful to hurry out the door to catch the bus in the morning, and be forced to relate to many strangers.. Here I can go peacefully out to the animals wearing working clothes and not think about looking a certain way"*. Their experience of life-quality and "the good life" was also an important aspect of why they wanted to do small-scale farming and live on the countryside. Their expressions goes well to Leonard-Barton (1981) who refers to a quote of Duane Elgin about voluntary simplicity: "A manner of living that is outwardly simple and inwardly rich...a deliberate choice to live with less in the belief that more life will be returned to us in the process". In other words, they were being true to themselves both by having a way of life according to their experience of life quality and "the good life", as well as their actions were connected to global scale issues.

## Reclaiming control

In the interview with Andreas I asked him about the different reasons for “going self sufficient”, and it was a very important value for him to get knowledge and experience about the nature and how to use the nature's resources for survival, because according to him, it was old knowledge that seemed to be disappearing. It was important for him to know how things worked and how to be able to take care of himself without being dependent on others fixing things. What they wanted to create at Veigård occurred to me as a way of reclaiming control over their integrity by creating a lifestyle where they can be more independent concerning production of food and products, and knowing what process the food they eat has been through, since they are the ones producing it. This self-determination and desire to assume greater control over personal destiny is Leonard Barton also pointing out, as people wish to minimize their dependence on institutions they cannot control, such as government, oil companies and large agribusinesses food companies (p. 244). In addition to reducing consumption for environmental concerns, producing their own food seems to reveal around this ideological and political reclamation of control as Andreas and Elisabeth also expressed mistrust and disagreement to political processes and wished to eat, live and create income on their own premises.

## Moral responsibility

Alexander (2011) say it is important to recognize that voluntary simplicity is not just a personal self interest in less stress and higher life quality. There are broader humanitarian reasons for adopting this lifestyle because *“in a world where extreme poverty exist amidst such plenty, living simply can be understood as a lifestyle response to the highly skewed distribution of wealth in the world, perceived by many to be grossly unjust”* Living simply is therefore an act of human solidarity by trying to resist high level of consumption that cannot be shared by all. (p.7) Andreas and Elisabeth live in a time where the Internet and social media can give us constant and instant access to what is happening everywhere and an awareness of differences of fortune across the globe. Communities of people with same interests can be created through cyber space across the globe, just like WWOOF. As mentioned earlier, Giddens (1991) and Eriksen's (2014) view about the reflexive individual today- asking who to be, and what to do about global problems-is in my opinion Andreas and

Elisabeth an example of. Their own use of the Internet can be an example of this because if people and volunteers were not physically at the farm, the Internet seemed to play an important role practically and existentially. A lot of the physical manifestations one could see on the farm had their information and inspiration from communities on the Internet dealing with ecological farming and self-sufficiency. In other words, their “*links to the outside world*” as previously mentioned, shaped how they wanted to relate to the world and live in it. In the interview with Andreas I asked about what gave him inspiration. He said among other things that the Internet was a good tool in search of knowledge, but also in getting inspiration and motivation by being reminded that many people around the world shared the same values and interests of self-sufficiency and environmental consciousness in general. The closer physical surroundings usually gave the opposite impression, he said. The social factors of sharing ideas and belonging to a community seemed important, like WWOOF where they got connected to a world-wide community. To me it seemed like it was a moral responsibility sticking deep enough to simply make it difficult not to act on it, they *had* to. Andreas told me they saw the idea of helping Jorge and his family as a natural extension of their projects at Veigård. They saw it as the right thing to do when they witnessed people in need and had possibilities to help. The familiar saying “more action-less talking” seemed to play an important role for them. At one occasion Andreas said that he found it disturbing when people had strong opinions about what was wrong in society, but didn’t act themselves and actually lived a lifestyle actually supporting the “wrong-doings”. On another occasion Elisabeth said that it was incomprehensible for her that people who found the industrial meat production disturbing and wrong, *still* bought that meat.

## **Creating synergies**

Andreas often talked about synergy creation and how Veigård could be a place for that. The idea about synergies is to make two parts become greater together than the single part alone. They wanted to create a place where people with same interests could meet and learn from each other and enrich life together. It seemed as an ideal he put high. Andreas and Elisabeth didn’t want to be commanding bosses when people came to the farm, but rather create a situation where all contributed on equal ground. I understood this idea, but I also realized that in praxis it was difficult for them to balance this principle with the fact that it was still their home and therefore they needed some rules, plans and preferences for others to follow, of which they also had. Creating synergies was non the less an important concept for them so

when Jorge, the bankrupt Spanish baker, contacted them they both had a possibility to realize their idea of helping economic refugees, and in addition this person could contribute to their bakery project which was a great starting point for creating synergic effects.



## Jorge and Marta

In the case of mobility and flow of people today there is a changing tendency of increased trans-migration, which means that people who migrate to another country do not quite know if they will stay put or, move somewhere else soon, or move back home. Today, migrants in search for work have an intensified mobility and uncertainty of the nearest future (Eriksen, 2014). This is also the case of Jorge and Marta. They come from the countryside of Cartagena in Spain. They had to close down their bakery due to the economic situation in the country. The people of Spain are experiencing governmental corruption, high unemployment rates and demoralizing among its citizens. The suicide rate is high and the mistrust to the government is endemic. The ignorance and powerlessness are paralleled with demonstrators and activists. Migration rate is very high and people with no other option travel to countries like Norway based on positive rumors about the country, but many are rather unequipped to settle down and end up on streets and “Houses for poor” without money to travel back home.<sup>6</sup>

Jorge and Marta have three children. During fieldwork the twin girls Raquel and Laura were three years old and Marcos almost two years. The married couple ran a bakery together. The bakery could offer high quality homemade products, and they were doing well. When the crisis hit Spain, consumers started to buy the cheap industrial bread of one euro, and Jorge and Marta couldn't compete with the prices. For one year they were both unemployed and got some help from parents, but they didn't have much to offer them either. The government only offered a one-time small amount of support. Jorge and Marta were now in a position where they couldn't offer economic security for their children, and the condition of the country indicated that an economic uprising was still far away. Jorge expressed a great mistrust to the government in Spain. In the interview he expressed emotionally that “...*I was very angry with the government and the rich people in my country who are like... forcing us to do this...(pause)... because now their pockets are full and ours are empty*”. In his opinion the government actively tried to steer the people's attention to political matters away by entertainment on TV, making the people ignorant of the injustice done to them. “*They are laughing at us...They are laughing!*” As we did the interview, the world cup in Brazil had started and Spain was still in the game. He had ambivalent feelings towards the whole cup, a

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.osloby.no/nyheter/Arbeidsinnvandrerne-sliter-i-Oslo-7341072.html>

change of feelings compared to earlier in life, when he was fond of football and entertainment. He expressed a frustration towards his citizens who were more concerned about Spain winning matches and waving flags in the streets than about the political issues in the country. What if all that engagement and energy could be used to protest against the government? He asked. *"Yes, of course, some people are going in demonstrations and such, but just a few, it's not enough!"* He said it was not so important what happened to him. If he didn't have the children, he would probably stay in Spain and protest more. But now the concern of the children was the most important thing in life. Previously he would have cared if Spain were winning or losing matches. Now, he didn't really care. He told me how he had felt depressed and filled with hopelessness for about a year. Jorge and Marta saw no other way than looking for possibilities in other countries. Taking their children away from their friends and grandparents were unpleasant, but what options did they have? *"It's very hard, very, very hard... But in the end when you have gathered all your thoughts and your mind is clear, you just do it"* he said. They had previously been to Norway on vacation, and knowing that Norway was still economically strong, it was a logical option to search for new possibilities there. But where could they start? Where to go? They didn't know any Norwegians and didn't know the language. After tips from a friend Jorge contacted WWOOF –farms on the Internet. Working at a farm and get food and housing for free seemed like a good opportunity to get in contact with Norwegians and orient oneself of work possibilities and places to live. Andreas and Elisabeth answered Jorge and they started to communicate through emails. For Jorge and Marta it was unbelievable that a couple in Norway needed a baker and in addition wanted to help working immigrants establishing themselves in Norway. It was a surrealistic match! This was a great opportunity they couldn't hesitate to take. From being filled with severe uncertainty and hopelessness about the future, the e-mails suddenly replaced this with opportunities and hope.

They wrote e-mails back and forth before Jorge came to Veigård the first time. They decided that it was a good idea for Jorge to come alone to begin with so they could get to know each other and see if they got along. Jorge had been there for about a week when I arrived to Veigård to do my fieldwork. A week or so later I was informed that they had taken the decision to bring his wife and children to the farm, after a special request from Jorge. He went back to Spain for three weeks to organize things before the complete family took a flight to Norway. All though Andreas and Elisabeth had an idea of helping working immigrants, they pictured helping one person at the time and preferably, like many immigrants do, travel alone

to establish oneself with a job and a home before bringing family members. Since Jorge had three very young children he didn't want to be separated from his family for an unspecified time. He explained to me how important it was for him that the family was united and about the importance of having both the mother figure and father figure around children of this young age. Andreas and Elisabeth decided to give it a chance, but, as they wrote in the e-mails before Jorge arrived, they called it a *potential* collaboration with possibilities of failure. They underlined the necessity of having a plan B if the collaboration did not work out. I will say more about the emails in the method- chapter below.

## **A lifeworld approach**

Approaches to understand globalization are many and interdisciplinary (Eriksen, 2014). They give us useful overviews of mechanisms and tendencies of the current state of the world. However, they might not give a good insight in people's *lifeworlds* on these matters, and this is where the ethnographic approach has its strengths, but has been missing (Eriksen 2014). Eriksen argue that we should go into communities and see what people's perceptions and preoccupations concerning the crisis are- or maybe they go on as usual? Having a lifeworld approach naturally led me into the methodology of case study as point of departure. A case study is used to “...support an argument to show how general principles deriving from some theoretical orientation manifest themselves in some given set of particular circumstances” (Mitchell, 1984, p. 239). The ethnographic data has the quality of detailed descriptions of particular events, and the events can be of any level of social organization (Mitchell 1984, p.237). In my case it is on a household level. A case study can follow relations between individuals and their social processes and relationships in a specific point in time (Mitchell, 1984, p. 238). This approach seems supported by Lila Abu –Lughod's meaning by “ethnographies of the particular” (1991), namely that studying particular individuals restrain you from generalizations that will homogenize and flatten out differences within a group of people (ibid, p.475). It manages to grasp the human contradictions and conflicts of interests, doubts about ones choices, changing of values, the self-reflection over own traditions, norms and rules or individuals living outside the “norm” by choice et. (ibid, p. 475). By doing case study and studying the particular gave me a deeper and more nuanced look at what it takes to

start up a self-sufficient farm like Andreas and Elisabeth wanted, both on practical and emotional level. I got to know more of how their inner experiences were changing between belief and doubts, motivation and demotivation, optimism and worries about their big undertaking. I was able to closely follow and get insight in the specific process between Andreas and Elisabeth, Jorge and Marta, where their perception and meaning making shaped by their life situation expressed itself. I would not have gotten to these underlying levels if it wasn't for doing fieldwork at this one farm with these particular people over a longer period of time.

## **Participant observation**

Participant observation can be explained as a method anthropologists and social scientists use for gathering qualitative data by taking part in daily life activities, rituals, relations and events of a group of people (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010). According to the DeWalts, participant observation is one out of several methods for doing qualitative research, which has its goal of understanding phenomena and are therefore not occupied with quantifying it (ibid, p. 2). Other qualitative methods are structured and semi structured interviews, collecting and analyzing text, and taking a step back and observe from a distance (ibid, p. 3). A method I also used was of course the camera as a tool, which is not mentioned here. Doing fieldwork at a WWOOF-farm meant that participating in daily activities and events would be the most natural thing to do since I also lived at the farm, in their house. My role as both a "woofer" and anthropologist made the participant observation easy and natural, almost so natural that it was hard separating the two roles. My experience of this situation fits well to Spradley (1980) who says, "Doing ethnographic fieldwork involves alternating between the insider and outsider experience, and having both simultaneously" (1980, p. 57).

## **Using camera in the field**

This challenge also considered using a camera in the field. The first couple of days I was not filming my informants, but I had the equipment available and filmed surroundings and animals to start with. I wanted to let the informants get to know me better and get used to the presence of the camera. Considering the filming I felt it necessary to move from being patiently but constantly "on my toes" waiting around with the camera for telling events and conversations about self-sufficiency to happen, to actually plan certain events together with Andreas and Elisabeth. What I and other classmates thought was my blessing, namely living

in the house of my informants and living directly in the field 24/7 turned out to be rather challenging, in my experience. I was constantly in the field with the camera gaze “on”, instead of turning up to places and people with more defined events to film, and then retire to my own place afterwards. If I had the camera ready I was always “on my toes”, because in relevant and telling events could appear at any moment. If I didn’t have the camera with me, I worried I would miss out on them. Another reason for suggesting more collaboration on the filming of events was that many of the plans they had for the coming weeks often got postponed or even cancelled. I gradually got stressed because I went out of time getting these “happenings” on tape before my fieldwork time was over. Another reason was that a lot of the work behind their projects was after all happening inside of their minds before being put into in praxis. This meant that since they were in a starting process, they did a lot of planning and discussion in their office, Andreas explained. Andreas, Elisabeth and I had a meeting considering this where we agreed to be more conscious of it, and if possible, decide which day events related to their self- sufficiency projects would actually happen. Concerning Jorge this was not a problem, as I often found him doing some kind of farming work outdoors. He was very relaxed in front of the camera and me, and our friendship grew as time went. Because of that, a lot of the material is of Jorge working outside as well as spending time with his family when they arrived. Less material is of Andreas and Elisabeth as they spent time planning and discussing and in addition Elisabeth was busy finishing her master thesis. In the end, the film material reflects the reality just perfect and I let go of trying to shape the outcome and rather let the outcome shape itself.

## **Interviews**

In the beginning my film idea was not to include structured interviews in the film but only record natural conversations. Since I related very much to the values, lifestyle and ideals of Andreas and Elisabeth, it felt somehow awkward to ask questions about something I already were “getting”, and something I knew the answer to either through conversation without the camera present or simply by reading their blog beforehand. Yet, I did record interviews in case I needed clear and fulfilling answers or reflections about a topic that I could use for the thesis. Another reason for recording interviews was that my natural way of filming appeared to be very observational. It wasn’t natural for me to comment or ask questions while I was filming, so because of that it was a better idea to do structured interviews. Considering the editing process, I was therefore in the end using a lot of “talking heads” after several attempts

without. It turned out to be the best solution because of the intricate interactional and conflicted character of the film.

## Text analysis

After the field -work, I got their permission to read the emails they had exchanged before they met, in case something of analytic value could be found there. The reason I asked for permission to read them was because of the fact that the first interaction and planning of the collaboration took place through email exchange. This made me assume that crucial parts of their perceptions about the collaboration were formed through this exchange. When I read them after fieldwork, I found it fascinating how the written words between them mirrored the relation between them at the farm. The emails portray very well how I experienced the character of their relationship in the field, and I will briefly come back to the e-mails in the analysis. I have decided to put in excerpts from their email correspondence so that the reader can get an impression of the interaction in question:

### Excerpts from e-mails

*“Hi Jorge,*

*Thanks for your thoughts. It seems that we agree on many basic values, which would be a good starting point for our potential collaboration... We have also thought about what will happen if things does not work out, and would like you to give this some thought as well. Do you have a place to return to? How long period would you like to spend to attain your goals, what are these goals, and what happens if this fails? The only reason we would like to talk about this is a “just in case”-scenario- as what we’re attempting to do is a rather big undertaking for both us and for you.”*

(Andreas and Elisabeth)

*“Hi Elizabeth & Andreas*

*Thanks to you for being so crystal-clear, and for your deep and so down-to-earth thoughts. Perhaps we have just been a little carried away for such a big opportunity for leaving this country without hope for us and above all our children. It is so dreadful the situation we are going*

*through at this moment, that maybe we have been just a little selfish just thinking about ourselves, without taking into account the burden it be for you to take in a whole family without hardly knowing each other. Perhaps we have never stopped ourselves to think about if things do not go well. It is just that we do not want to think such a thing. We need at this moment to be very positive, bad energy brings bad thoughts, bad actions and decisions and we do not need them. EVERYTHING IS GONNA BE ALRIGHT!!! We just see in front of us a very big opportunity in leaving all behind, start a new life in a country which in our belief can offer us more than ours at this moment.” (Jorge)*

*“Hello again Jorge, thanks again for your prompt reply!  
We still like very much all that you write, and yes indeed, we consider ourselves incredibly lucky to be able to live like we want, in peace and stability. Not many people have this immense luxury, and for this we are ever grateful, and it seems a natural extension to try and share it all.”*

*(Andreas and Elisabeth)*

*What a great news for us ;j We are so excited too ;j ;j*

*“I just could not sit still, wandering from one spot to other, just thinking how fortunate we are to have met you, Marta would keep telling me, come on, sit down and answer, but I just could not, so look at what time it is now, but I could not go to sleep without answering back to you in spite of being a little tired, tomorrow the alarm will set off very early, but tonight I would sleep deeply and soundly, or maybe not, it does not matter anyway. This last message of yours has given me so extra strength!” (Jorge)*

## Living the farm life

The season of cold spring with dry leaves on the ground, indoor temperature so cold that we had to wear wool sweaters and make fire in the fireplace, shifted rapidly to warm, green



summer surrounding the farm with flowers, bees summing and bird's singing. Andreas and Elisabeth went from having three newborn lambs to five, then one died, they got two more and the number stayed at five in the end. They got the lambs from their landlord's sheep farm, and

occasionally some lambs were rejected from their mother so it was a good solution to give them to Andreas and Elisabeth. The lambs grew as fast as the summer season changed and the routines for feeding them changed from manually feeding with heated milk every three hours,



to teach them how to drink themselves from the "lamb-mother"- bucket. Some managed well, others just could not "get it" and that was a bit of a challenge and small source of frustration for several of us. When I arrived the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May, Jorge and their woofers and friend Sarah was there. During these first

days of fieldwork I got a sense of how it usually was like living on the farm and having woofers coming to stay at a limited period of time. I want to describe how I experienced a regular day when the farm functioned more as a WWOOF- farm with people coming and going in the spirit of collectiveness- their initial and original idea of what kind of place Veigård should be.



The first days or week we tidied up the garden as the snow just melted there. We also started to paint the coming-to-be library, which turned out to be a long-term project. Sarah explained that in her opinion, not much had been done since last year. She came as a woofers to their farm the previous summer when they had just moved there. At this early state I understood through observation and their self-ironic sense of humor that they had little experience and did a lot for the first time. It was about improvisation and "use what you've got" praxis. A



regular day would start by getting up around 8-9 am and have breakfast and morning-meeting together in the kitchen. The one who woke up first usually went to open the door and feed the lambs, chicken and the rabbit, and to collect eggs.

*Jorge baking bread*

In the beginning this was usually Jorge because he went up early to bake bread, so that we had fresh baked bread for breakfast. In the beginning, I was the “newb” who observed Jorge being so routinized and confident; Baking bread so early while warming up milk in a bottle for the lambs and feed them, every third hour. Since I didn't know him quite well yet, it was like he had lived there for a long time. As time went by though, I got routinized as well and it was *me* who went to see the animals first. When I arrived I was ecstatic about the three adorable lambs and I couldn't wait to feed them and care for them. I really liked this simple routine and contact with the animals before sitting down to eat. As we ate and drank coffee Andreas and Elisabeth had their notebook with lists of what needed to be done. They announced what was the plan for the day, when to eat next time and who was responsible for lunch or dinner this day. We often sat for a long time eating and drinking since there after all was no bus to catch or job to go to. Maybe because of this fact, there was a tendency that things got delayed and postponed, and that the plans quickly changed. We would after eating work with whatever was on the program, for example painting the library, putting up fence for the animals, brew beer and other brewing related activities, plant seeds in pots, or plant out sprouts in the vegetable garden. Because of my second role as a filmmaker, I often stepped out for a while during the work and filmed the process. Lunchtime was usually from 1.p.m to 3.p.m and in the beginning when we were eating and doing work more collectively, the lunch was usually a hot meal made from scratch, and we could also sit for two hours eating and talking about philosophical and political issues of society. There was an important focus on good food and good taste, so

they spent a long time cooking, and were great chefs. Dumpster diving certainly helped their economy in addition to buying food but they rarely had to buy. If they did, it was often local products of good quality. What they had of self-produced food were so far slaughtered turkeys they had in the freezer, beer, herbs and eggs. Usually one person had responsibility for cooking a meal, and we took turns doing it randomly as best suited. After lunch we continued whatever work we were doing, and repeated the feeding of the animals and watering of the sprouts and vegetables. On two occasions (during the three weeks Jorge was away) I watched the farm alone for several days in a row. This was when I felt I was moving from being an observer and guest, to feeling ownership and responsibility for the farm, the animals and the plants. When they came back it was me who had the latest updates on how the animals and vegetables were doing. One could imagine that there was not much to do on this rather isolated farm, but I was surprised how quickly the days went by and how long it took before I began to feel bored or restless. It was like I adopted the slow pace of the place, because we were always doing farm related work, but it was in no hurry. I also always had something I could do considering the field-work. It was always something I could film and try out with the camera, look at footage and write field notes. Dinnertime was also usually late, sometimes as late as 09.30 pm. I always looked forward to dinner, which was always delicious together with dark homebrewed beer. Someone went to close the door for the animals and we would sit together in the living room talking or reading, or retire to one's own room.

## The family arrives and Veigård changes



Three weeks in to the fieldwork Jorge came back with his wife Marta and the three small children. Andreas and Elisabeth went two days before with a big car to pick them up at the airport. They came in the middle of the night, and the car was filled to the brim with baggage. I had waited for them and I was

very excited. I was tempted to film them as they came driving in and exiting the car, but putting myself in their situation, they would then be met by a stranger who were invisible behind a recording camera with blending nightlight on. So I dropped it. It wasn't the proper moment. Jorge told me that traveling with three children and all that baggage was a terrible nightmare, and I could only imagine. The atmosphere now changed drastically compared to the weeks of quietness and few people on the farm. It was a alive and vibrant atmosphere with children running happily around. It was nice to see their curiosity about the animals and the animal's curiosity about them. Still, after a week or so the readjustment process was challenging for all. There were still not clear enough farming- and household routines for all



*Marta and two of the kids in the living room*

to follow, and the new situation made the children uneasy and they had difficulties to fall asleep. It was made attempts to resolve this by making a timetable of the daily routines that we all could follow. Jorge, Andreas and Elisabeth

started to have daily meetings about the process and agreement between them. The sixth week things seemed to go pretty well with the collaboration, of what I could see. Jorge was doing farm work, Elisabeth were taking him to Fagernes (the biggest city nearby) to apply for jobs, where he got some positive responds. I joined him and followed him with the camera as he delivered his curriculum to different café's and restaurants. I was impressed by how he bravely asked for job at one place after another. I told him how good he was doing and that I would have been so nervous doing it myself. He answered that he was very nervous, but he kept thinking about his children and it made him be brave. Thanks to Andreas and Elisabeth, he was also earning some tax-free money on their landlord's farm, and he even got to know some people nearby who was also planning to start a bakery, and he went there to bake at a few occasions. Maybe this could be a place he could become employed in the future? Despite my good impression of the collaboration, more discussions and tensions started to rise by the seventh week. By the seventh week Andreas and Elisabeth were evaluating how the collaboration worked, and expressed to Jorge the things they were unhappy about. During this seventh week I did the interview of Andreas. I asked where they were at in the process and he said;

*“After they had been here one week, we said that we should have a framework of one month around this, to see if we can do this, if they can do this, and if the integration takes place. Now it is one week left of that month and you can say that the evaluation has started. What the result will be is still uncertain. That’s exactly where we are at in the process”.*

I knew they had meetings, but at that time I didn’t know too well about what they discussed. I didn’t think I needed to know either because of my good impression. I could nonetheless feel the tension by the seventh week through the development of a separation between them. The atmosphere changed and became somehow quiet but tense. Andreas and Elisabeth were keeping a lot for themselves in the office, and Marta and the kids also spent less time in the main house. They spent more and more time in the store-house. From sharing meals together in the kitchen, we now didn’t eat together at all. From spending time together in the living room, the living room now stayed dark, quiet and empty. By the eighth week the conflict came to a peak where Andreas and Elisabeth wanted to end the situation with the whole family there, and suggested that Marta and the children went back to Spain until Jorge had established himself with a job and some money. It was their rational solution to be able to continue to help the family. This was not an unproblematic and easy solution for Jorge and Marta, and they took it very heavily.

The conflict had a great impact on me and therefore the filming. It resulted in both missing material of “events” on the farm, which were put on ice because of the situation occurring. Many self-sufficiency projects were not carried out in praxis since Andreas and Elisabeth were dealing with a whole family now. I also missed material to be able to structure a clear narrative in the editing room. It was because it felt wrong to go after them with the camera in the middle of such a conflict. Still, I knew that I had to try to capture something that could be “telling”, something that could express the conflict. If I didn’t I would actually not have a film; my master film was in danger, no matter how self-centered it seemed. I had the closest relationship to Jorge and Marta, so it was easier to film them, despite their anger, worries and sadness. I managed to capture a few situations after they have heard Andreas and Elisabeth’s suggestion to send Marta and the children back to Spain. For the rest I had to rely on interviews and symbolize mood and emotions through images of nature and animals.

## Analysis

### Vulnerability and uncertainty

In the beginning of the fieldwork I was focusing on the differences between the two couples, in perspective of their life opportunities within a broader context of global crisis. I was dichotomizing how one part acted from choice and the other part acted from force because they also used those expressions about themselves; Andreas and Elisabeth said they were grateful to be able to live like they wanted and wished to share their “immense luxury”, as written in the email. Jorge, on the other side, said he was forced by the government to leave Spain. The interaction between “the privileged and the deprived” is still the scenario of which the social situations are analyzed. However, later down the line this occurred to me as too simplified, and I started to identify more deeper-lying similarities between them because both parts imagined an alternative of life and took action to realize that alternative. About migration Papastergiadis (2000) says; “*Movement is not only the experience of shifting from place to place, it is also linked to our ability to imagine an alternative*”. Whether it is movement to another country or changing status quo in the country you’re in, my informants seemed to do exactly this, which he calls the “*spirit of our time*” (p. 11). In a way, they are both parts migrants of our time, because Andreas and Elisabeth were migrating from the city to the countryside, from one lifestyle to another, with their imagination of an alternative way of living. They were not pressured from outside forces and economic conditions like Jorge was, but on the other hand, the need to move away from the city and start a life style on their own premises was also something they had to do for themselves to be true to their values. In a way, they were pressed out from a lifestyle in the city they didn’t support and felt belonging to. Vulnerability belongs to our existential condition; no one is “invulnerable gods” (Coeckelbergh, 2013). Still, I started to get more nuanced interpretations where I saw vulnerability coming from the fact that both parts were wittingly putting themselves in an uncertain life situation where they didn’t know the outcome and where they had to take one step at the time in areas they didn’t have experience and knowledge. The vulnerability of Jorge and Marta is probably easy to see and understand, but I also started to see Andreas and Elisabeth’s vulnerability in this as well, as they had taken a big responsibility on their shoulders by taking in a whole family from the wish to do something meaningful and live out their ideals. They did this on top of being inexperienced farmers and having an unpredictable income themselves. From the interview in the film Elisabeth says: “*It is a big responsibility to take in a whole family and say that, yes, we can try to help you... That’s a big*

*responsibility... And now we feel that this responsibility has become too big.*” They were in the starting process of building a lifestyle that required a lot of work and patience before being “up and running” the way they imagined. After all, in the beginning they were four people with work force, knowledge and money. Now they were only two, and they didn’t even have jobs at the moment so their economy was ailing slowly. I thought to myself if maybe their similarities of uncertainty and vulnerability actually contributed to enhance the tension? According to studies of socio-economic uncertainty and conflicts, life uncertainty and insecurity is touching upon people’s vulnerability. Uncertainty is in a great degree a perception and thereof feeling of uncertainty about one’s life situation in the nearest or more distant future. The vulnerability coming from this lack of knowledge and control over safety and resources is experienced as negative and threatening for people and can then give rise to conflicts between groups of people (Démeny G, 2012). Following these basic lines between uncertainty and conflict, my case can be argued to be a micro example of these mechanisms at work. Below I will elaborate on aspects carrying this uncertainty, such as their economy, language and future outlooks.

## **Andreas, Elisabeth and farming matters**

They had taught themselves a lot about agriculture and self- sufficiency during the first year, and they were intelligent and thirsty for knowledge. But their inexperience revealed itself in brief moments in time through comments or misjudgments they made. Andreas had a good sense of humor and he often made me burst into laughter when he made jokes about their inexperience and failures on the farm. Once he explained that animals was not any stress to take care of; as long as you give them food, water and enough space to move around, they are well of and under control. *“But these vegetables...!” he said and rolled his eyes. “They are impossible to understand...!”*As I described earlier, they had recently got lambs when I arrived. A while after they received another lamb from the landlord and I got to film the newcomer. I sat in the corner of the sheep’s room in the farmhouse while I filmed the conversation between Andreas and Elisabeth. Andreas put down the lamb and called Elisabeth to come and greet the new one:

*“Elisabeth, come and say hello to 4141!”<sup>7</sup> Elisabeth showed up. “Oh, so tiny!” she expressed happily. “I brought some Coke for it ”she said holding up the Coca Cola bottle with milk replacement. “Good, their favorite!” Andreas said, and they giggled. She wanted to approach the new lamb, but it run to the corner where the other lambs were laying. “Something makes me believe it hasn’t been drinking from bottle yet” Andreas said, and referred to the fact that the lamb was born that same day. “So we have to force it then?” Elisabeth asked. “Well, just like you are used to” Andreas said. Elisabeth was very careful and kind to the newborn lamb, and approached it slowly. The lamb was very scared, run around and hid wherever it could. She spent a very long time to get close to it, but Andreas disagreed with her strategy. He proposed that she just had to grab it by force and hold it, and eventually it would drink the milk. She followed his suggestion and it worked. She carefully petted the lamb while it was lying on the floor drinking with a great appetite.*

### **Jorge, Marta and language matters**

The same week I filmed the whole Spanish family in the living room of the main house. Jorge was teaching himself Norwegian with some books he had brought. They were all sitting in the sofa and the twin girls were teaching themselves English from a computer program for children. I filmed them spending time here, with sun lighting up the room, happy noises and music from the computer program and the children. Jorge seemed positive and energized, but Marta looked tired. It must be a lot of work to take care of three small children all day long while Jorge did other farm work, I thought to myself. Marta could not speak very well English or Norwegian, all though she could understand a little when people spoke, and knew a few Norwegian words and phrases. Unfortunately this put her in a position where our communication with her had to go through Jorge though me, Andreas and Elisabeth tried to use our weak basic Spanish to communicate with her and the children.

Everything was communicated beside her in a sense, without her ability to interact and be involved. What she got to know about the collaboration and so forth was through Jorge. He also expressed a frustration about not being able to express himself the way he wanted because of the lack of vocabulary and fluent English grammar. This might have made him a weaker part during the meetings since Andreas and Elisabeth spoke fluently English.

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<sup>7</sup> The ear-mark of the lamb, thereof its name.

The collaboration gradually developed into miscommunication and conflict because of these aspects of uncertainty, I believe. Their idea of a synergetic relation didn't take place and it was Andreas and Elisabeth who had the power to put an end to it. In the middle of the heat, I was only observing some individuals with their different personas having very different understandings and expectations of how things were supposed to be. It might certainly be that different people in the same situation would not have a conflict, but actually make things work. I still argue that there are some significant sociological and anthropological aspects that would've influenced such a relation and therefore why it didn't work out between these two couples. I have set out to look at what the reasons for the conflict and "mismatch" can be and I have ended up with some theoretical terms which I think can shed light on the interaction in question.

## **Making "contracts"**

I have decided to use a concept of Fredrik Barth (1981) as a foundation of the analysis, which is that of "contract-societies". It describes a social transformation where in modern western societies individuals are seen as autonomous actors as opposed to traditional societies where the individual's rights and duties are defined by given combined statuses of their kinship system, a "whole-person" set out from the start (Barth, 1981). The modern autonomous actors, on the other hand, have to communicate intentions and come to an agreement before predictable behavior will be generated. They have to negotiate status and role by moving in a social space by making what he calls *contracts* with who ever they want (Ibid p. 122,124,128). A clear example of this is employer- employee, teacher- student and salesman-customer. In this perspective Andreas and Elisabeth writes a contract with Jorge by having clear expectations to the status set employer-employee, and give him roles such as being the baker responsible for baking and the bakery project, and being a helper of general farm work. Jorge accepted the roles and gave an effort to meet their expectations. Still, as I will show, Andreas and Elisabeth had a much more complex, "whole-person" expectation to Jorge's role from the idea of creating a synergetic relation and the expectation of an independent self-going behavior, which was their main critique of him. This caused confusion around their perceptions of each other and the role they were playing in the collaboration, because they related differently to the contract between them. I will say a little bit more about perceptions next.



## **“Messages given and received”**

I remember very well a comment from Elisabeth during the interview with her. The interview was done the last week of my stay and also of their collaboration. She was open to talk about the conflict on camera. In her opinion Jorge had not heard or understood what they had told him, and she said: *“Communication is messages that are given and received, but it seems as if he does not receive our messages”*. Messages given and received in an interaction can also be called transactions between actors and Reidar Grønhaug (1975) talks about the two-fold process of transactions and signification. Grønhaug’s argument is that if we are to study transactions between actors, we must take into consideration that actors think, that they have consciousness about the communication. People do this by using signs and symbols, and from thereof comes the term signification (Grønhaug 197, p.1- 2). This means that behavior in a transaction has a form of meta-communication, which means the *signaling of role -behavior*. In a social situation, actors are occupying different roles, which are signaled to make the transaction possible (Grønhaug, 1975, p. 10). The comment from Elisabeth plus my insight in the two different perspectives as I was standing in the middle moving from one part to the other, made it clear that they had quite different perceptions about each other’s roles in the collaboration. In interaction there are also *differences of perception*, which Cohen (1985) points at. With this he means that a signaled behavior doesn’t contain a given meaning, but it becomes meaningful as we interpret and make sense of the behavior we observe. *“The sense we make is “ours” and may not coincide with that intended by those whose behavior it was”* (Cohen 1985, p 17). To find out more about their perceptions, I will look into some structural and systemic aspects surrounding them.

## **Reciprocity- the social glue**

The social system of reciprocity is the basic foundation of my informant’s relation. Eriksen (2007) explains Marcel Mauss’ (1925) theoretical perspective of reciprocity as “the glue” which *“...ties individuals and groups together, presupposes that commitment, trust and stability in relationship (recurrent interactions) are fundamental aspects of social life.”* (Eriksen 2007, p.7) Reciprocity means non-market exchange of gifts and services. The point of doing this is building and defining relationships. The main principle of Mauss is that gifts and services are in theory voluntary, but in reality they represent a commitment or obligation of a return of *equal value*. Hence, a sort of silent contract is created (Mauss, 1925 p.11). Reciprocate processes can in that sense be found everywhere if you look for it, but in my case

the significance of reciprocity was such a central topic to analyze from, since the whole idea of the collaboration was based on reciprocal principles. The foundation was that Jorge and Marta needed to restructure life back in another country, and Andreas and Elisabeth needed a baker to bake bread and develop the bakery project. An example of the reciprocity put into praxis is when the family had arrived and they all had gathered outside to start up the collaboration:

*The day after they arrived everyone was gathered in the garden. Andreas and Elisabeth were going to show Jorge more of the work that needed to be done. Marta was looking after the kids and was standing in the background with Marcos in the baby carriage, but the twins kept running happily around Jorge, pulling his shirt for attention. I grabbed the camera and followed them around the property. The first thing to learn was how the grinder worked, which was standing outside in the chicken yard ready to be used. They chatted about equipment and Jorge asked if they kept the axe inside of a certain room in the barn. "Yes, we keep it inside yes" and added with a smile to Jorge "Well, you organize it, so..." They went on to show what to be grinded for the rabbit and chicken-house, and it was something like thick splinters lying about on the ground. Andreas and Elisabeth explained and Jorge paid good attention as they walked about in the garden, Jorge carrying on each side his two twin girls who were in a good mood, not knowing what it all was about. Finally they went over to the vegetable garden. Andreas and Elisabeth explained about the permaculture, standing over it looking after sprouts that seemed to be alive and growing well, because most of it was just different types of weed. The previous summer some volunteers had planted out the seeds. "What can this be?" they wondered about the unfamiliar plants. Andreas checked one. "Well, that one used to be alive, now it is not alive...!" he declared. Elisabeth studied it. "It's still alive" she contradicted. Jorge stood beside, listening politely and interested, following up with questions.*

During the rushes of film material a classmate saw the humor in the scene. He laughed a little and said "All those details about the permaculture stuff is like the last thing he could be preoccupied with in his life right now." I thought the same thing when I was filming it. Indeed, Jorge was from the countryside and knew how to grow vegetables, but the eco-friendly aspect of doing it was not in his capacity in his situation, like Giddens explains about lifestyle connected choices and opportunities available (1991). He had to restructure his life from scratch in a foreign country, and his main concern in life was the safety and future of his children. In my opinion their relationship naturally had a more complicated character than the

(ideal) “host and volunteer”-relation on a WWOOF-farm where both host and volunteer have a mutual interest in the eco-friendly aspect of agriculture. The reciprocity in this relation is in other words balanced and therefore the role-signification is clearly defined where the host naturally has a leading role, but still, they have a mutual need for each other (referring to the definition and ideology of well-functioning WWOOF-farms). I noticed two main elements from this scene in the garden; first of all how it was unavoidable to notice a unbalanced relation coming from the simple fact that it was Andreas and Elisabeth’s home and projects while Jorge and the family had been granted a big opportunity by staying there. In this particular transaction Andreas and Elisabeth were signaling their role as leaders over Jorge, who was signaling his role by being humble and submissive. The idea was nonetheless that this unbalance would even out and be less noticeable after some time when Jorge could contribute at an equal level, get a job and become less dependent. Still, it seemed as if the unbalance became even more visible in other situations as well, and the self –confident routinized “woofer-Jorge” I met before the collaboration started yielded for a more obeying Jorge trying to please Andreas and Elisabeth. The second element was the conversation about the axe. Jorge was being respectful and polite by asking them how they were operating around there. He was ready to adopt their praxis, similar to what you do in a new job. But Andreas said, like it was a given, “Well, you organize it, so...” In my impression Andreas was just informing Jorge about the work, but ready to let him take responsibility, initiative and control over it. In that moment, in those exchanges of words and signalization of behavior I believe I saw their different perceptions of each other, or, their contract. Still, it was in the beginning of the process, so I ignored it. I didn’t realize the importance of it yet. We were all excited and optimistic about this collaboration, and we only “saw what we wanted to see”, I guess. Another example is from the brewery room a week or so later. It is also an example of the different perceptions and how it is acted out, but at this point, as I will explain below, Andreas and Elisabeth had started to develop a doubt about the collaboration:

*One day I found Elisabeth and Jorge in the brewery room. She was teaching him one of the many steps of brewing beer. The beer was soon ready to be tapped into bottles. Andreas and Elisabeth had a great interest in beer brewing, and they had invested in equipment of good quality. Books about brewing and yeast were lying about in the house and even though Andreas and Elisabeth always were self- ironic about not having much experience about farming, brewing was something they were good at, and they kept brewing classes, gave beer away as gifts to friends and family and exchanged beer for other services or goods. After a*

*while Andreas took over the teaching because Elisabeth had to keep reading for an exam. The beer was now ready to be tapped into bottles and the process was faster if they were two people. One was tapping beer into the bottle and the other was putting corks on the bottles with a cork machine. I came to film this happening because I wanted some close-up images of the textures and colors of the beer and equipment, the sounds of the process and repetitive movements and complex work of producing beer. This was one of the many projects and businesses I wanted to visualize in the perspective of self-sufficiency. I also found the situation interesting because of the visual image of Jorge and Andreas cooperating in this. Visually I saw to people working closely together in the same activity, but situated so differently in life. Andreas and Elisabeth were teaching him how to brew so that he could help them with this later, but when I watched the footage afterwards I became aware of something else that I didn't see when I was occupied with getting those stable close-ups with blurry background. I got the impression that the situation here was not the synergetic effect Andreas was looking for. Quite the opposite, Andreas had a commanding role where he instructed Jorge what work they had to do. Jorge was receiving the message and accepting, like it was his duty to follow instructions from him and not really contributing to the ideas, plans and organizing:*

Conversation:

*Andreas: "So Jorge... Next week... we have to get serious about the bakery, slash, kitchen."*

*Jorge: "Yes".*

*Andreas: "And get our game on...(pause)... "We have to start using the oven..." "*

*Jorge: "M-hm"*

*Andreas: "...and also prepare the rooms".*

*Jorge: "Yes".*

I saw Andreas having a commanding role over Jorge, but Andreas was signaling a role he didn't really want to have. It was given from Jorge, in a sense. Jorge accepted the ideas and plans with a confirming "yes" and "m-hm" when Andreas wished he had contributions, or maybe had brought the topics up *first*. The different perception of the "contract" can be seen here, as Jorge played out the one-lined contract while Andreas longed for the more complex involvement. I knew this from conversations with Andreas in retrospect that he was not happy about giving instructions to Jorge. I knew about his expectations of Jorge to "get the game

on”, take initiative to find out things by himself and do his part in the collaboration. From Elisabeth and Andreas’ point of view, they expected this to happen without their delegation and initiative, they told me. They found it as an extra burden to feel that they had to do all the work for them (Marta and Jorge), without them seeming to find out about this themselves, Elisabeth explained. According to them they had been very clear from the start about what they should expect from each other, what to do to make it work and what to do if it didn’t work out, “...And now it seems like he hasn’t listened to what we have said or... That he hasn’t understood, and not asked, what we have meant”, she said in the interview, reflecting back. A similar example of this is the continuation of the brewery room when I the next day found Jorge in the basement sitting by the old bakery oven. He had followed the instruction of Andreas, to get going with the bakery plans:

*He put firewood inside of the very old fashioned oven that also, as Jorge explained to me, had some defects that needed to be fixed. He held a laser temperature- measurer, and he told me that he had to wait for the right temperature before baking anything. The flames needed to turn into hot glow, but not too hot either, he assumed. “This is the first time for me as well” he said and giggled. I had my film equipment ready to film the whole process of making fire, baking the pizza and the finished result. I didn’t know that it would take almost the whole day to sit around not missing the moments of putting in pizza and taking them out. It made me impatient, but he was positive and in a good mood. The kids and Marta came too see him, and I even went for a run in the meantime, and he was still there when I came back. At a point Andreas came to see. Jorge told him what he was doing and what he was thinking while Andreas stood and listened affirmatively as he looked inside the oven testing the laser temperature measurer. He then said: “This is great! Good job!” and left. “Thank you” said Jorge and put some more wood inside.*

I think this exemplifies how Jorge was following instructions according to his perception of his role. He did as he was told, but he did a good job and worked long, hard days to show is gratefulness and pay back their favor. The paradox is that Jorge got his role confirmed by Andrea’s authoritarian role –behavior.

## **Asymmetric reciprocity**

Listening to Andreas and Elisabeth’s reflections through conversations and interviews, they expressed an understanding about that Jorge and Marta needed to have a possibility to give

something in return. From the start they wanted to be clear about what they could do for each other and expect from each other so that the relationship became equal- and synergetic: *“We can do this, but then it is obvious that a certain return is required. In this relation it is not rent, but that they help us here at the farm and that they achieve the goals they say they have, so that our effort to help is not in vain”* Andreas explained in the interview. A person who saw the film during a screening in Tromsø put it pretty well, saying that it was such an uneven power relation because the Norwegians didn't really need the Spanish man there, it wasn't enough work on the farm for him to be truly needed the way Jorge needed them.

I came to think of how the unbalanced relation was having similarities to the problematic of foreign aid from rich countries to poor ones. In his paragraph about “The psychological and social effects of foreign aid” Eriksen (2007) points at the significance for people to being able to reciprocate a gift because it is such a central aspect of social life, but that hundreds of millions of people in the world are kept from fulfilling this obligatory "right". Eriksen is referring to Knut Nustad (2002) who is going into depth of these mechanisms in “The Power of the Gift” where he problematizes foreign aid for reproducing power relations between developing and developed countries. An asymmetric reciprocity is created where *“...the poor countries that receive foreign aid reciprocate lavishly through repayment of debt and cheap labor, but these “prestations” are not acknowledged as such. The gratitude expected from aid givers is in no way matched by similar expectations from debt payers and workers in, say, Jakarta’s sweatshops”* (Eriksen, 2007 p.11). In other words, even if aid-giving countries are in reciprocal relations with the receiving country in attempts to create balance, they have the power to turn on and off the aid flow, and the receiving country cant return the gift of equal value, because then it wouldn't be called aid, but a normal trade. To sum up: Despite levels of similarities in my informant's lives, their social positioning created a relationship where the reciprocal collaboration became one of asymmetric reciprocity instead. Jorge was not able to return a gift of equal value for the big favor Andreas and Elisabeth had offered him. Looking back at the email excerpts, it seems already evident that the relation is heavily unbalanced; Andreas and Elisabeth are underlining that it is a potential collaboration and want to have Jorge's detailed thoughts and plans for the big undertaking as Andreas put it in the email. Jorge apologizes for being so eager that he haven't even considered a failure, he is simply so grateful for the getting the opportunity. In the film I chose to call “Finding New Ways” I introduced Jorge by the following comment from the interview which was made in the beginning of the collaboration: *“I’ve been very lucky to get to know these people, I think that*

*they are very great people. They are helping us out a lot letting us use their house and... They are even trying to help me getting jobs around here so ...I don't know how I will pay them back in the future, but...*” It is already here pretty clear that he will feel in debt to them in a long time perspective, and that he should do more than farm work and baking to return their favor. It is like he would always be in debt to them; even how much he worked for them, even if the bakery plans was realized, even if he got a job and a home, it would be thanks to them.

## **Social fields and power aspects**

One main aspect is the asymmetric gift giving and returning. Another one is the unbalanced relation not only coming from the asymmetric reciprocity, but also that Jorge had brought his whole family into their house- holding, their *field*. He was not a having the role of a typical woofer like had the first weeks he was there without his family. Now they had started the big undertaking and he was supposed to return the gift inside of their field, which may have made things even more challenging. In sociology, an influential theory that explains the dynamics between people and between groups of people is *field theory*. It's most important contributor is the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu (1985) says that power relations within and between these fields structure human behavior and we can understand the behavior of agents, and groups of agents, by looking at what social fields they take part in. In terms of extension or scale, there are small fields, like households and families, larger fields, like political groupings, and super large fields, like state organizations according to Grønhaug (1976). These power relations impose themselves on all who enters the field (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 724). *Power* in this context is identified by how people possess degrees of *capital* based on which social field you are in. “ *The position of a given agent within the social space can thus be defined by the positions he occupies in the different fields, that is, in the distribution of the powers that are active within each of them*” (724). He divides the different types of capital social/cultural (can also be separated as two different groups) economic capital and symbolic capital. Social/cultural capital is the social knowledge you have embodied to maneuver within a field. Simply spoken these are norms and codes, the language and discourses required for surviving and raising the chances for profit in a given field. (Bourdieu 1985, p. 724) To illustrate “fields”, imagine a student association of philosophy and street- smart agents maneuvering in a ghetto; if entering each other's field, they may not have much social/cultural capital for raising profit there and might be considered a weak agent. Economic capital is the material and monetary possessions, and the symbolic capital is the commonly

called prestige, status and reputation and so on (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 724). He says that economic capital is the root of the three because if you have economic capital, like income, it is easier to obtain social and symbolic capital and if you have the more social and symbolic power you have you are more likely to obtain more economic capital (Bourdieu 1986). What this tells me is that when Jorge and Marta came to Veigård, they didn't have much of either the economic, social or symbolic capital. Andreas and Elisabeth had the dominant capital in fields Jorge and Marta were entering; Economic distribution, rules, regulations and culture of their household in addition to their household being part of a larger field; a political grouping or community of ecofriendly and self-sufficient lifestyle. In addition Jorge and Marta lacked social/cultural capital on the general Norwegian cultural norms and rules, knowledge about state law and systems, not least the Norwegian language. Because they didn't have much social/cultural and symbolic capital, it was like Bourdieu suggests, challenging to get a job. In my opinion, this uneven division of capital, and therefore power, imposed themselves on Jorge and Marta and influenced the attempts of a synergic relationship; all situations became affected by this hierarchy between them and because they in addition had different perceptions about the contract, communication became difficult.

## **Unintended power**

Usually, power is defined as the ability to realize ones interests, and the ability to get other people to do what you want (Hernes 1978). But power can exist in all social relations, it is changeable and simply comes in many different forms. Several scientists points out that the use of power is a form of exchange or trade (Hernes, 1978) which I see in my situation with the collaboration. There can be many forms of exchange he says, and in my case we have a scenario of which he exemplifies; *two actors with interests in different causes, but needs each other's help to realize them* (Hernes, p, 43, 1987). As discussed above, Andreas and Elisabeth didn't need Jorge as much as he needed them, which creates the unbalanced power relation. Therefore, Hernes continues, power over another can also be unintended. Unintended impacts can have certain patterns and take a systematic character because of the social structure it propagates through. "*Because of stable qualities of the system, they are regular but not planned or controlled by anyone*" he says (Hernes 1985, p. 158). Exactly because of this, the different structural realities can create powerlessness (ibid). In my case the structure is the social stratification, which is an example of what a social structure can be. In my understanding, the frustration of Andreas and Elisabeth is in this perspective coming from



their unintended power over Jorge because they have all the capital in the field they maneuver in. This is linked to the larger structures of stratification where Andreas and Elisabeth is positioned differently than Jorge. They are capable to offer this great gift, which Jorge cannot return even though he tries. One could say they are all powerless to these social structures and systems.

## Meetings

So how did the unbalanced power relation play out in the direct interaction between them? There is one point I think is necessary to mention considering why the communication broke, and I briefly brought it up earlier about how Andreas and Elisabeth wished Jorge were more self-going. In Andreas and Elisabeth's attempt to communicate well and "be on the same page", the three of them had meetings together every day more or less. I did not take part in these meetings after their wish, but they were open to tell me about the meetings and the process. They did so, both in filmed interviews and without the camera. As already mentioned, both Andreas and Elisabeth told me during the interviews that they missed self-going initiative from Jorge considering the bakery project, applying for jobs and finding out about rules and regulations as a working immigrant. It was also more challenging than expected to have small children around who were making a lot of noise, and they wished that Jorge and Marta would find a way to make it less noisy. They expressed this in the meetings, they said. Despite this, it didn't change for the better. I remember from the e-mails how desperately thankful Jorge seemed in contrast to Andreas and Elisabeth who didn't *have* to have someone baking their breads and fixing the bakery oven. The bakery project was an idea in process, not something they had to realize to survive. My understanding is that Jorge's lack of capital in this relation made him *less* self-going, producing the frustration that was building up for Andreas and Elisabeth. They didn't want to have the "commanding" role; after all, they had their own challenges to deal with considering their own economy and projects. But the more they brought this up in their meetings, it seemed as if they enhanced their dominant position and Jorge was obeying even more, trying his best to follow their instructions and please them. The more they complained and wanted him to change, the more submissive Jorge became, and the more absent the whole family became. This was expressed by how the family started to spend less and less time in the main house because they did not want to be disturbing and a burden. They were no longer spending time in the living room, and Marta

started to bring food from the kitchen to the store -house. On rainy days Marta and the children spent the whole day inside the store -house, only run inside to go to the toilet. Andreas and Elisabeth had noticed this and expressed to me that it was not their intension to make them feel like a burden and that they had misunderstood what they meant about the noisy children. Paradoxically, it was like they created the opposite effect of the synergy they wanted because the power relations between them seemed to be reproduced- and reinforced. In a way they wanted to create a synergy based on their premises and their expectations of how Jorge (and Marta) should behave considering both the collaboration and how to deal with the children. It was like a one-way process without Andreas and Elisabeth realizing it, is my interpretation.

### **Perceptions: “We came to stay”**

Jorge thought he was doing what he was supposed to be doing; signaling his role of which he had built his interpretation of their relationship. He was having a “...*sense of the position occupied in social space...*” (Bourdieu 1985, p. 728) referring to what Goffman calls “sense of ones place”. Bourdieu explains it as the “...*practical mastery of the social structure as a whole that reveals itself through the sense of the position occupied within that structure.*” (ibid). He did farm work they delegated to him; he contributed to the household routines, searched for jobs online, thought himself Norwegian, went with Elisabeth to Fagernes to apply for jobs and worked at the Landlord’s farm. For just being there three weeks, that’s how far he had capacity to get. In my understanding he had a longer time-perspective in his mind, and three weeks was just the beginning. They barely knew each other, and now he had brought his whole family into their home- of course he wanted to please them and make them happy and help them as much as he could. On top of that Jorge had to play out the roles as a father and a husband to Marta and the kids. How was Jorge supposed to meet their expectations when he was new to the country? He didn’t know how to start a bakery business in Norway and he wasn’t preoccupied with organic farming and self -sufficiency the way they were. He would need more social/cultural capital and probably belong to same social fields to understand them and meet their expectations. As mentioned above, Andreas and Elisabeth proposed a one lined contract but expected a more complex “whole-person“ involvement, but this was unclear for Jorge. One of the last days I was filming Jorge sitting in the sofa of the living room after another worrying meeting. Andreas and Elisabeth had proposed that Marta and the kids could go back to Spain while Jorge established himself with job and place to

stay. This came as a shock to Jorge and Marta now realizing that their perception turned out to be different than Andreas and Elisabeth's:

*It is bright outside, but dark inside because all the lamps are switched off. Jorge sits in a corner with his computer on the table, which is the only thing that's lit. The webpage is a page for vacancies, and I can read from the list that he has searched for all that's related to baking and restaurants, all over the country. They just had a meeting where Andrea and Elisabeth suggested that Jorge could stay, but send Marta and the kids back to Spain until he had managed to get a job. Jorge is not happy. He seems baffled and speechless, like the world has turned upside down. I knew from before how much it meant for him and Marta to be together as a whole family. He says to me: "I don't know... I don't know... Because these people are helping us a lot and... I have been trying to keep all my problems [out of their way] and I have said many times that we are OK, we are OK, but now..." He turned silent for a long, long time and I just let the camera run. It was hard for me to find the right words to say, I was surprised about this sudden turn-around as well. He sighed, let his head fall back and then another long moment of silence.*

The situation had an effect on the contracts between my informants and me as well. My roles were volunteer and anthropological filmmaker following their daily practices with the camera, and the role as filmmaker was very challenged when my informant's contracts started to tremble. Suddenly my own contracts with them became unclear as well, and I felt a severe uncertainty about my role-behavior as a filmmaker. What could I film or not, how much could I intrude with the camera, was it even appropriate to film at all when we all felt the seriousness of the conflict? I can even see my own uncertainty in the way I have filmed many clips. They are unstable, too short, shaky and sometimes out of focus, because I was not able to focus as a filmmaker. It was like that role didn't have a place anymore. More importantly, the best "proof" of my own uncertainty was material not existing; Moments and situations I did not manage to capture, but that was desired to be able to make the film.

Jorge and Marta took it heavy, and it was visible in their face- and body language. Marta came over to me one day in the garden, she was crying. We communicated somehow in both English and Spanish, but a sentence I clearly understood, and which were making me reflect, was that she said: "*We had brought all this baggage, all that we could manage, because we came to stay.*" What do the tears and this comment tell about their perception? Why did Jorge

and Marta react so emotionally about having to leave, even though they knew that a possible mismatch could occur? Why did they become baffled and nonplussed, gradually developing into anger and tears? I understand the emotions as an indication of their perceptions and their expectations Marta and Jorge had formed from the beginning. When I read the e-mails after fieldwork, the tears and the anger made just more sense because the tone of the writing had a desperately positive tone. It expressed not even wanting to consider a plan B or a possible mismatch. They had the understanding of coming to stay despite the e-mails between them underlining that they had to see how it went and always consider possible failure in collaboration and other problems of living together. Despite the emails and the frequent meetings, they had an understanding that they came to stay. They were in such need that they just had to take this opportunity. It simply just *had* to work. Considering something else was not an option, but for Andreas and Elisabeth it certainly was. The suggestion Andreas and Elisabeth had of sending Marta and the children back to Spain until he was settled therefore not as easy and unproblematic as they thought. These very different attitudes towards changing plans so quickly also express the different life opportunities and the different degrees of uncertainty and vulnerability; Andreas and Elisabeth can let themselves “try out” stuff, have lifestyle- projects and change direction if they wanted without too much consequences. For Jorge and Marta it was a life situation experienced as “all or nothing”; coming to Veigård was an opportunity from “heaven” that came to them in times of hopelessness and “no other way out”- feeling. After all as Marta said, when they came, they came to stay.

## Summary

One aspect of the culture/identity crisis as mentioned earlier, is that this crisis refers to “...enhanced multicultural contact due to international migration that enforces clashes and frictions between different cultural groups where people are forced to negotiate identity and scarce resources” (Eriksen 2014). In a sense, my micro level social interaction has some association to just this; my goal with this thesis was to identify aspects in a social process causing miscommunication and conflict between individuals with different life opportunities. This goal developed from a change of focus away from exploring the starting process of Andreas and Elisabeth, who wanted to become self-sufficient to address environmental and social problems they saw. Their values and lifestyle choice can be seen as part of “The Voluntary Simplicity Movement” where reduced consumption is seen as addressing individual, ecological and humanitarian issues. Instead, their starting process and values of eco-friendly lifestyle became important elements to understand their motivations and perceptions to the collaboration with Jorge and his family, the Spanish family who had to restructure their life from scratch because of the financial crisis in Spain. I now had a situation where “the structural aspects of the stratification existing” imposed themselves on Andreas and Elisabeth as the privileged and on Jorge and Marta as the deprived. The motivation for the thesis came from my own preoccupation with interconnected global crisis and a curiosity about how other people’s perceptions and responses to them are. Through the Overheating-project of Hylland Eriksen (2014) I found a framework dealing with just how the speed of change and global interconnection the last decades` influences people’s daily lives and minds. The three interconnected crisis is in this context the environmental crisis, financial crisis and culture/identity crisis. I saw responses to all the three crisis in my informants and have argued

that I have a micro level case study of this broader framework; Andreas and Elisabeth's perceptions was how one's lifestyle and consumption affects the global state and they responded by following their values of an eco friendly lifestyle as well as to share resources and opportunities with less fortunate people. I have seen them as an example of how the "self has become a project" in the perspective of the culture/identity crisis; they moved to Veigård to start self-sufficient farming and by welcoming people struck by financial crisis to come live and collaborate with them in a reciprocal relationship. Jorge and Marta's response to the financial crisis in Spain was a "forced" one; they didn't see any other possibility than leaving Spain. Their perception of their situation was a mistrust and anger towards the "people in power" who had forced them to leave their home to be able to offer future possibilities for their children. I started to see a vulnerability of both parts from the fact that they all had put themselves in an uncertain life situation they didn't know the outcome of. This lack of safety and control is said to give rise to tension and conflict between people, which I argued my case could be a micro level example of. I set out to identify sociological and anthropological aspects of why they came into conflict and split apart after only one month. To understand the miscommunication and conflict I saw it necessary to focus on their different perception of the collaboration and their roles in it. I have used the theoretical concept of "contracts" to understand their perception, and I have argued that the two parts related differently to the contract between them. Andreas and Elisabeth had a more complex "whole-person" involvement to Jorge's role in the collaboration and lifestyle project, which was unclear to Jorge who related to the contract as a one-lined employer-employee- relation. I found that despite (especially) Andreas' ideals of synergy creation and focus on reciprocity, an unbalanced power relation developed because Jorge was not able to return the "gift" (the opportunity to come to Veigård et.) of equal value, and the reciprocity became asymmetric. I compared this situation with human aid problematic, where the aid giving country will have the power to be in charge over the receiving country who often reciprocates "lavishly" with less acknowledged returns. The result can be that the rich country's power over poor ones are reproduced. The reason why he couldn't return the gift was because he needed Andreas and Elisabeth more than they needed him. There wasn't important enough work for him to be needed on an equal level and it was also something he asked himself; how he would be able to pay them back in the future. I have argued that the asymmetry also came from the fact that Jorge and Marta didn't have much social/cultural and economic capital to be positioned equally to Andreas and Elisabeth. After all, Jorge had brought his whole family into Andreas and Elisabeth's field. They got therefore an unintended power over Jorge, a role they didn't

want to have but was given to them from Jorge, who were again responding to their dominating role behavior. Jorge simply followed their instructions, rules and routines based on his perception of role and his “*sense of place*”. A frustration developed from Andreas and Elisabeth who expected Jorge to be more self-going and take initiative to his situation and their collaboration. They expected a more complex involvement were Jorge did more than following their instructions. They didn’t want to feel that the work of establishing a foreign family in Norway was all theirs; that would be a too big responsibility. But Jorge’s lack of capital and Andreas and Elisabeth’s expressions of their dissatisfaction made him less self-going and even more submissive trying to please them and not be a burden. Their collaboration based on synergetic ideals developed paradoxically into the opposite effect where the unbalanced power relation got reproduced and reinforced. I saw a development where they were all powerless to the social structures and systems imposing upon them. Jorge and Marta experienced it as a shock and a turnaround when Andreas and Elisabeth proposed that Jorge could stay and establish himself more but let Marta and the kids go back to Spain in the meantime. It was a solution they thought would make things better. According to their email exchanges and meetings, Andreas and Elisabeth underlined that it was a potential collaboration with possibilities of failure, but in my interpretation Jorge and Marta was in such desperate situation that failure was not an option, it had to work, and they were ready to do all they could to make the collaboration work and make Andrea and Elisabeth pleased with them. This was especially visible in the emails from Jorge where he expressed that he didn’t want to think about possible failure, he wanted to stay positive and was sure it would work out. In Jorge and Marta’s perception, they came to stay for a long time perspective and brought all the baggage they could manage. The problem was that Jorge’s perception of his role and what actually pleased Andreas and Elisabeth was different than what Andreas and Elisabeth were looking for in a synergetic collaboration.

## End-of-story remark

Becoming friends with Jorge and Marta (and the children) it was natural for me to suggest to them that they could come with me when I planned to end field -work some days later. My parents and hometown is in Fusa where “everybody knows each other”. I knew my parents would help out, and a quick phone call after my she had found some neighbors who could offer them a cottage to stay in for a cheaper price, of which my mother paid for the two first months. So we took the long distance bus back to Fusa where they still live and work today, and the kids go to kindergarten. Their work-situations have still uncertainty in it, where they have short-term contracts and part-time positions. Jorge told me they are very tired at the end of the day as their days are very stressful with work, the children and low income. He told me on the phone a while after that *“yes, we are very tired and we are very busy, but when I see the refugees in the boats on the news, I think that we are after all okay, we manage. There are scary developments in the world, so I am just thinking about how to make my children safe and to give them a future”*.



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