

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

**"A living life"**

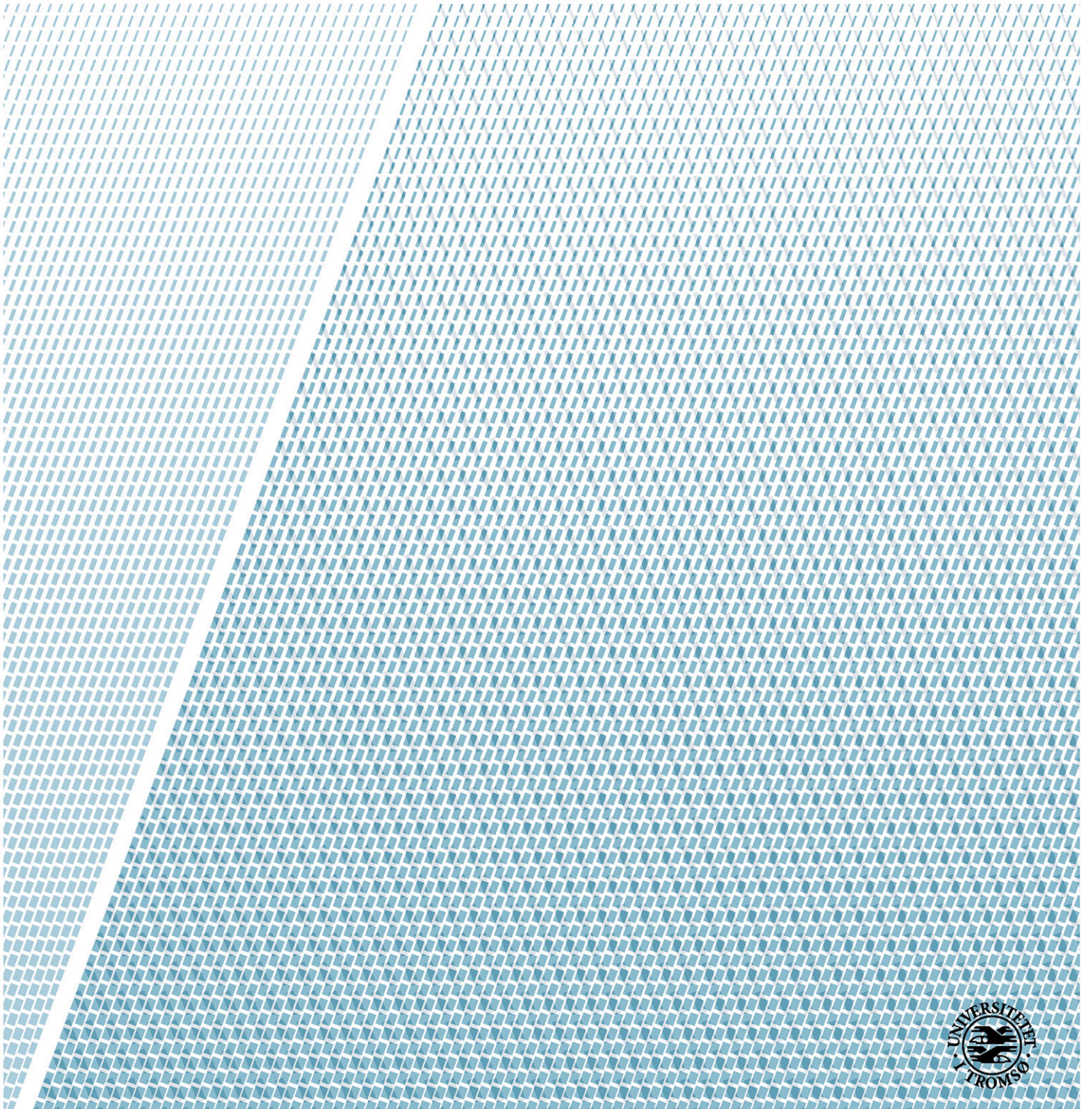
- *Exploring Place attachment and "The good life" on Sandøya, an island community in Southern Norway.*

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# **Abstract**

The concept of lifestyle has become much more important in contemporary, and especially western, social life. This must be seen as part how individual are more free to choose who they want to be, and consequently how and where they want to live. With refers to lifestyle there is a growing number of people who relocate on the basis of a belief that there is a more fulfilling way of life available elsewhere. This is the starting point of how the two women presented in this paper, ended up moving to Sandøya, an island community in the southern part of Norway. This paper is an exploration on the two women's experiences and notion of living "The good life" on Sandøya. By looking at the different aspects of the social, as well as physical environment my informants are part of, I explore the process of Place attachment. Additionally, I look at how Place attachment is expressed and mobilized in action and behavior connected to an attempt to sustain a vibrant community on Sandøya. A preconditions for "The good life" as my informants experience it.

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*It's about the joy of life  
About the art of living  
To love what you do, what you are - and where you are  
It's about real joy, to be, in its totality  
For yourself, for others.  
It's about Sandøya*

*- Made On Sandøya.no*

# **Table of content**

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	3
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENT</b> .....	4
<b><u>Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION</u></b> .....	<b>7</b>
1.1 Entering the field.....	8
1.1.1 Finding informants .....	9
1.2 Presenting Sandøya.....	11
1.2.1 Sandøya before.....	12
1.2.2 Sandøya today.....	13
1.3 Short presentation of Elisiv.....	14
1.4 Short presentation of Trine.....	15
1.5 Research question and structure of the paper.....	16
<b><u>Chapter 2: THEORETICAL CONCEPTS</u></b> .....	<b>17</b>
2.1 From Space to Place.....	17
2.1.1 Place attachment.....	17
2.2 Values and Lifestyle .....	19
2.2.1 The project of self-identity.....	20
<b><u>Chapter 3: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH</u></b> .....	<b>21</b>
3.1 On familiar ground being at home? .....	21
3.1.1 Insider vs outsider – a fluid concept.....	22
3.1.2 “Communal work at Kjennhaug” .....	23
3.2 Fieldwork and participant observation.....	25
3.2.1 Sensing my way through the field.....	25
3.3 Fieldwork with a camera.....	26
3.3.1 Me, the camera and Elisiv.....	27
3.3.2 Me the camera and Trine.....	28
3.4 “A living life” – conveying the experience of place through film.....	29
3.4.1 Film and haptic visuality.....	30
3.5 Ethical considerations.....	33
<b><u>Chapter 4: EXPLORING “THE GOOD LIFE” ON SANDØYA</u></b> .....	<b>34</b>
4.1 Self-employment as part of lifestyle.....	35
4.2 “Trines bachelorette party” .....	37
4.2.1 “Us” and “them” – the symbolic construction of community.....	39
4.2.2 The value of Reciprocity .....	41
4.3 Physical environment – a respiratory for identity and meaning.....	43
4.3.1 “Autumn is here and so are the mushrooms” .....	43
4.3.1 The experience of nature .....	44
4.3.2 “Trine goes to work” .....	45
4.3.2 Living “in” nature” – what does it mean? .....	50
<b><u>Chapter 5: “A LIVING LIFE” –sustaining “The good life”</u></b> .....	<b>53</b>
5.1 “Summer marked with Made on Sandøya” .....	55
5.1.1 “Made on Sandøya” as social entrepreneurs.....	56
5.1.2 Selling “the good life” .....	58
<b><u>Final words</u></b> .....	<b>61</b>
 Bibliography.....	 62

# Chapter 1: Introduction

When I began Visual Cultural Studies two years ago, I would never have thought I would end up doing my fieldwork in Norway, let alone Sandøya, the birthplace of my mother.

Throughout my previous studies my mind had been turned towards the unfamiliar and the unknown, which to a large extent had been synonymous with what was geographically far away. While studying in a multicultural environment like VCS I started to turn my gaze towards myself and my own cultural background, and in the process of finding out where to go for fieldwork, Sandøya often came to my mind. I started to remember the stories my mother had told me about life on the island; Stories about my grandfather being captain on a ship, transporting goods from the coast of Africa to Europe; about the excitement she felt when he sent packages with all kinds of exotic things like coconuts, bananas and spices which at the time was completely foreign to a Norwegian palate. Since my grandfather was often absent years at the time, my grandmother was the head of the household. She was strict, but had a soft and caring heart, according to my mother. Every Sunday they went to the church, which was the meeting point on the island. The reality my mother grew up in was shared with most other families on Sandøya. Men were at sea and women were at home taking care of the children and community matters.

I always loved listening to my mother's stories. To me they were exciting mainly because the reality she grew up in was so far from my own. It was also very different then present day Sandøya where both men and women worked and few, if any, men went to sea. The church had also closed down years ago and according to my mother there were a growing number of new settlers on the island. She had even heard that there were more children attending the local primary school than there had been in years.

I started to think more and more about how the place had changed from the time my mother grew up until today. My mother had left at the age of 21 to study in Oslo. Most of the people at her age did the same and few of them decided to return. When asking my mother about why she didn't go back, her immediate reply was: "*It wasn't anything there for me. It wasn't how I wanted to live*".

I started to ask the question: What made people settle on Sandøya today?

By the end of the first year at VCS my decision was made. I was going to Sandøya, live in my mother's childhood home, and explore life there. The more I did research on the place and the more I talked to my mother about her experiences growing up, the more I started to feel that my choice of field site was actually a very personal one. Sandøya was a place where I have generations of family history and a place very close to my mother's heart. In this way the fieldwork developed to not only being a research on other people's experience and attachment to Sandøya as a place, but also my own.

### **1.1 Entering the field**

After a four-hour drive from Oslo I was finally standing on the harbor waiting for the boat to take me to Sandøya. I can still feel the fresh air with the smell of ocean stroking my face as I was admiring the view. I could see Sandøya across the fjord, covered in trees with some houses scattered around the shore. On the west tip there were several white wooden houses gathered in a cluster. The biggest one of them was where my grandfather grew up.

The boat that was taking me to the island arrived at the harbor. A middle-aged man with a sweater saying "Sørlandets Maritime" was driving the boat. I entered with all my camera equipment, bags of clothes, laptop and some bags of food. "*Where are you going?*" The man asked. "*I'm going to Hauketangen. You can drop me off at Bukta. It's my uncle's harbor*", I replied. He smiled and started to turn the boat around, getting ready to leave the doc. "*I hope you are staying long because now the best time of the year is right ahead of us!*" From my understanding he was referring to the upcoming seasons and the island being a popular summer destination for tourists.

I walked out on deck to look at the view while we were driving. The small white houses were getting closer and closer as the boat got further away from the mainland. It wasn't a long drive, but the feeling of crossing water felt almost like a rite of passage. It felt like I was about to enter a different world and between the familiar and the unknown was a gap of sea.

The boat arrived at the pier. There was no one around, only me and the seagulls circulating above my uncle's house. I took a long deep breath and started to walk toward my mother's childhood home a bit further in on land.



As I walked the narrow dirt road I could see small yellow dandelions trying to force their way through the ground. Around me the trees were starting to get back their green leaves after a long cold wither. The sound of birds singing in the treetops was impossible to ignore and in that exact moment in time I strongly felt that my journey had begun.

### **1.2.1 Finding informants**

During my first week on the island I didn't see many people. I spent my first days walking around trying to get a sense of the place from all different angles. I hadn't seen Sandøya like this before, since my previous visits had taken place during the summer months of July and August. A period when not only nature looked and smelled different, but also, due to the high amount of summerhouses, the number of people being present on the island was noticeably more.<sup>1</sup>

By having lived in the city all my life I started to realize how the summing sound of cars had become so "normal" that I didn't even notice it anymore. The silence I experience on Sandøya was in this way new to me and I quickly realized I had to get used to hearing my own breath without getting scared. My mother had told me that Sandøya was known for having a vibrant birdlife and being alone made me even more sensible to it. It struck me how the nature was so present in the soundscape, how I could hear every movement of the wind and every nuances of the birds living just outside my door.

After a week of exploration, I realized I had to start contacting people directly. Walking around didn't result in finding informants, as I naively thought it might.

Since this wasn't a "normal" fieldwork where I was doing participant observation using only myself and a notebook, but a fieldwork using a camera with the aim of making a film, I knew I needed to find characters quite fast and start the process of filming. I remembered my mother had told me about a business cooperative that had just started up. It was called "Made on Sandøya" and consisted of nine independent businesses situated on the island. I thought it might be a good place to start and decided to contact some of the business holders connected to the cooperative. One of the people I contacted was Elisiv, the owner of Løvøens Lam, a small knitting business located on the east side of the island. Elisiv was the first to reply and we arranged a meeting at her workshop the next day. At this time of my fieldwork I didn't

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<sup>1</sup> Sandøya is a popular summer destination and several of the houses on the island are only used as summer residences. According to the webpage sandoya.no, the population rises to around 2000 during the summer months of July and August.

have a bicycle so I had to walk the 40 minutes it took to get to Elisiv's workshop from my house. I passed the school, a small lake and several houses on my way. Some of them had light inside, but most windows were dark and seemed to be empty.

I did not know exactly where the workshop was, but when I passed the local grocery shop I could hear the sound of classical music coming from a small red wooden house on top of a small hill just next to the road. A blue bicycle was parked right outside and on the terrace there was a middle aged lady having a cigarette. She was wearing orange baggy pants, a black woolen sweater and had a thick scarf tucked around her neck. On her feet was a pair of worn out black Converse shoes, which I later came to know was the trademark of Elisiv among her friends. I was standing on the road looking up at the small red house. "*Are you Elisiv?*" I asked. "*Yes, Come on up! Do you drink coffee?*" She went in to the house and came back with two plastic cups filled with strong instant coffee. We sat down on the terrace and started to talk. I told her about my project on Sandøya and that I wanted to explore how different people experience life here. I immediately felt comfortable in Elisiv's presence and already after our first talk I decided to ask if she wanted to spend time with me and my camera the coming months. I explained that I wanted to follow her in her daily life and activities and that I wanted her to get used to having the camera around. I didn't expect her to say yes immediately. I, myself would have been a bit hesitant to let a person film me for such a long period of time. But, to my surprise she was immediately positive to my request and seemed to have a clear understanding about what I was after, as she started to suggest setting I should film and mentioned other films that might be similar to what she thought I was after. I started to spend a lot of time with Elisiv and decided to put my full focus on her and her life on the island. She became a gatekeeper into a variety of different social situations and a gatekeeper for getting in contact with other people living on the island. It was through her I met Trine, the person who was to become my second main character and key informant.

I clearly remember the first time I met Trine. It was a Friday afternoon in early May and I was going to Elisiv's house to film. I remember entering the door of the house and the first thing that met me was a loud, hearty and characteristic voice. "*So you are "the shadow!"*", referring to me "following" Elisiv around. I ended up spending a lot of time with Trine due to her close relationship to Elisiv.

The more I got to know her and her story, the more it felt natural, as well as relevant to include her in the film as an independent character and not only as the friend of Elisiv. I will later in this paper give a short presentation of the two women who came to be my main informants and characters of the film “A living life”, but before that I want to introduce Sandøya, the site of my fieldwork.

### 1.3 Presentation of Sandøya



Figur 1: half a map of Norway



Figur 2: Map of Sandøya

Sandøya is the biggest island in the archipelago of Tvedestrand municipality. It covers an area of 3,8 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 220 people. Substantial parts of the island are covered by forest and the settlement is spread throughout the island, both along the seaside and on the inland. Many of the houses are used only as holiday homes, and during the summer months of July and August the population is multiplied.

There are small dirt roads connecting the settlements together and there are no cars on the island, except one, driving groceries from the local shop to the inhabitants if needed. Most people use a bicycle to get around. During the winter people use kick sledges and skis. The island is not connected physically to the mainland and it takes in average 10 minutes to get across the fjord, dependent on where you are located. Most people have their own boat, but there is a public ferry available from all public harbors spread out on the island. Located in the middle of the island there is a primary school which at the present time host 16 children from 1<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade. When starting, 5<sup>th</sup> grade children have to commute to the mainland to attend school. The island also has a kindergarten and a grocery shop which also offers post service. There also is a restaurant open during the summer season ([www.sandoya.no](http://www.sandoya.no)).

### **1.3.1 Sandøya before**

Sandøya has been, as most coastal communities in Norway, highly dependent on the ocean as a primary source of income. Men were often sailors, and absent years at a time while the women stayed home taking care of the children and community matters. Up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the population was estimated to reach its peak of 665 inhabitants, which for a small island like Sandøya can be said to be quite big. At this time there were several local shops on the island and community services were many. After the steamships took over, Sandøya, like many other coastal communities in the area experienced a demographic crisis (Thorsen, 2010)

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century many people immigrated to America and several owners, skippers and helmsmen moved to bigger places. The migration of people had obvious consequences for traders and craftsmen on the island and services and shops started to close down. During the 1960s and 70s more and more young people left the island for education or jobs in bigger cities. This negative demographic development continued up until the late 1970s when the population was as low as 150 people (ibid).

With what is often referred to as the "green wave" at the end of the 1970s the negative spiral

started to reverse. People, often young people, started to settle in rural areas again as part of a wish to contest growing tendencies of urbanization and centralization (Fritznersgate, 1983). On Sandøya these settlers are often referred to as “The radical” or “The pedagogues” as there were many teachers amongst the newcomers. The 70s became in many ways a turning point for the community on the island. From the 1970s and until today there has been a continuous wave of new and returning settlers. This has provided a basis for sustaining services like a kindergarten, a local grocery shop and a primary school (Thorsen, 2010).

### **1.3.2 Sandøya today**

Before entering the field, I had ideas about Sandøya being a small place with a small population that would be more or less easy to grasp or at least obtain a certain overview over quite fast. I was very wrong. What on the paper looked like a small village, suddenly felt like a big multi-layered city, a city with a diverse group of people both in relation to ethnicity, sociocultural background and age. The diversity can also be said to be reflected in the various means of livelihood people on the island have. When I arrived at the island there were artists, architects, teachers, offshore workers, lawyers, social workers, politicians and people who were unemployed. In other words, the island was in many ways as diverse as a big city. As Sandøya has a limited number of workplaces available, most of the inhabitants commute to the mainland for work. Having said that, there have been increasing amounts of people who are trying to find a livelihood on the island itself, both among the people who have lived on the island for years, and also among the newer settlers. These enterprises are mainly within the category of arts and handicraft, but also food and recreation. With the rise of small scale businesses on the island some of the entrepreneurs came together and started a cooperative called; “Made on Sandøya”. “Made on Sandøya” functions as a shared marketing platform. Additionally, they function as a local tourist office as well as event management. All of it overlapping. They arrange markets several times a year and members are committed to open their workshops for customers and audiences during high season, holidays and other happenings. “Made on Sandøya” has also been involved in arranging markets and events in the city of Tvedestrand. Trine and Elisiv, my two informants were active and central members of the cooperative and I will in the following give a short presentation of both of them.

### 1.3 Short presentation of Elisiv



Elisiv is a 48 years old woman who partly grew up in a neighboring community not far from Sandøya. She has lived several places in Norway, but moved to Sandøya 19 years ago with her previous husband and her two sons. Today her sons has moved to the mainland and she is now living with her new husband, Øyvind , and their daughter Idunn (9). Idunn is in fourth grade at Sandøya primary school. During the first 10 years living on Sandøya, Elisiv worked as automation technician on the mainland. After Idunn was born she felt a strong desire to do something else. She says:

*“When you get children you start to reflect more about how you want to live and what you feel is important in your everyday life. I was a bit tired of commuting to the mainland and wanted to find something I could do on the island. Something that allowed me to be close to Idunn and have more flexibility when I come to work hours and so on. Being on maternity leave gave me both the time and the economic freedom to start up my business. Something I had thought about and wanted for a long time”.*

9 years ago Elisiv started up a knitting business called “Løvøens Lam” where she design and produce a variety of knitted products ranging from scarfs to sweaters. Løvøens Lam has become her fulltime profession and she has a workshop and seasonal outlet in the old post office on the east side of the island. Elisiv is one of the main initiators of “Made On Sandøya”.

#### 1.4 Short presentation of Trine:



Trine is a 49-year-old woman who grew up on Lyngør, a neighboring island to Sandøya. Like Elisiv, Trine has lived several places in Norway, mainly in bigger cities. She decided to move back to her childhood home on Lyngør 13 years ago because she wanted to live what she calls “*an island life*”. Trine is an educated furniture carpenter and after moving to Lyngør she started up her own business where she designed and produced all kinds of wooden product, artifacts and furniture. After three years living alone on Lyngør she met Jan who at the time lived on Sandøya. He moved to Lyngør and not long after, they got their first daughter, Elvira. Kari was born 2 years later. 1,5 years ago Trine and her family decided to move from Lyngør and settle on Sandøya. This is what Trine told me about the decision;

*“When I decided to move back to Lyngør, I was seeking the place I remembered from my childhood, or at least the same environment. I think that’s what most people seek when they move back to their childhood home, or place. But, because the population has become so small, the dynamic and vivid community I remembered from my childhood has more or less “died out”(…) The school has closed down and there are no new settlers. Here it is different. More people. A life. A community that it is possible to ... A living community.”*

After moving to Sandøya, “Lyngør Møbler” has been renamed to “Basthaven”. Trine has also become partner in 4915, the local boatyard on Sandøya. The business consists of 5 people with a variety of competence in wooden handicraft. Both 4915 and “Basthaven” are members of “Made on Sandøya” and Trine is an active member in the administration of the cooperation.

## 1.5 Research question and structure of the paper

As I mentioned in the introduction of this paper, I started this whole process by wondering about what made people settle on Sandøya today? I have carried this question with me both during fieldwork, as well as after, and hope I will be able give some answers related to this by the end of this thesis. However, my initial question has expanded a bit since then.

By living on Sandøya and spending time with Elisiv and Trine I came to understand that what might initially have brought them to Sandøya in the first place was also what kept them there. Both of them often referred to an experience and a notion of living “The good life” on Sandøya and I saw a strong attachment to the island as a physical and social space.

I started to wonder; **What makes life on Sandøya “The good life” to my informants?**

This paper will be an exploration of the above question. Additionally, I want to look at how, what I understand to be a strong Place attachment, is expressed in their engagement in “Made on Sandøya”.

Before I go further in my exploration, I want to delineate the main theoretical framework for this paper. After that I will reflect on the methodological aspect of my fieldwork which I believe is fundamental in the process of knowledge creation. In the analytical parts of this paper I will explore my informants experiences and perceptions about the physical and social environment on Sandøya and further connect it to how meaningful person/place bonds are made. This I will do by looking closer at selected empiric examples. In the final and last part, I want to look at how my informant’s actions in the place which they live, is part of an attempt in preserving “The good life” as they understand and experience it on Sandøya.



# Chapter 3. Theoretical concepts

In this chapter I want to clarify the main theoretical concept used in this paper. This is not a full introduction to all theory used, but a clarification of the most central concepts that I believe constitute the main framework for my further exploration.

## **3.1 From Space to Place**

Place as a term is highly complex and multivalent. It is both a location on the map which has specific physical characteristics in the form of build or natural character but, it also highly imagined and dynamic. In the book *Space and place: the perspective of experience* (1977) Yi-Fu Tuan argues that space becomes place when people start to embed meaning in to it. In other words: it is only when space is experienced that it *becomes* a place. Space is according to Tuan an abstract concept, while place is specific and can be contemplated from within. By understanding place from this perspective we emphasize on the subjective, experiential aspect of place, in other words, the subjective and emotional attachment *people* have to place (Berg and Dale 2004). It is therefore through people's subjective descriptions, experiences and actions we have the possibility to understand how people and places create their meaning world, not only *in* places, but *with* places (ibid). In this way, places-making is "*a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities.*" (Basso, 1992:6) Consequently, places are, as people, in constants transformation and thus, a highly temporary phenomenon.

### **3.1.1 Places attachment**

During the last years the concept of Place attachment has gained growing attention within various academic disciplines. This can be seen in relation to an awareness that person-place bonds have become more fragile as globalization and increased mobility has become more prevalent, especially in the modern western world (Giddens, 1991). This, Giddens argues, has led to a state where values, beliefs and ideas are more loosely connected to localities as such. But this doesn't mean that places are not important to people anymore. On the contrary. places are still where peoples' everyday experiences and lives take place and might also be where new expressions of identity are manifested. Giddens argues that "*the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa*" (Giddens 1990: 64) Hence,

more globalized values, beliefs and ideas might be argued to be brought in to the local (Hylland-Eriksen, 2008). With this in mind, place attachment and the way that it occurs might have been taking new shapes alongside an increasingly globalized world. This can be argued to be especially relevant when dealing with rural communities, like Sandøya, in post-industrial societies.

So how does one approach place attachment and further define what makes a place "meaningful" enough for place attachment to occur?

Scannell and Giffords put forward a three-dimensional framework when dealing with Place attachment. This include person, psychological process, and place (Scannell and Gifford, 2009:2), with the first answering the question of: who is attached? To what extent is the attachment based on individually and collectively held meanings? And what is the nature of these meanings? The second dimension is a psychological process which they further divided in tree levels; affect, cognition, and behavior. The affective aspect of this dimension, Scannell and Gifford understand as the emotional connection to a place. Emotional connection is expressed in the way people experience feelings, like for example, security or sense of satisfaction in specific places. The cognitive part of the psychological process “*involves the construction of, and bonding to, place meaning, as well as the cognitions that facilitate closeness to a place*” (2009:3).

The third and last aspect of the psychological dimension of place attachment is seen at a behavioral level. Person-place bonds are both expressed through, as well as created by people behavior in and with place, both on a social as well as physical level, which also points in the direction of the final dimension of place attachment, which is what they call *place*. Here we are directed towards the object of the attachment, hence the place characteristics or what I will continue to call the “*local character*” of a given place. This include both imagined as well as real elements of the social or/and physical environment found in particular places (Scannell and Gifford, 2009:2). Before I move on to the concept of lifestyle and the construction of self-identity I want to underline that Place attachment by no means can be explained in terms of a cause and effect type of mechanism. All the above dimensions and aspects presented, I understand as interconnected, as well as mutually dependent and overlapping.

Below I have attached a model made by Scannell and Gifford (2009) which might clarify what I presented in the above.

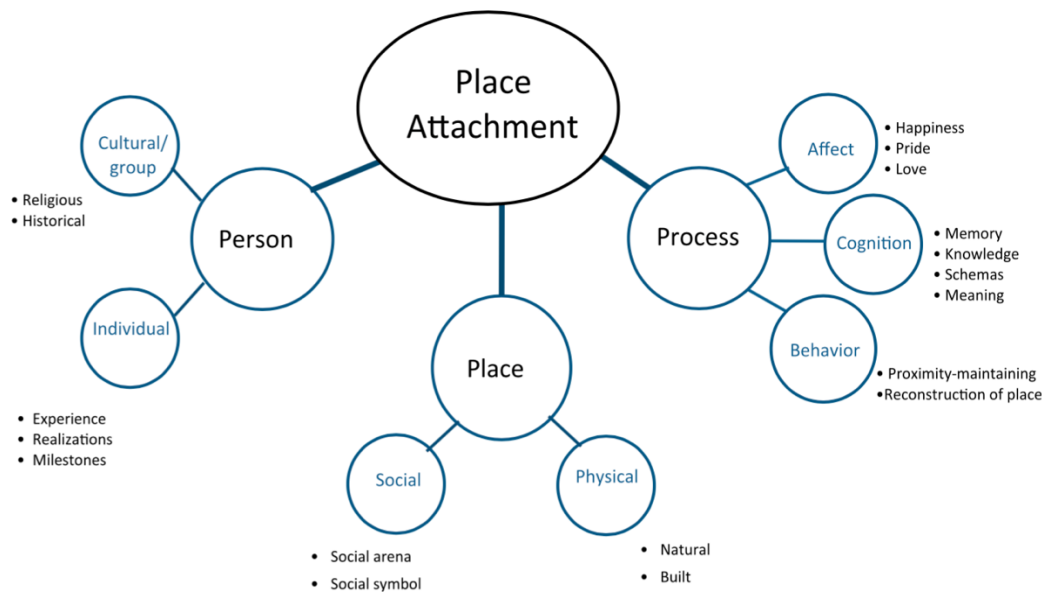


Fig. 1. The tripartite model of place attachment.

### 3.3 Values and lifestyle

According to Giddens (1991), the concept of lifestyle has become much more important in contemporary, and especially western, social life. He argues that the more tradition loses its grip on our daily life, the more it is up to, and to some extent, expected, that individuals create the life they feel correspond with own values and beliefs (Giddens, 1991).

Having said that, people’s values and beliefs are not developed in a vacuum. Rather they can be understood as social and cultural phenomena’s in the sense that they are developed through peoples conscious and un conscious participation with the world. Followingly, values, being a social and cultural expression, have the possibility to create a sense of belonging to different social environments (Gullestad 1989:61). Values can also be seen in connection to social action. It might direct our emotions as well as our choices (Barth, 1994) In this way, I want to introduce the term *lifestyle migration*. Lifestyle migrants are people who relocate on the basis of a belief that there is a more fulfilling way of life available for them elsewhere. In other word, they migrate in pursuit of ”The good life” as they see it (Hoey, 2005). “The good life” in this context refers to how a person experience their life in correspondence to personal values, beliefs and ideas (Tuan, 1986). In this way, “The good life” is highly related to the construction of self-identity, which I will look at in the following.

### 3.3 The reflexive project of self

Lifestyle and self-identity must be understood as mutually interlinked. Giddens define lifestyle as “*a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embrace, not only because such practices fulfill utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity*” (Giddens, 1991:81). In this way lifestyle becomes a part of “*the reflexive project of self*”. This can be described as a process of self-realization where choices and actions becomes a materialization of one's own story, or as Giddens puts it “*the narrative of the self*” (ibid). Because I, in this paper look at Place attachment, I find it relevant to add the concept of place-identity as a specific component to self-identity. Place identity, defined by Cuba and Hammond is: “*an interpretation of self that uses environmental meaning to symbolize or situate identity. Like other forms of identity, place identity answers the question, “Who am I?”, doing so by countering, “Where am I?”, or more fundamentally, “Where do I belong?”*” (1993:548).

#### 3.3.5 Short summary

I have now clarified the main theoretical concept of this paper. I have argued that place must be understood as something that “become” in the moment people embed meaning in to it. In this way it is only when a physical place is experienced it becomes a place. This is also the starting point of how a will approach Sandøya as a physical place on the map. By trying to gain an understanding about what I came to see was a strong attachment to Sandøya as a physical and social space, I will draw on the term Place attachment. I have presented a tripartite model of how Place attachment can be argued to occur. The three dimensions I have presented include person, psychological process, and place. Shortly put, I will approach Place attachment as “*an interplay of affective and emotional, knowledge and beliefs and behavior and action in reference to place*” (Altman and Low, 1992:5). Because I understand both my informant's decision to settle on Sandøya as a lifestyle choice I have clarified this term and connected it with the idea of “The good life”. Additionally I have argued that lifestyle must be seen as part of a person self-identity project. In this way, I understand place and people are mutually constitutive.

Before exploring Place attachment and my informants notions of living “The good life” on Sandøya, I will look closer at the methodological aspects of my work.

## **Chapter 4. Methodological approach**

*“Knowledge cannot be separated from the knower”* (1991:53 in Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000:1)

All anthropological research must be understood as a social process of which knowledge has been, and are being created (Davies, 2008). Hence, it is important to be reflexive when presenting and creating knowledge, a method that I have applied in this paper. Reflexivity, defined by Davies, is about turning the gaze toward oneself and attend to a process of self-reference (Davies, 2008:7). How I interpret and understand the data collected in the field is influenced by my background, sets of statuses, personal beliefs and views. By applying reflexivity, I want to underline how the knowledge presented in this paper is based on my personal/subjective understanding and interpretations. I am the author making meaning of both my own and my informants lived experiences which I approached through participant observation, mainly using a camera. The camera must in this way be understood as fundamental to the meaning-making process and as following, the creation of knowledge. *What* I came to know is interlinked with *how* I came to know. In the following I want to present and discuss my own background for understanding and reflect and discuss the methods used when approaching the field and my participants lived experiences. I also find it valuable, due to my connection to Sandøya and the fact that I was doing research in my native country, to discuss the concept of anthropology at “home”.

### **4.1 On familiar ground, Being at” home”?**

Doing fieldwork was for a long time synonymous with leaving the familiar and seek out toward the unknown world, preferably far away from one’s own field of reference. Fieldwork done in own cultures was for a long time disputed and it was argued that researchers at “home” was not able to put enough distance between themselves and what she or he was studying, hence the result was argued to become subjective and non-scientific (Paulgaard, 1997).

In recent years, however, most researchers agree that there are no such thing as an “objective” anthropological research. All research is situated, hence bias. Being an “insider” or an “outsider” is in this way not relevant when deciding whether a research is scientific or not. Cato Wadel argues that doing fieldwork in your own society doesn’t necessarily mean that you are doing research in your own culture. He continues to argue that even within cultures there are a variety of realities that might be foreign to the researcher (Wadel, 1991). This supports my own experiences during fieldwork in the way that I was very much new to social realities on Sandøya. I didn’t have knowledge about, nor any previous experience with living on an island and in a small scale community like found on Sandøya. I grew up in a city and have lived in cities all my life. With that said, I did share language with my informants and to some extent cultural references because I was a Norwegian like them. These prepositions might have afforded me a faster ability to get an understanding of the social realities I was situated in and addressing because I could understand and communicate directly to my informants. On the other hand, I might have taken things for granted and missed out on important aspects because the reality and meaning-world of my informants was too close to my own and therefore not noticeable to me. Having said that, I was very aware this fact, and I constantly reminded myself to step out of the situation and see it from a position of a complete foreigner. It was helpful for me to remind myself of my classmates in Tromsø who were from other parts of the world and I often asked myself “*Would they understand what is going on now, what they are doing and why they are doing it?*”

#### **4.2 “Insider” and “outsider” – a fluid concept**

There is another aspect to the notion of “insider” and “outsider” that I find important to emphasize. This is related to how the researcher is perceived by the community. Davies argues that being an “insider” is both a matter of acknowledging and being acknowledged. It can be argued to take shape an ongoing dialogue between groups and individuals. In this way, it is not only up to me, as an anthropologist, to feel and identify with the group; it’s also up to the group to acknowledge me, the anthropologist, as an “insider” (Davies, 1998). As I came to understand during my fieldwork, the notion of “insider” and “outsider” must be seen as a rather fluid concept.

First of all, the degree of familiarity is impossible to mainly because it is not a static condition. In every society there are multiple of social boundaries that are highly fluid in the sense that they are shaped and reshaped in various ways. These boundaries are being created

by - and must be seen as the result of, “*the variety of ways individuals are felt to belong and not belong to different social categories and groups*” (Davies, 2008:41). The empiric example presented below, I believe gives insight into how I experienced being acknowledge differently by different people living on Sandøya.

#### **4.2.1 Communal work at Kjennhaug, the community house**

It was my first week of fieldwork. On the webpage of Sandøya I saw there was going to be a dugnad<sup>2</sup> at Kjennhaug, the community house, the coming weekend. I thought it might be a perfect opportunity for me to meet and get to know people. It was a rainy day so I had to put on my rubber boots and raincoat. While I was walking several people passed me on their bicycles. Everyone greeted with a short, but persistent “hi” and continued cycling on the muddy dirt road. I didn’t recognize a single face from previous visits to Sandøya and I started to become a bit nervous about just showing up without knowing anyone there. After a 20-minute walk towards the east side of the island I finally arrived at Kjennhaug. The red wooden house was situated on top of a small hill next to Tjenna, a small lake. My hair and face was completely wet as I arrived and I had just discovered that there was a hole in my left rubber boot.

I felt a strong relief when I met Ole at the entrance. I had met him a couple of days before when I was wandering around exploring the island and accidentally ended up in his garden with full camera gear. He was cutting wood when I suddenly showed up. We stopped and chatted for a while, and the first thing he told me after getting to know my name was that we were related on my grandmother’s side. He also proudly stated that he had 16 generations of bloodline linking him to Sandøya. That was way more than most people could claim, according to him.

When I met him at Kjennhaug he was as friendly and welcoming as he had been the first time we met. There were about 40 people present and Ole guided me toward the kitchen where some people were cleaning. I introduced myself with my name and said I was going to live

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<sup>2</sup> Old Norwegian practice based on voluntary work. Involves often helping neighbors or others with a work that it is difficult to manage alone . Participants are given food and drink in return for work. Also often combined effort within a residential areas , an association , local community etc. (<https://snl.no/dugnad>)

on Sandøya for a few months doing my master project. They didn't seem very interested in talking to me and I didn't want to seem intrusive so I mainly listened to their conversation while cleaning. After a couple of hours, people started to leave. I was still in the kitchen finishing up with a man and a woman who I learned had just moved back to the island after living a couple of years on the mainland. None of them was from Sandøya, but they wanted to live on an island where there still was a local school. According to them, Sandøya was one of the few islands left in the southern part of Norway.

As we were talking, Ole, came towards me. *“Do you mind locking the door before you leave, Aylin?”* He placed the key in my hand and said: *“just put it in my mailbox on your way home”*. I noticed the couple got a bit surprised when Ole “trusted” me with the key. They didn't say anything before we were about to leave. *“Where do you live?”* the woman asked me. *“I live in my mother childhood home close to Hauketangen”* I replied. *“I see. that's why Ole gave the key to a visitor and not one of us locals”*. I got the impression that they both were a bit offended that I was given the key and therefor the responsibility to close Kjennhaug. I was after all just a visitor.

As I have mentioned earlier in this paper, the community on Sandøya can be said to be highly diverse in several manners. In this way the different social categories and groups can be said to have different criteria's for belonging to Sandøya as a place. As seen in the example above, the way I was perceived by people varied accordingly. In relation to people who had family roots on the island, I often experienced that my status expanded from being only a student and a visitor, to one who, to some extent, “belonged”. Ole “trusting” me with the key to Kjennhaug I believe exemplify this point. To my understanding, we had something in common in the sense that we “shared” having family roots on the island. When he proudly presented having several of generations of bloodline connecting him to Sandøya as a physical place, he implicitly points toward bloodline as one of the element of “belonging” to the island. Hence, I was someone who “belonged”.

However. In my meetings with people who had settled in recent years and didn't have a bloodline to refer to, I encounter different attitudes. As the empiric example might show, the man and the women perceived me as an “outsider” in the sense that I was a visitor to the island. To them belonging seemed to be linked to actually living on the island on a full year basis. Having family connections to the place was not enough. I remember another lady who



had lived on the island for 10 years once told me “*You have to experience the winter here before you can actually call yourself a local*”.

#### **4.3 Fieldwork and participant observation**

Doing fieldwork can be regarded as the core of the anthropological endeavor and the very foundation of how anthropological knowledge is created. It involves a qualitative methodology where the researcher over time is living in the environment of the people whose lives she or he is exploring (Spradley, 1980). Simply put, the goal of the anthropologist is to gain an understanding of people’s meaning worlds and realities through the methods of both participating in their everyday life as well as observing it from a distance (ibid).

During my fieldwork I was both doing participant observation with and without a camera. Even if the camera was an important part of *how* I “collected” material from the field, my everyday encounters and experiences on the island without the camera have been just as important to the overall field experience. Because I was working on the film I spent proportionately more time with my film characters and their social network in relation to other people. But, the island being fairly small both in size and population, my presence became noticeable to most people. I became in many ways part of the social landscape on the island. My meeting with people was mostly random and took often place at the store or by the road, arenas I came to understand was where everyday social interaction mostly took place. During these meetings people transferred news in the community and talked about everyday topics, like the weather, upcoming events and so on.

During my stay I tried to participate in most of the public events happening. Everything from parties, to annual events or communal work. On most events I was following my informants with a camera, but I was also participating myself in between the filming. I experienced people to be very curious about my project and conversations I had often circulated around what the film would be about. Additionally, people who I met often started to share their own stories and experiences related to life on Sandøya. On many occasions political topics were brought up. Like the municipalities threat of closing down the school. This was a big concern for many and I felt that people often wanted to share their experiences about this topic with me. I always brought a notebook along when I was outside and with people, but I rarely wrote things down in the moment simply because it didn’t feel natural to start writing while having a conversation with someone.

When I came home I always spent time writing down who I met, what we talked about and my experiences during the day. When reading through my field notes I found similarities in people's stories. Certain topics, experiences and descriptions were brought up on several occasions in my talks with different people. Even if both my film and this paper focus on Elisiv and Trines, I found that their experiences and perceptions were shared by many other people who I met. This is relevant because I believe it says something both about the social and cultural processes and environment my informants are a part of and situated in (Gullestad 1996).

#### **4.3.1 Sensing my way through the field**

A big and important part of my experience living on Sandøya was connected to the sensory aspect of the place. Everyday I woke up to the sound of birds and the smell of fresh sea and forest. The nature was omnipresent and I came to understand that this was a big part of not only my experiences living on the island, but also of my informants. Peter Stoller says *“anthropological practice is a corporeal process that involves the ethnographer engaging not only with the ideas of others, but in learning about their understanding through her or his own physical and sensorial experiences(...)”* (Stoller 1997 in Pink 2009). As I was living on the island myself for a longer period of time, my body was situated in the environment of my informants. I was walking the same roads, breathing the same air and I was surrounded by the same sea. In other words, experiencing the place not only through my encounters with people, but also through my senses. During my fieldwork I also notice that people's everyday talk often evolved around the sensory aspect of island life, like the shifting of the wind or the sound of a bird.

The creation of knowledge which this paper is a part of, derives from both from my active participation in a social and material environment, but in addition to that, it also involves my active participation in a sensorial environment (Pink 2009).

#### **4.4 Fieldwork with a camera**

The fact that I was making a film, as I have mentioned above, has been fundamental to this fieldwork. The camera must be recognized to be an essential part of how I engaged with people and my environment. It has influenced the way I experienced my surroundings, the people I encountered and the mode in which I was participating in social situations (Pink

2009). The camera became in other words a part of the material environment my informant and I was situated in and was to a large extent defining my role in relations to them, as well as my role in the wider community. People knew me as the one making a film. If I met people without carrying the camera or having a camera bag on my back, I almost always got comments like “*Where is your camera?*” “*Aren’t you going to film today?*”.

Additionally, the camera became a way for me to position myself and to get access into my informants’ everyday lives and occupations. Pink writes that in contemporary research, and especially in western societies, it can be hard to get access and insight into all spheres of a research partner’s life. Not only may it be impractical, but also inappropriate for the researcher to live for a long period in the home of her or his research partners (Pink 2004 in Pink 2009:9). This was very much the case in my fieldwork. My plan was never to live under the same roof as my informants, but I wanted to get access into the more intimate and private spheres of their everyday life. In order to get this kind of access I experienced the camera to hold an important role. It became my way into part of their lives which I, without a camera, don’t believe I would be granted access, at least not as fast as I did. I didn’t know my informants before arriving for the fieldwork and I don’t think it would be natural for me, or them, to be hanging around in their house in the morning while they had breakfast or tag along when visiting a friend in the evening.

The camera and the fact that I was making a film became the starting point for building a relationship and it legitimated my presence in situations and social contexts I wouldn’t naturally be part of. Like a family dinner, Trine’s bachelorette party or going to the grocery shop after work. Because the camera must be acknowledged to play a significant role in how I interacted and built relationship with my informants, I find it important to discuss and clarify the role of the camera and how it was part of my interaction with my two main informants.

#### **4.4.1 Me, the camera and Elisiv**

With Elisiv, our relationship both started out and evolved through the framework of making a film. I was spending time with Elisiv both during her work hours and leisure. I followed her around in her activities on the island, ranging from meeting with “Made on Sandøya”, making dinner at home, having a beer at Trine’s place, going to public events on the island, knitting or going to choir practice at the community house. We mainly arranged our meetings for filming, but I often just dropped by her workplace or at her house and filmed whatever she

was doing. My approach varied between pure observation and a more interactive approach where I asked questions while filming. Which approach I employed often depended on the situation. If she was working, I tried to not interrupt her more than I already did by being there. In addition to that, I wanted her to act as she “normally” behaved, and directing the situation by asking questions or talking would make this rather difficult. A lot of my footage is from situations where Elisiv interacts with other people. This could be random meetings by the road, customers coming to her workshop or other social meetings and gatherings. In these situations, I was shifting between interaction and pure observation depending on how people addressed me. In some situations, people started to involve me in the conversations or they commented something about the camera. I rarely experienced people asking me to stop filming, even though in some situations people asked me afterward to not include part of conversations in the film. Reasons for that could be if they were talking about someone else who wasn't there and the content was rather private.

My approach also changed a bit during the fieldwork as we both got more used to the camera. The more fluent I got in handling the camera the more I was able to interact and have conversations while filming. I also understood from Elisiv's body language that she didn't feel comfortable talking to too much while being filmed in the beginning. This changed during the fieldwork. The film material is therefore more observational in the beginning than later.

#### **4.4.2 Me, the camera and Trine**

Trine came in as a main character and informant on a later stage than Elisiv. I had already filmed her in social settings with Elisiv, but I did not spend time with her alone before after I decided to include her as a second main character in the film. Most of my meeting with Trine was arranged and I asked on beforehand if I could come and film at her house or at her workplace. In contrast to Elisiv, I experienced Trine to be very talkative and outspoken. She often asked me about things while I was filming and we had many dialogues while I was behind the camera and she was in front. All the interviews I had with Trine were informal in the sense that they just impulsively happened through our interaction.

In comparison with Elisiv I felt Trine was much more aware of the camera and I got the impression that she to a larger extent, had specific things she wanted to convey, like her experiences of moving from Lyngør. This was to her a very emotional topic and I felt she had

a strong need to convey her experiences concerning it. During the situation that this topic was brought up I strongly felt she didn't only speak to me, but to what I understand to be, a future audience of the film. Arntsen and Holthedal are emphasizing the role of the audience in the construction of anthropological based representation and knowledge. When using visual tools, the audience becomes invisible and in the minds of people involved (Arntsen and Holtedahl, 2005). The perspective Arntsen and Holthedal emphasize is something I found to be highly relevant in my interaction, especially with Trine. Trine frequently suggested setting to film, like when we went for a walking interview on Lyngør. During our tour she showed me the island, talked about her childhood memories and how life on the island changed after the school was closed down. The decreasing population on Lyngør, was what has brought her to Sandøya and I felt she had a strong desire to share her story with others, not only me.

#### **4.5 The film "A living life" –conveying the experience of place through film**

*“Film brings people and cultures alive on the screen, capturing the sensation of living presence, in a way that neither words nor even still photos can” (Barbash and Taylor, 1997:1).*

The visual can be argued to first and foremost present us with a physical presence. Which in turn can be argued to present us with the more sensible realities of social life in the way that it expresses details of the physical world of people (MacDougall, 2006, Posta and Crawford, 2006). Additionally, the visual can also be argued to hold functions that might lead us towards the nonvisible. That is, the domain of for instance, feeling, space and the senses. Edgar Morris calls this *“the emotive fabric of human existence”* (MacDougall, 2006:269). The synchronization of sound, image and movement opens up for a more multilayer and holistic way of understanding peoples lived realities. Hence it direct us toward a multi-sensorial way of knowing (ibid). In this way I want to argue that the visual is especially suited when trying to understand and approach people's experiences and relationships in and with places because it has the possibility to “show” how people move and “inhabit” their space. By using visual and audio tools I was able to both explore and show the more multisensory layers of my informants lived experiences because it enabled me to reach beyond what I believe can be expressed using only words.

### 4.5.1 Film and haptic visuality

MacDougall argues that the relationship between touching and seeing can be understood as part of the use of video as a sensory research method (MacDougall 1998, 2005 in Pink 2009). When stating this he goes further than understanding touch as only a physical sensation. The idea of touch, he argues, can involve the idea of “*touching the consciousness of others*” (Pink 2009: 145).

As I have mentioned earlier, an important part of my fieldwork experience was connected to the sensorial environment on Sandøya. In my film, “A living life” I have tried to transmit these experiences on to the audience. This I have tried to do in the way I have selected images, used sound and the pace I have chosen to edit. I have for example chosen to have long and stable shots of the natural environment in between the different scenes. This I have done due to several reasons. First, I wanted to show the audience the variation of material and sensorial environment there is on the island. Like the forest landscape and the fjord landscape. By placing these images in between the different scenes, I wanted to give the viewer a sensation of how it is to be and move around on the island. One of the realities I came to see and feel on my body while living on Sandøya was connected to how you needed to physically move my body through the different landscapes in order to get from one location to another. There were no means of transportation available except your own feet or a bike. By choosing to have these long shots my intention was to give the viewer time to emerge into the image, the soundscape and the temperament of the place. I want to give the audience a “sense of the place”. Laura Marks talk about” haptic visuality, which she defined as the way we experience touch “*both on the surface of, and inside our bodies*” (Marks 2002:2). In haptic visuality, our eyes become like an organ of touch in the way that image triggers multiple senses, not only vision. It invites the viewer’s body into process of seeing (Marks 2002, 2-3). Below I present some of the haptic images I use in the film. The audio attach to the images I believe is important important in order to get a totality of the experience I try to evoke. Obviously this is not possible in this paper, but I want to refer to the film “A living life”.



Sunrise and the sound of morning birds singing. Here the focus is on the mood of the image. I try to invite the viewer to feel the surface of the water and pay attention to the soundscape of the island. The image I believe evokes calmness as well the freshness of a new day.



A calm lake during the day. The sound of birds and wind hitting the treetops are in the foreground of this shot in the film "A living life. I try with this image to give the audience a feeling of tranquility and to get immersed in to the feeling of the place.



A cat by the road. It is the slow phase of the movements in this shot I find important. The empty road and the cat occupying it. In this image the audio along with the image I believe give a feeling of tranquility and calmness.

As explained above, I try to give the audience a "sense" of the place. To feel the place on their body in similar way that I felt it. This must be understood in terms of reflexivity because the way I have edited sequences shows not only how I understand my informants sensory experience of the place, but also how I experience the place myself through my own senses. MacDougall argues that the filmmakers' presence may be shown through small details and in very implicit ways (MacDougall, 1998:88). How I have edited and presented the sensorial aspect of the island, I believe, is part of situating my presence in the film. With that said, when showing the film to my informants, one of the comments they made was that they were impressed with how I had grasped the slow pace in of the island. How I had captured the "feeling" of the place and through my film they were reminded about how the place "felt". Before I move on and start to explore aspect of my informant's experiences of living "The good life" on Sandøya, I want to mentioned a few things about ethical considerations connected to both the paper and the film.



#### **4.6 Ethical considerations**

When you, as an anthropologist get involved and are granted access to peoples private and sometimes vulnerable spheres of life, it is very important to reflect on how what is presented might affect the people involved. In many cases anthropologist chooses to anonymize their informants in their writings, but in my work this was never a possible option. As I was doing fieldwork with a camera with the intention of making a film both my informants images and names, as well as the social environment they are part of, would be presented to the outside world. Due to this fact, I always made people aware of when the camera was on or not. This I did by turning the camera away from the event taking place or leaving it on the ground or in my camera bag. Having said that, I will use empiricism seen in the film “A living life”, but also examples that are not included in the film in this paper. This I see as related to how film and written text adhere to different ethical considerations. Some people, like when I filmed during markets on the island, were not aware of the purpose of the filming. I have not made agreements with them about the use of the material they might be part of. I find it therefor not appropriate to to use their image if I haven’t specifically made them aware of the purpose.

With this in mind, I don’t believe that any of the questions I bring forward reveals aspects of my informants private life, nor the social life on the island in a way that might lead to negative consequences for the people involved. On the contrary. Both expressed a wish to show “The good life” on Sandøya. By looking at my informant’s experiences and perceptions connected to life on the island, I do believe and hope I have managed to to exactly this.

# Chapter 5: Exploring the “The good life” on

## Sandøya

In the following part of this paper I will look closer at the process of Place attachment and followingly, explore element I found to be fundamental to my informants notion of living “The good life” on Sandøya. The first part is dedicated to an exploration of how community are constructed and further, how it is expressed through social interaction. In the second part, I look at how my informant’s interaction with and in the physical environment play part in establishing meaningful person/place bonds.

### **5.1 Moving to Sandøya – a lifestyle choice**

*“We were tired of the city and wanted to move somewhere on the countryside, to a small scale community. A place where we could grow our own vegetable and keep a garden. We didn’t have those possibilities where we lived. For me, it was also important to live close to nature. Sandøya offered us all these things so when we found this house, I was completely mesmerized” - Elisiv*

*“When I decided to move back to Lyngør I was seeking the place I remembered from my childhood. I wanted to live “An island life”. But life there wasn’t how I expected it to be. (...) Just to be able to visit a friend in the evening. Or somebody suddenly knocking on the door! That never happened on Lyngør. Sandøya is more like Lyngør was when I grew up. More people. A life. A living community. -Trine*

As seen in the quotes above, both my informants have actively made a choice when settling on Sandøya. They have both lived elsewhere, but decided to leave and seek out a physical place in the world which they believed possessed qualities necessary to support and facilitate for the life they wanted to live, hence lifestyle (Hoey, 2010:243). (Tuan, 1986)). Tuan says; “Mobility, like individualism, are two features of modern life. The two being closely linked. An individual dissatisfied with his community’s settled ways, moves out to take advantage of opportunities elsewhere (Tuan in Eigler and Kugele, 2012: 227). As mentioned in the

theoretical part of this paper, a person's decision to relocate might be seen as a pursuit for "The good life" which in turn must be seen as connected to a person, or groups values and beliefs. Flowingly, the act of migrating with reference to lifestyle, as I have argued in the theoretical part, becomes the basis of people's self-identity project (Hoey, 2010). This way of understanding the connection between lifestyle, self-identity and place, I believe correspond with how Trine formulated it when I asked her why it was so important for her to live on Sandøya;

*"Why is it important for me to be able to choose my own life? I think it is a right in life. Being able to choose who I want to be, how I want to be. And in order to choose who I want to be, I need to be able to choose where I want to live, and the way I want to live" .*

Elisiv answered in a similar way when replying that being able to choose where to live was the same as "being able to choose who I want to be". In this way, living on Sandøya is how I see it, the very foundation for how they construct their self-identity. The preconceived ideas they had about Sandøya being able to facilitate for their desired lifestyle was what initially made them move to the island in the first place. Having said that, it is what they do, and how they experience the place while living there that eventually confirm or disconfirm the idea of Sandøya being a place for "The good life" as they see it. This exact point is exemplified in the way Trine first moves to Lyngør, seeking out "The good life" she had memories of from her childhood, but while living there, her expectations are not met, hence she decided to move on, to Sandøya.

Before I go on to explore the different aspect of what I came to understand makes Sandøya a place where "The good life" is experienced, I want to look at my informants means of livelihood on the island.

### **5.2.1 Self-employment as part lifestyle**

During my stay on Sandøya something that caught my attention was the amount of time my informants spent on their work. Elisiv, who I spent the most time with, often works 10 to 12 hours a day, 6 or 7 days a week during peak summer. Summer season was an important income period for her business and she had to both attend to customers as well as produce new products on a regular basis. Trine was also very busy and was working both on project at

the boatyard as well as working at home. In addition, she was planning the upcoming wedding of her and Jan. There were also a lot of activities initiated by “Made on Sandøya” which had to be organized and because both Trine and Elisiv were active members, this added to their list of things to do.

Giddens argues that for many people, livelihood becomes a part of lifestyle in the way that work becomes a venue for self-realization (Giddens 1991). I believe this is very much the case with both my informants. Both expressed a wish to concentrate all of everyday activities and interactions on the island itself. Elisiv expressed it as followingly:

*“I just love the fact that it can go weeks in between the time I go to the mainland. By world is here. Its and island. Protected from the outside world. You can pretend that the world outside doesn't concern you in a way”*

By working on the island, the island became the arena for all daily activities and interactions. It became “*the world*”, as Elisiv expresses it. Being self-employed was how I see it, not exclusively motivated by the fact that they needed an income, nor that it afforded them a lot of “free” time. Instead they both emphasized on how it enabled them a flexibility and freedom in life they would not have been afforded if they had to commute to the mainland for work. The flexibility was connected to things like being able to be home in the morning, having breakfast with their family, having a chat by the road in the middle of work hours, or in Elisiv's case, being able to decide when to work from home or not. One of her favorite moments, she told me, was when she could sit in her favorite chair next to the window in the living room and sew while listening to British criminal novels on audiobook.

The way I see it, the boundaries between work and leisure was also very blurred. Work involved socializing with other members of the community, having quality time at home or “*having fun*” as Trine expressed it on several occasions. Working with “Made on Sandøya” made these boundaries even more unclear. By observing several meeting with the cooperative I noticed how the meeting easily turn in to conversations about completely other things then work relations. It also often involved having a beer or even a meal. The way I see it, work was also part of community building, which I will explore further in the coming part of this paper.

### 5.3 “Trine’s bachelorette Party”

It was yet another beautiful sunny summer day in the middle of peak summer. The island was as vivid as ever as the summer guests had arrived on the island. Every house was now inhabited and the calm and tranquil atmosphere was now overtaken by loud boats cruising the fjord and children playing and running around. I was in Bastvika filming Trine in her garden preparing for her and Jan’s wedding which was only 2 weeks away. I had been told by Elisiv that she and a group of other women from the island would come and pick Trine up as a surprise for her bachelorette party. I wanted to film Trine’s reaction as they entered Bastvika with Elisiv’s “sjekte”<sup>3</sup> so I didn’t dare to shut the camera off, being afraid I would miss the “moment”.

I had my back towards the cove as I was filming Trine pushing a wheelbarrow filled with stones up a small hill. As soon as Trine had reached the top, I heard the sound of Elisiv’s “sjekte” and women’s voices behind me. “*Oh my God*”, Trine shouted as soon as she saw them. I turned and saw the boat with women entering the cove. Trine left the wheelbarrow and started running down to the harbor with a big smile on her face. “*Where are you going?*” Elvira, the oldest daughter of Trine asked. “*We are celebrating that I am getting married!*” Trine said while putting on a green glittery top that was randomly lying on the steps next to the boathouse. We both entered the boat and got a glass of cava in our hands. The boat was filled with women from the island. Young and old. Elisiv was the captain and every fifth minute someone raised their glass and announced a cheer for Trine. The boat was wobbling up and down as we got further away from land and the waves got a bit more persistent. Trine was sitting on the pulpit and I was amazed how she could keep her balance without falling out of the boat. We passed several small islets on the way and the seagulls were circulating in the sky. Every time a boat passed by, the women waved eagerly and I came to understand that it wasn’t only on land you had to greet people, but also while in a boat. We arrived at a small islet some 40 minutes’ boat ride away. Everyone had brought a contribution for the shared meal and the “table” was filled with cheese, salads, homemade spring rolls, buns and bread. During the evening Trine received both presents and loving speeches expressing excitement and happiness about Trine’s decision to settle on Sandøya. When the sun started to set, the sky lit up in colors of red and orange. Suddenly one of the ladies got up and shouted. “*lets swim!*”

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<sup>3</sup> “Sjekte” is the local name of a specific type of wooden boat. It is usually open or semi-open and 15 to 30 feet long. The tables are overlapping and the boat helm is exterior.

Another lady approached me as she started running up to the top of the islet. “*Now you can’t film anymore!*” I turned off the camera and followed the women as they were running towards the water. When I arrived some of the women had already removed their clothes and had jumped in the water. Others were standing naked on the tip of the rocks ready to jump out. I remember being amazed about the unity they shared and how comfortable they seemed to be in each other’s company.



- What are you doing?  
- Celebrating that I'm getting married



1. Trine in the garden making ready to leave

2. Women having food on the islet.



3. The sun starts to set on the islet.

A couple of days after the bachelorette party I went to Trine’s place to film her continuing her preparations for the wedding. There was a lot of preparation that needed to be done and when I arrived she was busy cutting the lawn. She stopped as soon as she saw me crossing the front of the house with all my camera gear. *You want a glass of beer?* She shouted towards me. *”We have just got the tapping tower to work”* Trine and Jan had bought a tapping tower for

the wedding and they were quite proud of their new commodity. She went in to the boathouse and poured me a glass. *“It is so great to have our own private pub! She said while she laughed. Around her neck was the necklace she had got as a present from one of the women at the party. It was a silver necklace shaped as a starfish. Did you have a nice time at the party? I asked holding the camera in my hand. She looked at me and sat down on the stone step next to the boathouse. “You know what is amazing by living here, Aylin? It is all the amazing people. Can you imagine all those women who came and picked me up? I don’t know all of them that well, but still they all care about me. It is such a good feeling. I feel so accepted here. We are kind of the same type despite our differences”*

Remembering Trine’s story about moving to Sandøya from Lyngør I could understand how much this experience meant to her. She and her family had moved from Lyngør because the community as she remembered it from her childhood, had, as Trine formulated it, *“died out”*. Moving to Sandøya meant moving to a place where she could be part of a community, feel belonging and unity and where there was enough people to create the dynamic and vivid life she had missed on Lyngør. In the following I will try to go deeper in my attempt to understand the meaning of community on Sandøya. I find Anthony Cohen’s (1985) works on community and belonging to be of great help in this manner. I also want to look at how community is expressed through social interaction and in connection to this, I will draw on the term *“reciprocity”*.

### **5.3.1 “Us and “them” - The symbolic construction of community.**

Cohen says that: *“People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity’* (Cohen 1985: 118 in Smith, 2001) In this way, he argues that communities are best approached as *‘communities of meaning’* because it involves members of a group having something in common. What the members share is also what distinguishes significantly from others (1985:2 in Smith 2001). In this way community can be said to be about inclusion and exclusion, about *“us”* and *“them”*.

In the case of Sandøya, the boundary between *“us”* and *“them”* might be fairly simple to spot. It is an island, physically separated from the mainland. But, it is certainly not that easy. As mentioned earlier, Sandøya is a popular summer destination and during the summer months of July and August the population increases dramatically. The *“summer guests”*, as most permanent inhabitants call them, becomes a part of the social and physical landscape, but they

are not necessarily included as members of the community. Trine puts it like this: *“It’s nice when the summer guest comes, but I must admit that it is as nice when they leave. Then we get the island back to our selves again”*.

During my time on the island I frequently heard people stating similar things as Trine does in the quote above. Summer guests were, from my understanding, seen as a group of people who came and “stirred” up the place for a couple of months. The island during this period was not as it “normally” was and people often told me that they looked forward to *“getting the island back to normal again”*.

Summer guests were, from my understanding, not included as full members of the community on Sandøya. They were perceived as visitors to the island. Community boundaries become in this way not a matter of physical separation, but *‘they may be thought of, rather, as existing in the minds of the beholders’* (Cohen 1985: 12). From this perspective, community must be understood as a system of values, norms, and moral codes which provides a sense of identity within a a group (ibid). How I understand my informants, it is the experience of sharing values and an outlook on life, in other words, lifestyle, that unites them. It is about the identity of being an islander where the island, physically detached to the mainland, is made relevant in the way it is seen as connected to a specific and unique way of life, that is, lifestyle. The coastline in this way becomes a powerful symbol for setting up the boundary between “us” and “them” (Crow and Allan 1994: 6 in Smith, 2001). Like seen in this quote of Elisiv:

*“Living like this is not for everyone. For many, having to cross the fjord to get to solid land is unthinkable. But for us who live here it is great! It has become a lifestyle in many ways.*

So what does it mean to be part of the community on Sandøya? What values are connected to being an “islander” and how are these values expressed in social interaction?



### 5.3.3 Reciprocity as “the social glue”

Marianne Gullestad (1996) argues that the most prominent feature in the basis of values in western social life during the last decades, is connected to a transition between “to be of use” to “be your self”. “To be of use”, Gullestad refers to as values of obedience and loyalty while “to be your self” refers to individuals being loyal to her or his own preferences and affiliations (Gullestad 1996). Both Trine and Elisiv emphasized how they felt “*they could be themselves*” on the island. Trine puts it as following:

*” I see myself as an individualist. I do what I like no matter what society tells me. I feel like we are many people like that living here. At least among the people I mostly spend time with. You can be yourself and people accept you for that. People are very generous in that sense.*

As mentioned earlier, I see my informants’ decision to settle on Sandøya as connected to lifestyle, hence a desire to live according to personal values, desires and beliefs (Giddens 2001). Because lifestyle, must be understood as interlinked to a person’s self-identity project, settling on Sandøya in the first place might be seen as an expression of “being yourself”. Having said that, I didn’t experience that “*being yourself*” and “*being of use*” in any way outperform each other. On the contrary, it seemed to me like “*being of use*” was part of “*being yourself*” in the way that it was connected to shared values associated with the “island life”. I came to understand that helping each other out as well as participation in communal work were very important values, not only to Elisiv and Trine, but to several other people who I talked to. Below is a quote of Elisiv which I believe shed light of the above mentioned;

*I like living in a “dugnad-samfunn”. We don’t just sit here and wait for the municipality or some kind of higher authority to fix things, but we do it ourselves, and then we don’t bother anyone. If we want something done, we just do it! That’s how it is here. It is almost a duty I would say. To help out (laughs). Øyvind (Elisiv’s husband) has had 4 weeks of vacation this year, but 3 of those weeks has passed while doing communal work. It has been everything from wedding preparations to fixing someone’s electrical system (laughing) They will get back when we are building an annex over there. Then we get back for all the hours we spent on others.*

Living in a “*dugnad-samfunn*”, as Elisiv expresses it, is about people coming together with the aim of benefiting the community as a whole. These activities could be everything from fixing the road to cleaning or painting the community house, which I used as an empiric example in the methodological chapter. Helping each other on an individual level, like helping with wedding preparations, fixing someone’s electric system, as Elisiv mentions, was also part of living in a “*dugnad-samfunn*”.

What is also made clear in the quote of Elisiv is how “*dugnad-samfunn*” must be seen as a give-and-take kind of arrangement. Like Elisiv states: “*They will get back when we are building an annex over there. Then we are rewarded for all the hours we spent on others*”. To explore this aspect a bit further I am going to make use of the term *reciprocity*.

According to Marcel Mauss, it is through exchange of objects and labor that relationships between groups and between individuals are established and maintained. Mauss argues that gifts and services are in theory voluntary, but in reality they represent a commitment or obligation of a return of equal value. In this way, a silent contract is created (Mauss, 1970:11). Thomas Hylland Eriksen refers to reciprocity as “*the glue*” *which ties individuals and groups together*” (Eriksen 2007:7). It can be argued that it is through these kinds of social interactions people are enabled to build communities, thus establish meaningful social bonds (Beem 1999:20 in Smith, 2001).

What I came to understand both through my own involvement in the community on Sandøya and through my conversations and interaction with people, chains of reciprocity were highly present in social life and in the social relationships my informant were part of. It was highlighted as part of the local character of Sandøya as a place and something that made life on the island meaningful and good.

In the following I will look closer at the physical environment on Sandøya and how moving in and out of different landscapes play part in forming meaningful person/place bonds.

## **5.4 The physical environment – a respiratory for identity**

Throughout my fieldwork I experienced that nature and the sensorial part of living on the island often became a topic in conversation. It could be everything from commenting on which direction the wind came from to expressing excitement about the mushroom season coming up. I came to understand the physical environment of Sandøya as an important component to my informants' place attachment in the way that it was highly valued and expressed as one of the most central factors of what made Sandøya such a good place to live. When asking Elisiv why she enjoyed living on the island, her answer was as follows:

*“I like the fact that I live in a house in the middle of the forest, and I can walk as far as I want in all directions without meeting anything ugly. Only forest and nature and then suddenly reach the ocean”*

In the coming part, I want to explore how my informant through interaction in, and with the physical environment establishing and maintaining meaningful person-place bonds.

### **5.4.1 Autumn is here and so are the mushrooms**

It was my last day before leaving Sandøya and I was going to Elisiv's house to do my last interview before leaving back to Tromsø. It was evening and the bright summer nights had turned in to dark autumn days and every other house on the island was now empty. It was a strange feeling, but I could truly understand what people meant when referring to the island going back to “normal” again. It felt like people, as well as the island itself finally had the possibility to take a long deep breath after some hectic summer months with people everywhere. I took my bike and my camera and cycled towards Elisiv's house. I could feel the cold autumn breeze had hit the island as the tip of my nose got cold during the ride. When I arrived, there was light in the windows and I could see that she was standing in the kitchen from the road. I knocked on the door and entered. I was hit by the smell of forest as soon as I came in to the hall. In the kitchen the table was filled with a variety of mushrooms and herbs. On the bench there were bottles of homemade syrup and in the oven Elisiv was drying mushrooms, preserving them so they would last throughout the winter. *“I have been out all day picking mushrooms. I got so much energy from spending a whole afternoon in the forest. I even skipped my afternoon nap!”* she said while looking at the catch for the day. *“I think I'm*

getting crazy! Autumn crazy! She paused a while and said quietly “It just makes me so happy”.



#### 5.4.2 The experience of nature

Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that there is a relationship in which both people and the world contribute to having an experience. The empiric example above I believe clarifies precisely this point; that people, by being and acting out in nature both experience themselves and nature, in nature. This means that the experience is not to be understood as something purely subjective, but as something relational in the way that we always experience “something”, and that “something” can be said to be the relationship between human and nature. The experience is created through the way objects in the world appear and interact with the way we sense and perceive things around us (Merleau-Ponty, 1994 in Bischoff, 2012). The natural environment on Sandøya was, by both my informants, highlighted as one of the local characters of Sandøya and to a large extent what made Sandøya a good place to live. Elisiv especially emphasized the green vegetation and the island having large parts of forest as important to her. The forest that surrounded her house on the island was a place where she felt she could “unwind” and “disconnect”. It was, for her, a site for recreation, and while walking on the small paths in the forest, she was could hear “the silence of the forest” or the “smell of autumn”. These experiences gave her a feeling of “happiness” and “calmness”, as she put it. Following Merleau-Ponty perspective, it is through the physical body of Elisiv, that the physical event of walking in the forest picking mushrooms becomes meaningful. Nature becomes an extended part of her in the way that the physical event is connected to psychological processes of cognition (Scannel and Gifford, 2009 and Fürst 2004: 50 in Ween and Flikke, 2009:9). Elisiv is in other words embedding meaning to the sensorial experiences

she has in the forest, thus a meaningful bond are made. This can be argued to be a physiological process where the interplay between affect, behavior and cognition creating meaning in the given place.

Having said that, one does not necessarily need to engage in concrete activities within a given environment to develop meaningful bonds. What I also came to understand through my own experience living on Sandøya and through my conversation and interaction with Elisiv and Trine was that nature was not only given value in the way people actively and intentionally engage in activities, like the above empirical example is showing. Nature and the sensorial environment was also given meaning and value in the way that it was there, all the time, despite of actively attending to it. Both my informant used the term living “in” nature on several occasions when talking about life on the island. Trine expressed it as followed;

*“When you live in a place like this, you live “in” nature in a way. It is just outside your door. You can just look out of your window and if you open it the sound and the smells will even come inside. It is everywhere you turn.”*

Having this in mind I want to look closer at how moving in and with the physical, thus natural landscape of the island play part in my informants Place attachment.

### **5.4.3 Trine goes to work**

It was early morning and I had an agreement with Trine that I would come to her house to film her and her family getting ready to start the day. I had my cup of coffee on the terrace which had become a morning ritual while living on the island. While sitting there I listened to the sound of birds whistling from the treetops that were surrounding me. I must admit it felt good to start the day like this. After finishing my cup of coffee I started to pack my bags with camera equipment and made myself ready to bicycle towards the other side of the island. The seat of my bike was wet due to the moist air. It was always like that in the morning. I wiped the moist from the bike and started my ride. The island was still asleep and I didn’t meet a single soul on the road. When I arrive Trines house, both her, Jan and the girls where already up and were preparing breakfast and making the girls ready for school. After having breakfast, Elvira, Trine’s oldest daughter had to hurry to catch the ferry. She had just started 5<sup>th</sup> grade and had to commute to the mainland to attend school. Kari, the youngest daughter, had just started 4<sup>th</sup> grade at the local school on Sandøya and was joining Trine and me since

the school was in the same direction as Trine's workplace. We went outside and Trine and Kari picked up their bikes that were placed on the side of the red annex in the garden. I connected the small Gopro camera I had to the bicycle. I wanted to record the whole ride and the big camera I had was impossible to hold while cycling. We cycled through the small path we continue our ride on the "main road". Kari was cycling in the front, then Trine and then me. There was a soft wind in the air and a fresh smell of sea. On our way we met several other people. Some were cycling in the direction of the harbor catching a boat to the mainland, while others were going the same direction as we were, probably to deliver their kids in the kindergarten or school. We didn't stop to talk to people, but exchanged some short words while passing each other. We passed Elisiv's house and the small field just outside her house. The reed was waving silently back and forth. As we continued further down the road we passed the small lake that marked the middle of the island. Then we had to cycle up a small hill before we arrived at the school were Kari was "getting off". Trine gave her a warm hug and we continued our ride passing long stretches of forest. After about 5 minutes we arrived at a white house in the end of a small dirt path. "*We have to park our bikes here and walk the rest of the way*", Trine said. There were three other bikes parked at the same spot. We crossed a small field and continued to walk through a small forest towards the sea. Trine stopped before crossing a small bridge that connected the small islet where the boatyard was situated to the rest of the island. "*Just look over there, Aylin. This is going to be a beautiful day. It is almost no wind on the fjord and the sky is a clear blue. Isn't this an amazing way to start the day?*" Trine asked while gazing out toward the water. "*Yes it is quite amazing*" I replied. "*Just imagine how other people are stuck in traffic or are sitting in crowded buses and this is how I get to work*" Trine said while crossing the bridge. I turned again to admire the view. Seagulls were circulating the sky and I must admit that I was quite stunned by the view myself.



1. Trine and Kari bicycling to school and work, passing Elisiv house.



2. Trine saying goodbye to Kari in front of the school.



3. Passing people by on the road.



4. Walking through the small forest to the boatyard.





5. About to cross the bridge over to the boatyard. Trine admires the view.



6.. The view from where Trine was standing.



7. Sandøya boatyard, 4915 AS.

#### 5.4.4 To live “in “nature

As seen in the empiric example above, the natural environment plays a significant part in everyday life on the island. As the island has no cars, people have to walk, bicycle, kick sledge or use skis in the wintertime to get around. Paul Adams says that: *“To walk through a place is to become involved in that place with sight, hearing, touch, smell, the kinetic sense of proprioception, and even taste. (Adams, 2001:188).* In this way it is not the physical act of walking that becomes the key here, but how the act of walking, or bicycling which I understand to hold similar qualities, exposes people to deep sensory experiences like sounds, smells, sights and even touch. I came to understand that the perception of living “in” nature was a metonym for my informant’s experience of interacting with nature in their daily life. It was unavoidable. It was part of the *local character* of Sandøya and in this way, parts of what made life on the island unique. Elisiv expressed it in this way;

*” When you live here you are forced to deal with all kind of weather and all kinds of winds. It is not like you can just jump in a car and drive from door to*

*door. If it is raining, you basically just have to dress up! If there is a snowstorm you have to deal with that to. (laughing. Nature becomes a part of life here. You can't avoid. It is one of the things that is unique about life here I would say."*

Tim Ingold draw on Heidegger's concept of *dwelling* to capture how perception might be said to lay the foundation for the world of which we experience. He argues that we are "*immersed from the start (...) in an active, practical and perceptual engagement with the constituents of the dwelt-in world*" (Ingold 2000: 42). Following Ingold's perspective, it can be argued that it is our movement through the environment, our paths and our actions in and with our surroundings, our life world is created. In this way, we experience the nature we "dwell in". In this way it is the interaction between consciousness and activities in nature, is what lays the foundation for, thus our understanding of the place of which we "dwell" (Ingold 2000:42 in Ween and Flikke, 2007:9).

However, when my informants interact with the environment it is important to understand the totality of the situation. It can be described as a net of threads that is attached to the person, but at the same time it is attached to social, cultural and spiritual structures. According to Bischoff, it reflects back on who we are, who we were and who we want to be in all its complexity. This is what constitutes the very basis and preconditions for the interaction and the experiences attached to it (Bischoff, 2012:137). With this in mind I find it fruitful to draw on the theoretical term of *landscape*. Katarina Saltzman argues that *landscape* is not nature, nor is it culture. It is rather a figure of the mind where landscape is situated right in the middle; "*between the material and the mental and between nature and culture - a dialectical position*" (Saltzman 2001 in Bischoff, 2012:137). She argues that there is a dialogue taking place in the landscape. This dialogue is characterized as a cognitive process between idea and matter, between past and present and between nature and culture (Saltzman 2001 in Bischoff, 2012:137). Simultaneously, it is through the body this dialog come in to being. Landscape as a concept thus embraces the relationship between nature and culture. The field where culture, understood as values, ideas and beliefs, is reflected in nature, and where nature is reflected in culture. In this way, there is a constant tension between individual, culture and nature (ibid) Hence, I believe we can talk about landscapes as: "*symbolic environment created by human acts of conferring meaning to nature and the environment, of giving the environment definition and form for a particular angle of vision and through a specific filter of values and beliefs*" (Greider and Garkovich, 1994:1). This I believe comes through in the empiric

example and in the way Trine admires the view and the sentiments of the physical environment, and asks me “*isn't this an amazing way to start the day?*” and further juxtapose it with how other people outside the island “*are stuck in traffic*” or “*sit on crowded buses*”. By doing this she turns towards her physical environment and the sensorial experiences she has in, and with it, to situate her self-identity as an island-dweller. The landscape becomes a respiratory for identity in the way Trine mirrors herself and her experiences in the landscape. As I have stated earlier on in this paper, living on Sandøya must be seen in the context of lifestyle and lifestyle migration and therefor part of my informants’ self-identity project. I have argued that the social environment my informants are part of, reflects back on their values and ambitions seen in the context of lifestyle. This underpins my informants’ experience of living “The good life” on Sandøya which in turn give form to their Place Attachment. I want to argue that the same mechanisms become valid when looking at my informants’ interaction with the natural environment. Stedman (2003) notes that Place attachment occurs when “... *attributes of the environment are associated with characteristic experiences. Symbolic meanings are produced from these experiences, and these meanings in turn underpin place attachment and satisfaction. (ibid.: 675).*”

Until the present point of this paper I have looked at how my informants’ experience and perceive their social and natural environment. I have shown that through interaction, experiences and cognition with, and in, the social and the physical environment, meaningful bonds are made and sustained. I have argued that these bonds must be seen in connection to lifestyle, and following, a part of my informants’ self-identity project. The sum of these experiences and perceptions creates a notion of living “The good life” on Sandøya. But, having said that, I came to understand that “The good life” was under constant negotiation. “The good life” was determined by Sandøya staying “*a living community*”. I will in the following explore how Place attachment is manifested in social action connected to preserving a vibrant all-year community on Sandøya.

## Chapter 5 : “A living community” – sustaining “The good life”

*“A common concern of everyone living here is that it is very important for all of us that Sandøya continues to be a living community, and not crumble and become a facade like islands in the neighborhood have experienced. But if the school close down it will be difficult” – Elisiv*

*“It was mainly after the school was closed down it went downwards for Lyngør. I am afraid that this will happen to Sandøya as well (...). One thing is people who has grown up here and who decides to stay with their children. The real issue is getting new settlers. Nobody moves to Sandøya with small children just to send them off to school. I decided to live here because I want my children to experience island life. Not a travelling life” - Trine*

As seen in the quotes above, the school was in many ways expressed by my informants to be the pumping heart of Sandøya. Without a school on the island both my informants and other people who I met, were undoubtedly sure that the community in the long term would “die out”. Elisiv says:

*“Without new settlers the average age will rise and in the end there will be no people living here on a full year basis. The community as we know it will disappear”.*

As I have mentioned earlier, the experience of living in a vibrant community was from how I understand my informants, one of the key local characters of Sandøya as a place. It was part of the lifestyle connected to the island, hence central to the experience and notion of living “The good life”. School closure, was in this way, threatening the whole concept of “The good life”. It was also, at least for Trine, experienced as a personal threat or even attack.

*“If the municipality doesn’t want people to live on the island around here they give a shit about me and my life! I should be able to choose where to live and how I live. I think it is a human right. If they don’t respect that, then I don’t respect me!”*

I believe that Trine's quote underlines what I have discussed earlier in this paper when arguing that settling and living on Sandøya must be understood as part of my informants' self-identity project. "The good life" is therefore inextricably connected both to my informants' *project of self*. In this way, political decisions, like school closure, can be argued to be experienced as an invasion in private matters and, as seen in Trine's quote, a threat to the very essence of who you are and want to be. However, in situations where communities feel threatened, people may try to influence the decision-making process. Vaske and Kibrin states that people with a strong place attachment are often more likely to act in protective ways towards places to which they are attached (2001). I have earlier on, argued that Place Attachment derives from the way my informants mirror themselves and their values, both in the social and the physical environment on the island. Protecting the island and the community, becomes in this way inextricably linked with "protecting themselves". Having said that, when exploring how my informants, along with other people on the island are trying to influence political decisions related to school closure I will look at the phenomenon of community-based activism.

Community-based activism often occurs when people feel they have lost, or not given control over decisions concerning them and their community. The threat to the local community may be of a physical or social nature, such as the building of a mall, deforestation or closure of important social institutions, such as schools (Valentine 2001). Community based activism unfolds in the way members of the community uses the opportunities and resources they have to influence the outcome of the decision. On Sandøya this takes various forms. One being an attempt to get member of the community in to the municipality board, thus into the core of where political decisions are made. Another, more pro-active attempt I became aware of, was connected to "Made on Sandøya" and their activities. I will in the following look at "Made on Sandøya" and my informants' engagement in "Made on Sandøya" as part of a strategy to sustain Sandøya a "*living community*" which as stated, must be understood as one of the key pillars of what constitutes "The good life" for my informants.

## 5.1 Summer market with “Made on Sandøya”

Summer season had reached its peak and almost all the houses on the island were now occupied. I was heading to Elisiv’s workshop to film as she prepared for the summer market which was taking place the next day. As usual, I took my bike and started to cycle toward Elisiv’s workshop on the other side of the island. It was easy to tell that the summer guests had arrived as I believe I said “hi” to people passing at least 15 times during the ride. Outside Elisiv’s place there was a small red tractor with a trailer attached to the back. It looked more like a scooter, but according to Elisiv it was a tractor for sure. I went up to the workshop and found Elisiv inside packing. Sweaters, scarfs, ponchos and hats in a variety of different colors and shapes were placed in big blue IKEA bags. The piles of scarfs had grown considerably during the last days. She told me she had been working from early morning to late evening almost the whole week to have enough products to sell at the market. After finishing up the packing she carried everything down to the tractor, locked the door and placed the key in the mailbox which she always did after closing up. I asked if they expected many people to come for the market. *“It is supposed to be good weather so yes. We have announced it a lot of places so we expect people to come from everywhere, not only Sandøya. We have even arranged boat transportation from the city”* she told me while strapping things on the back of the tractor.

The next day I went early to film the preparations for the market. There were six local businesses making their stand ready. One cloth designer and tailor, a chandelier, a ceramic, a couple who produce yarn and then there were Elisiv and Trine, selling wooden and knitted products. The garden was decorated in colorful flags and banners and some of the kids had made their own stands selling plastic jewelry and homemade buns. A big banner with the logo of “Made on Sandøya” was placed right at the entrance to the garden. During the day there were hundreds of people coming and going. Many had made the trip from neighboring islands as well as the city of Tvedestrand. I was filming both Trine and Elisiv interacting with customers, but I also observed and made note during the day. I noticed that conversations often led towards talking about the beauty of Sandøya and how people loved spending time there. A dialogue that really caught my attention was between Elisiv and a woman who had her summer residency on the island.

Woman: - *It is amazing to see how much things that are going on here. You are doing an amazing job out here!(...) We only stay here during the summer, but I have been thinking about maybe staying here a full year or so.*

Elisiv: - *Yes, do that! There are several people who have done the same actually. Like (a family on the west side). They moved here, initially only for a year, but they enjoyed it so much that after a year they decided to settle permanently.*

After the market was over all the business owners gathered to evaluate the day. Most of them had earned more in one day than they usually earned during a month. All of them agreed that the market had been a success in several manners. There had been many people coming from other places, not only Sandøya and they talked about how this contributed to placing Sandøya “on the map”. “On the map” I understood as synonymous as making Sandøya visible to the outside world.



## 5.2 Social entrepreneurship and Made on Sandøya

The summer market which is presented above is just one out of many activities ‘Made on Sandøya’ initiate. As I mentioned in the introductory part of this paper, “Made on Sandøya” can be described as an overarching brand which member businesses are subordinated. In this way all the businesses connected are part of a shared marketing strategy. Part of this strategy involves facilitating markets and other social and cultural happenings on the island as well as in the city of Tvedestrand. They also offer free tours where tourists can come and visit the different outlets and workshops on Sandøya.

Both Trine and Elisiv highlighted that the start of of “Made on Sandøya” had been beneficial to their business. Elisiv told me that she had at least doubled her sales rate after they started up the cooperative. However, what I came to understand was that the starting point of “Made on Sandøya” was not purely an attempt to support and strengthen local business holders on



the island. It was also an attempt to attract people, and possible new settlers to Sandøya. Hence, I came to understand that “Made on Sandøya” to a large extent was a pro-active strategy to sustain Sandøya an all year vibrant community. Linn, one of the initiator of Made on Sandøya told me this during one of our meeting:

*“One of the overall goals of Made on Sandøya is to place Sandøya “on the map”. By attracting more people to the island might result in getting more settlers. If only one family out of hundred even considers moving here, and takes the step to do so, our goal is reach”*

Attracting people to the island could, as Linn expresses it, potentially result in more people, hopefully families with children, wanting to settle. In this way, it would not only make it more likely that the school would survive, but it would also send a clear message to the municipality. Elisiv put it like this;

*“If we contribute in attracting more people to the island, this would obviously benefit Tvedestrand municipality in general. More people means more income on taxes. Tvedestrand municipality is in general struggling with depopulation. But if they start to see Sandøya as a resource in the way that we have the possibility to attract people to the municipality in general, this would benefit not only us, but everyone living in Tvedestrand. That’s why we also arrange markets and other events outside the island. To show that we can be resource for everyone. That we are worth saving.”*

Whit this in mind “Made on Sandøya” can be understood in terms of social entrepreneurship. Borch and Førde point out that social entrepreneurship includes a social objective that goes beyond the self-interest and financial gain for the actors involved (Borch and Førde, 2010). Social entrepreneurs are thus often part of local development processes and often the driving force in communities which are experiencing difficulties like for instance depopulation (ibid) It would obviously be interesting to look at exactly *how* this come about on Sandøya and how Made on Sandøya, through activities is part of defining what Sandøya is and will be in the future, but that is not the aim of this thesis. Rather, I want to take a closer look at how Place attachment and the notion of living “The good life” on Sandøya, take part in an attempt to attract new settlers to the island, hence preserve Sandøya a living community.

### 5.3 Selling the “The good life”

#### “Experience Sandøya!

*The good life. What is that? We believe we know... At Sandøya we live the good life every day. All year through. The silence, the forest, the sea. We have everything - except the cars. Or by the way, we have one. The shop brings groceries to our houses every Thursday. That's nice. We also have a school! And Kindergarten! And chorus! And sports teams! And much more ... Around 220 islanders together constitute a vibrant all year community. And if the winter gets long, we dream about the summer where the population multiplies. That's the great part of the summer on Sandøya. The smell of freshly mown lawns, lilacs, sea and barbeque. On the clotheslines beach towels are drying up, fishing-stories told at the piers, we meet in the café or in Basthaven - or on one of the islets. But the best part – that's the people. To live on an island does something to us. We are together. We need each other. We are proud”*  
(Madeonsandoya.no)

The excerpt above is taken from Made on Sandøya’s webpage. I believe what is written here give witness to how “Made on Sandøya”, hence my informants “use” their own perceptions and experience of living “The good life” on Sandøya actively in their marketing strategy. Hence, from my perspective they are commodifying “The good life” by mobilizing and deploying central aspect of their place attachment which I have explored in the previous parts of this paper.

When Elisiv sells her knitted product at “Made on Sandøya”’s summer market, her products are given a story. This story is connected to the idea and notion of Sandøya being a place for “The good life”. By offering tours on the island and by arranging markets, “Made on Sandøya” invite people to come and experience “The good life”. It is part of the “package”, or the product. Having said that, I am not stating that people experience “The good life” on Sandøya in the same way as my informants does, but that is not what is important here. The importance lies in the *intention* of my informants and the other members of “Made on Sandøya”. How I see it, they want people to experience Sandøya through the eyes of themselves; to become aware of the qualities of the island and how Sandøya is a place for “The good life” as they have come to define it. In this way, I want to argue that “The good life” becomes part of the brand; “Made on Sandøya” which in turn is inextricably connected to Sandøya as a physical place. This become relevant not only in the way that it adds

exclusivity to the products being offered and sold, but how it become part of a strategy to attract possible new settlers to the island. Elisiv says; *“If more people become aware of how amazing it is to live in a community like this one, and see the possibilities here, they might want to settle.”*

The American scholar, Richard Florida has in recent years been one of the most prominent theorists in the field of local development. What according to him makes people settle in different locations he argues to not primarily related to job opportunities, but the overall impression people have of a place. In this way, he talks about how different places communicate different things. An attractive place, he argues, is a place that communicates possibilities for certain lifestyles, like closeness to nature and recreation, cultural life, social meeting places, or livelihoods (Florida, 2005). Sandøya as a place is, from my understanding, communicated through “Made on Sandøya” as an “island idyll”. It is a place which not only “offers” tranquility, closeness to nature and freedom from cars, but also *“a school! And Kindergarten! And chorus! And sports teams!”* In other word; a vibrant all-year island community. A complete *“island life”* which is the term both my informants use when referring to life on the island as a lifestyle. The island having a vibrant community, can be said to be fairly unique seen in the context of other neighboring islands in the area, and as I have discussed earlier on in this paper, a central aspect to why both my informants decided to settle on the island in the first place. Having said that, as we have seen previously in this chapter, this was not a given state. Being a vibrant all-year community depended on sustaining a school on the island, hence attracting new settlers was understood by most people, as essential. By selling “The good life” in terms of Sandøya being “an island idyll”, “Made on Sandøya” is trying to attract people who might share similar ideas and evaluation about “The good life” as themselves. In this way, “Made on Sandøya” which involves my informants, I believe commodify “The good life” in order to sustain it.

Additionally, I believe “Made on Sandøya” adds a new quality to Sandøya, which is not explicitly stated in the excerpt above. This quality is connected to “Made on Sandøya” itself. During my fieldwork and throughout the writing of this paper, “Made on Sandøya” and connected businesses received a lot of attention in the regional media and there were frequently articles written about the entrepreneurial activity on the island. Article with headlines like; *“The entrepreneurial island”* or the *“La bella vita on Sandøya!”*.

In this way, and from my understanding, “Made on Sandøyas” are not only “selling” the notion of “The good life” with reference to the physical and social qualities of the island, but

also a notion of Sandøya being a place for creativity and entrepreneurship. A place with a vibrant entrepreneurial milieu. This might obviously attract people who wish to start up their own business within arts and handicraft or food and recreation and who sees the opportunity to do so on Sandøya. But, additionally, they contributed in “branding” the island as a physical place. This I believe bring up a hole load of other possible research questions. Like for instance; How “Made on Sandøya” take part in developing an overall meaning of place and followingly how this might affect the community and sense of belonging to various people who might not be “entrepreneurs”? Having said that, answering these question is obviously not within the scope of this paper, but a will leave this question standing as a suggestion for further exploration and move on to the final words of this thesis.

## Some final words

I started this whole process with a curiosity related to why people in present day decided to settle on Sandøya. By explore the life of primarily two women living on the island, I have come to see that moving to Sandøya today must be seen in connection to lifestyle and lifestyle migration. This must be understood in a context of an increasing globalized world and in the context of modern, especially western society where individuals are more or less free to choice the lifestyle which they feel correspond with personal values, ideas and beliefs. A person's decision to relocate must in this way be understood as part of the way people construct their self-identity (Giddens, 2005). To both my informants, Sandøya, as a physical as social space, was attractive in the sense that it was believed to be able to facilitate their desired lifestyle formulated by informants as "*an island life*". This was, how I came to understand, synonymous with what they perceived to be "The good life". However, through my interaction with my two informants I came to see that what initially might have brought them to Sandøya in the first place, was also what made them stay. I came to see a strong attachment to the place both in the way they talked about their lives on the island, but also through their behaviors and actions in the place which they live. I have shown in this paper that the notion of living "The good life" on Sandøya, derives from how my informants experience, interact and make meaning of their physical and social environment and how these meaning reflect back on their self-identity project. In the last part of this paper I have looked at how my informants mobilize and deploy their experiences and notion of "The good life" in order to sustain "The good life" as they experience it on the island. I argue that through "Made on Sandøya" "The good life" is commodified in order to attract new settler. How this will influence the community, remains to be seen in the future.

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