

BLUE SKIES AND RED SEAS:
HOW THE FAROESE SEE THEIR NATION PORTRAYED
IN INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

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Túsund Takk Fyri.

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ABSTRACT

Media representation of the Faroe Islands, like that of other small, little-known places, is vulnerable to being skewed by various frames, agendas and biases. The islanders are demonized by the anti-whalers and their world portrayed as uniformly picturesque and exotic by the tourism industry. Nearly all representations of the Faroes exoticize the nation, relying on old-fashioned stereotypes, historical details, and extreme exceptions while neglecting to portray many aspects of the everyday reality for most Faroese. This analysis, based on interviews and photo elicitation with a variety of Faroese nationals as well as journalists covering Faroese issues, explores how the Faroese feel about their portrayal in the international media and considers the various factors that encourage this sort of exotification.

The professional work project consists of photography and writing on topics ranging from the current gender disparity and the lives of modern Faroese women to learning Faroese as an outsider and the various summer festivals on the islands, all produced with the intention of creating a balanced and well-rounded image of the modern Faroese nation.

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Introduction

For my professional project, I went to the Faroe Islands, a remote archipelago approximately equidistant from Iceland, Norway, and Scotland. The islands, which are an autonomous part of the kingdom of Denmark, are home to 50,000 people who speak their own language and maintain cultural traditions such as ballad dancing and whale hunting that have been passed down for thousands of years.

On my first visit to the Faroes, I was overwhelmed by the uniqueness of the culture – a place where the old culture does not feel like a museum piece, but rather something that has really merged with modernity in a largely seamless and endlessly fascinating way. Heavy metal versions of ancient kvæði ballads, houses with turf roofs and fish hanging out to dry on the outside and wifi and flat-screen TVs on the inside, families that on Wednesday open the fridge for a frozen pizza and on Thursday walk out to the hjallur, or drying-shed, and dig around in barrels of salt for whale-meat and blubber... those images haunted my imagination and inspired me to return as a journalist.

There are also several more newsworthy things going on in the islands right now. Most people who have heard of the Faroe Islands have only heard of the whale-hunt, which is often inaccurately depicted in email and Facebook forwards as a barbaric, wholesale slaughter of whales for fun. The hunt is controversial for a number of reasons, including environmental and health concerns. Another interesting issue is one that affects many small communities throughout Europe, but perhaps the Faroe Islands most strikingly – the flight of women. Young Faroese often go abroad (to Denmark or elsewhere) to study, but more women leave than men, and more women stay abroad – marrying foreigners or just choosing to settle in environments and careers that aren't available at home in the islands. This is predicted to create a major population problem in the coming years. However, when this issue has been depicted in foreign (usually Danish) media, the coverage is full of stereotypical and unflattering portrayals of the islands, usually focusing on the remote outer

islands where only a small percentage of the population lives, therefore painting a misleading picture of life in the Faroes.

For my research component, I decided to interview Faroese people about how they felt that they were portrayed in the international media. Preliminary interviews indicated to me that many people feel as if the islands are misrepresented through frames that alternatively depict them as an exoticized paradise and the home of backwater barbarians. While the goal of good journalism is to portray the truth, and a balanced representation of places and cultures, it often falls short in this attempt, leading to a disparity between the culture as perceived by those within the culture and those outside of it. I find this disparity, and the media's substantial role in it, both important and fascinating, especially when it comes to small nations such as the Faroe Islands, the Basque Country, the Sami of far northern Europe, and other similar groups.

For my professional project component, I planned to write a series of articles for publication, ideally a mixture of long-form travel and cultural pieces, and also take photographs to illustrate these myself. I wanted to write a mixture of travel writing and journalism based on current news, primarily the gender disparity. I spent most of the time in the Faroe Islands, but also spent some time in Denmark – both because it's necessary when connecting to the Faroe Islands and because a substantial percentage of Faroese people live in Denmark, especially the women who have left, and I think they are also part of the story of the islands.

Field Notes

In addition to my formal field notes, I also blogged at *www.landofmaybe.com* with both behind-the-scenes information about my work and life in the Faroe Islands and some of the results of my journalistic work.

Field Report 1: May 21st – June 2nd

Weekly highlights: This week, I arrived in the Faroe Islands and began adjusting to the culture and language. I also explored and photographed the village where I live. I started a blog about my time here, *Adventures in the Land of Maybe*, to go along with my field notes. I translated my project description and request to interview people into Faroese. I have started making contacts and I have asked two people if I could interview them and profile them. One agreed. I also began visiting tourist destinations, including several on the island of Suðuroy and Saksun, a famous historical village on Streymoy.

I have been working on narrowing my focus: For my newsy story, which I think will be more time-consuming and difficult to get access for, I think I'll focus primarily on the lives of young women in the Faroe Islands given the current problem they have with women moving abroad. Secondly, I'm very interested in the lives of these young women in the capital, Tórshavn, compared to more remote regions of the country. There are many other stories here which would be interesting, but I don't want to bite off more than I can chew for the summer. Besides, a topic like this is large enough to pull in other information as appropriate. For example, the pilot whale controversy is especially important to women because of the effects of mercury on unborn children.

Work issue: Right now I need to get a bigger start on the two things that have always been the hardest parts of journalism for me – finding contacts and placing stories.

I have a lot of advantages here that are enabling me to find contacts, because I

already knew several people before I came, and they are able to introduce me to others. In addition, Faroese people are very friendly and they are impressed that I am here for so long and am learning their language. So, I have not had an especially hard time striking up conversations or getting people's contact information.

However, despite this, this is not the easiest place to make contacts either. There are not really large public gathering places where it would feel appropriate to solicit people. People are in their houses or in their yards, for the most part, where approaching them is hard. Also, while Faroese people are very friendly, they are also a little bit shy, and they are very aware of the power of the media in a place where everyone knows everyone and everyone reads everything published about the Faroe Islands. I felt very encouraged that one of the first two people I asked to follow accepted. But there are many people I haven't asked, at least not yet, because they already advertised their shyness to me.

I have not actually started trying to place stories yet. This is very naughty of me. I should make that my goal for this week. Partly, I wanted to narrow my focus a little bit more first, but partly that was just an excuse, as I could have reached out before. My question is, at the publications that we had brainstormed or any others, do any of you know someone that would be good for me to contact? Otherwise, I guess it's time to take the plunge and start cold-emailing.

Research progress: I have talked to people about my research and gotten some good ideas to help me finalize my list of questions and images that I will use. I am grateful to also be doing a research component because I feel like it legitimizes my presence here more. It shows that I'm taking their culture seriously. I have the support of a Faroese anthropologist on my research component who has also offered me some good advice. Just this weekend, I told a group of people about my project and they told me I absolutely had to talk to a certain Faroese journalist. They said he was the only “real” journalist in the Faroe Islands and was for sure who I should speak with. Another person in the room knew him personally and said he could introduce us.

Briefly outline your agenda or goals for next week: Some of my goals for this week are continued adaptation. I need to learn to drive a manual car so that I can reach more remote locations in the Faroe Islands on my own.

I also need to continue to improve my Faroese. Since arriving here, my understanding of spoken Faroese has improved very quickly. I can now read anything in Faroese and understand 80-90% when people speak slowly. However, I need to keep improving. In particular, I need to learn words for things related to my project. I still switch into Norwegian when I have to explain complicated things like that. This process is hard because these are words that are not just sitting in the dictionary. I have to discuss each word with a very competent native speaker who also speaks English, because I have to make sure that the wording is correct. Faroese is an old language, but new to this type of specialized vocabulary.

I am also still uncertain as to whether I should allow or encourage my study participants to speak in Faroese. I will have recordings, of course, so I can try again to understand and what I don't understand, I can ask someone in my house about later, but I'm still trying to decide if that's the best course of action. The good news is that people here are obsessed with their own language. They never seem to tire of explaining things to me in exhausting detail. But I'm sure, like everything, that has its limits, and I'm not sure I want to find them. One of my concrete goals for this week is to finalize my interview questions, get them translated into Danish and Faroese, and get actual interviews lined up and on the calendar.

I also want to make contact with the Faroese radio station. My friend said that foreigners usually can get on the radio here explaining what they're doing here. If I explain who I need to talk with for my project, I might be able to get some contacts that way. There is a Faroese culture night this week, which I am excited to go to. I'm sure I'll get some images and contacts that will be great for my travel piece there.

Field Report 2: June 3rd - June 11th

Weekly highlights: This week I made a lot more contacts, including both women for my newsy story and people involved in the tourism and music industries for my travel stories. I also improved my manual driving skills, I should feel comfortable driving (at least to small villages on Eysturoy and Streymoy) soon, which will improve my mobility. My Faroese has also improved slightly to the point where I can now explain my project in Faroese (albeit bad Faroese) instead of switching to English or Norwegian for tricky things like that.

I Made several trips to Tórshavn by bus to make contacts there and also found a place I can stay if I want to spend a night in the capital. One day I went it was a beautiful, sunny day and I got to see the Faroese people at their happiest, swimming at the harbor, sitting at outside cafes, etc. Tórshavn felt very lively and summery that day (a nice contrast to the usual heavy fog). Also, that day a huge cruise ship had come in, dwarfing the city beneath it. It was fascinating to actually see tourists in Tórshavn, and funny to see how they basically stayed in large groups and only hit a few narrowly defined places in the capital or, occasionally, went on bus excursions to other sites. I still have not met any longer-term, independent tourists except for a small group of Danish people. Even when we go to very famous natural or cultural places during good weather, and find a small crowd, they have all been Faroese.

I attended the huge Faroese Culture Night, a growing tradition that's starting to be called the “mini-Ólavsøka” or miniature national day celebration. I think this event itself will be interesting to write about in a travel article, and additionally I took pictures at the event of some Faroese musicians in action, the Faroese fashion show showing traditional clothing, and traditional Faroese ring dancing. I think the event captured the feeling of the Faroes Islands in a nutshell as it was a mix of modern and traditional events, set in random venues throughout the city (really any building or outdoor space large enough to fit a small crowd) and I tried to capture the strange feeling of a crowd in a tiny town in my photos and observations. At the Culture Night I also got to try Faroese dancing myself, and though I'm

horrible at dancing it's quite easy. Even the only first-timer in the crowd can join in in real-time. Another good experience for my writing. After the organized festivities, I went out and met a lot of people there, and even got invited to “the club,” a private club that's by far the oldest in the Faroes and can only be entered by (male) members and their guests. “The Club” is a Faroese cultural institution, in fact I had read about it in a novel set in the Faroe Islands and hadn't known it was real before being invited.

I went to several private parties where I was also able to make contacts and see how people in the villages (in my case, Norðragøta) enjoy themselves. In Tórshavn, after all, there are several bars and even clubs. Klaksvík also has a few such establishments, and Tvøroyri in Suðuroy has one. Gøta, where I live, has not even so much as a cafe or a restaurant. So what do young people do for fun? Well, it seems they have house parties and play music together, or they host a massive birthday party at the harbor, setting up a huge tent and band equipment, three wood-fire hot tubs and a sauna (jump in the sea by the fishing boats in between), hiring a sausage truck to give out customized hot dogs for free (in addition to the whale, blubber, and fish soup, of course) and spending a cold, drizzly, foggy, bright night from 8 pm to 8 am having a great time.

Made a list of my 'useful' contacts and who I think would be good to interview for my research, who would be good to talk with and photograph for my stories (permission pending), and what are some weak points I still have that I can start asking around to find.

I have thought more about my travel story and my focus, and decided there were four interesting things tourists come, or should come, to the Faroes to experience: Faroese nature, culture, food and music. A large travel story could be split into four sections, itineraries, etc based on those four topics, or a shorter story could focus on one of the four. One concern I had was that the culture or the music might be harder for a tourist to experience, but having attended a public event like Culture Night, hearing about the upcoming G! and Summer Festival (the two biggest music festivals here) and the “Summer Music Festival” which involves almost daily concerts in amazing settings (including, weather permitting, sea-

caves) on almost all the islands over the course of the whole summer. This stuff is amazing and barely taken advantage of by tourists. Granted, the real tourism season usually only goes through July and part of August, but by June 11th I still see almost exclusively Faroese people and the small group of expats at events.

Work issue: I am no longer as worried about making contacts. Especially once I started going to Tórshavn, and also just through luck, I feel like I now know quite a few people here and a big range of them as well. I made a list of who I'd like to interview for the research component and who would be good to work with journalistically. I think I have the research contacts covered now, and I have lots of the things I am looking for for women – several in the capital, a few in other villages, one in Klaksvík, and one in Suðuroy, all with a variety of jobs and ages (18-30ish). Here are some of the things I felt like I was still missing and should try to narrow in on finding:

I really want to photograph at least one young woman who already has a family/child, because I feel like that is quite common here just not in the groups that I have gotten farthest into. I do know one woman with a very young baby, but she's rather atypical as she is a musician's wife and almost forty. But some of my contacts have sisters etc who fit this description, so I may start asking around.

I also want to talk to an immigrant woman, specifically one from Thailand or the Philippines as it is a growing and visible trend that Faroese men are finding women there due to a scarcity here. Finally, it would be great to talk to a Faroese person who has left the Faroe Islands, either while they are here visiting or while I am in Copenhagen in August. I do know two of these girls, but one lives in Norway and has already visited and left the Faroes for the year. The other is coming briefly but doesn't really want to be interrupted during her short family time, and while I think she'd be happy to talk to me online or in Denmark, she lives in Aarhus which would mean a bit of travel from Copenhagen, and a slightly atypical experience, so I'll continue to keep my ears open.

I still have not actually started trying to place stories yet. Last week, I posed the

following question: “at the publications that we had brainstormed or any others, do any of you know someone that would be good for me to contact? Otherwise, I guess it's time to take the plunge and start cold-emailing.” It would be great to get an answer from you guys on this if you did know anyone at the publications I plan to contact.

Research progress: I have made a list of the specific people I want to interview and I am going to send them requests, finalize and get my materials printed very soon, probably as soon as I get power and internet access back.

Briefly outline your agenda or goals for next week: Continue getting better at driving and at Faroese – almost a permanent goal for the summer for me! I'm seeing the light at the end of the tunnel in the sense that I have been driving around some nearby villages and think I will soon reach a level where I can independently drive at least around this and the adjacent island. Ferries and towns with stoplights and busy roundabouts continue to terrify me. In Faroese, I understand so much now that I think I can do my interviews in Faroese as long as I record them and have friends who are willing to help me decipher tricky bits (which I totally do).

I need to continue to try to get in touch with the Faroese university and radio station, the former because they still haven't made a decision about my having office space or a scholarship (office space would be nice as I would have somewhere free and with internet access to go while I'm in Tórshavn), and the radio station could help me make contacts.

Basically, I need to actually get started with the work itself, not just preparations and a huge body of background cultural knowledge and general purpose photographs. I'm going to make a physical calendar filling it in with obligations and when people are here and not here (as a lot of the people I talked to are going to Denmark or traveling for a large chunk of the summer) so that I can plan my timing for going places like Suðuroy. I also can get started on the research interviews right away.

Field Report 3: June 12th - June 16th

Weekly highlights: Spent the weekend in Klaksvík, the second largest town in the Faroes, for the weekend, met several more people and got the names of some contacts in Copenhagen. Finished translating my research questions and gathering and printing my photo elicitation artifacts. Did three interviews for my research component. Found a new young woman to interview and photograph in Klaksvík. Identified areas where I still need to find contacts (young women with families, young female immigrants, people in Copenhagen) and started asking around specifically in those categories.

Had a great interview with and took some photos of a woman in Klaksvík who I find very interesting for my project. She's recently opened a cafe and told me a lot about women in the Faroes, food in the Faroes, and issues she perceives with how most outsiders understand the islands as well as possibilities and problems she sees with tourism in the Faroes.

Work issue: Thanks for the advice and names when it comes to trying to get my stories placed from this summer. I'm going to start contacting people this week (last week I sent out my field notes quite late, so it's only been five days since I got your responses, and I was in Klaksvík over the weekend.) I am going to put together those story summaries as was suggested. I am really happy that I feel like I have a lot of contacts and potential contacts at my disposal now. I still see a few holes but I feel more confident that I will be able to fill those as well. Now I need to get a better idea of if and where I'll get placements and how I'll need to tailor what I ask and gather according to those assignments. I guess I just feel nervous about this because I don't want to screw up with an incomplete or bad pitch, so it's a balancing act between doing it sooner and having more time to deliver or doing it later when I have more for the pitch but less flexibility to adapt to requests.

A funny work issue right now is that this group called Sea Shepherd (a slightly less nonviolent offshoot of Greenpeace) is in the Faroe Islands this summer to try to stop the whale hunt. This is of course a really interesting topic. Several people have covered the topic of the controversial whale hunt well, but I'm very amused to see how the Faroese people are

reacting to the “Grindstop” Campaign that is bringing 500 foreigners to the Faroes to protest and try to interfere with whaling this summer. It's an interesting dynamic. It remains to be seen whether there will even be a whale hunt this summer while they are here, but if there is things will get very interesting. For now, tensions are high, but I think not dangerous as the Faroese are some of the most laid back people I have ever met. Still, as an American here during this time period, I'm starting to get asked if I am Sea Shepherd and I think some people are concerned that I am undercover (this has happened before). However, for the most part I am able to convince them otherwise pretty easily and quickly.

Research progress: This week I finalized all of my research interview materials and conducted three interviews for the research component. I plan to do around 8 interviews, so I am about a third of the way done. However, I did the interviews in Faroese after all, which means I'm looking at a lot of time transcribing and translating in the near future.

Briefly outline your agenda or goals for next week: My goals for this week are to get more organized, by (A) creating a formal list of story ideas, (B) sending out queries/pitches, and (C) putting together a calendar for my remaining time here so I can visualize and plan accordingly, and know when contacts are available, when major concerts are, etc. I also want to catch up on my blogging as I have let that slide a bit in the last week.

I'm feeling quite good about my language abilities. I want to keep working on my Faroese, of course, but I did my first interviews in the language and it went fine. Sometimes my side of the conversation was very clumsy and I think I will be humiliated when I listen to the interview, but I was able to understand almost everything (enough to ask the right follow up questions and that transcribing will not be too bad). So, I'm feeling good about that. I also need to start driving independently. I have a source I want to interview in the village of Funningur, for example (I also just want to go over to that area of the islands and take photos) but there are no busses to that area. So I need to keep practicing if I'm going to be able to get there without begging for favors.

I'd also like to continue to knock out research interviews as possible so that I can get

those out of the way and focus on the more difficult journalism aspect. Now that I have a good start on the research part, I want to get in touch with the Faroese journalist I've heard about and interview him as well. I don't think I'll use the same interview format with him because it is geared towards ordinary people, but I would like to talk to him about the same subject.

Field Report 4: June 17th - June 26th

This week marks halfway through my time in the Faroe Islands. I “freaked out” about that a little bit last week, but I've come to terms with it now. Things are finally starting to pick up in terms of taking contacts and accumulated knowledge and actually starting to crank out the interviews and work.

Weekly highlights: Spent the midsummer solstice on Koltur, one of the smallest and most remote of the Faroe Islands, on which only a single family lives. This isn't extremely relevant to my project, as I want to focus more on main-stream Faroese life, but it was fascinating to see this extreme as well. Also, while Koltur is not the easiest island to arrange a visit to, it is of great and growing tourism interest as they restore an entire old village on the site. At this event I was also able to take some nice photographs, especially because they did the Faroese ring dance, normally only done in crowded indoor spaces, outside beneath the mountains and beside the sea. This trip was also part of the tourist-accessible Faroese tradition of climbing a mountain to see the sunset on midsummer's eve, something I might write about in one of my tourism articles.

Did two interviews for my research component. Visited the small island of Nólsoy, where I took some photos and found very friendly people I can stay with and interview on a subsequent visit there. Spent a day with a young woman in Tórshavn who is moving to Denmark later this year. This is really relevant to my interests about why women are leaving the Faroe Islands. She was packing up her apartment and I was able to photograph her doing that as well as experiencing normal life in the capital, shopping at the mall, etc. I also met

several of her friends who also represent women in the “big Faroese city.” One of them is an outspoken Lesbian and I am hoping to talk with her as well about her experience here, as until very recently there were almost no openly gay people in the Faroe Islands (they basically stayed closeted or moved to Denmark or Iceland).

Spent a morning with a local woman in my village. She is very open, talkative, and friendly, and fascinating as she represents, to my eyes, a blend between the traditional and the modern Faroese woman. On one hand, she is a stay-at-home mother and a farmer's wife (very traditional), and happy in those roles. On the other hand, she is an entrepreneur always busy doing projects on the side. She loves the Faroe Islands but is not shy about identifying problems she sees in the society as well. I photographed her cutting grass for hay at her farm and interviewed her extensively on a variety of topics this morning. I asked her to stay in touch and I hope to photograph her and her family a few more times as its possible.

Experienced Faroese graduation culture, a major event in the lives of all young people here (18-30), as gap years and such are very common, so everyone has some friends graduating in any particular year and attends various festivities with them. These graduated students and friends represent a large portion of the attendance at various summer festivals and events, wearing traditional graduation clothing and/or traditional Faroese dress. It's very fun.

Work issue: I don't really feel like I have a work issue right now. If there is one, it's just deciding how to budget my time. This week has been busy and good and I expect the same from next week. My contacts are finally paying off and I feel like I'm in the thick of my main productive time, conducting the actual interviews etc. I'm just struggling with how (and even when) to take everything I'm gathering and edit, refine, and use it. I still feel like I'm so overwhelmed with gathering and absorbing that it's hard to find time to sit down and process.

Originally, I wasn't planning to write much about the Faroese whale killing, or Grindadráp. However, when I was blogging about it, I realized I couldn't find any articles

about the Grindadráp from any authoritative sources (well, I did find one PBS documentary). This made me think I should write about it after all. I am gathering some quotes, information and contacts on the subject, but I don't feel like it's my story to write unless I get to see a Grind myself. I am here during prime season, but some years go by without a grind at all and also some people think they will not have a grind this year in order to appease the environmentalist group Sea Shepherd. So I'm just waiting on high alert. If I'm able to witness a grind, I think I need to cover it.

I'm still working on meeting families with children and immigrant women. My new friend in Gøta has a family but I would also like to meet a slightly younger woman with a family, as many Faroese get married and have children in their early 20's and I'd like to represent that. I have met an immigrant woman from the Philippines and she is currently considering my request to interview her.

Research progress: I did a few more interviews for my research component. This is going well and I expect to finish all my interviews easily in the next week or two weeks. However, transcribing them will take a lot of time as they have mostly been conducted in Faroese.

Briefly outline your agenda or goals for next week: I already have several plans for next week. This weekend I will go to Suðuroy, the southern island, again and stay with Sirið, the young woman I met last time I was there. I will be there for the largest Suðuroy event of the year, Joansøka (Midsummer), and photograph this event (rowing regatta, parties, etc) and also get to know Sirið, interview her, and photograph her in her everyday life.

I also have plans to meet with the coordinating staff for the G! Music Festival, which is the second biggest music festival in the Faroe Islands and takes place in a few weeks in my village, so we can discuss my access there. I also plan to knock out a few more research interviews, already having scheduled one. Finally, I will meet with one of the most well-known and highly regarded Faroese journalists to talk with him about journalism in the Faroes and representations of the Faroes abroad.

Field Reports 5 and 6: June 27th - July 14th

I've missed a week or two of field notes, for a good reason – I've been so busy! Since I've also been slow to update my blog, I'm including a few sample photographs that I have taken.

Photographs include: Food being carried from the dock on Koltur, where only one family lives; a graduation ceremony in Gøta, which was about 75% female and represents more females continuing with higher education, which usually takes them abroad for school or work; Elin and her husband working in their garden, cutting hay and rhubarb; the village of Nólsoy; Jóna packing her things to move from her apartment, first home for a few months and then to Denmark; Bárá cutting the grass for hay at her family farm; Ari and his friends playing at their graduation ceremony; Sirið getting ready for a festival with the help of her mother and grandmother, who will probably move to Denmark if she does; Sirið and Suzanna watching casually over Súsanna's baby at Sirið's house; the village of Tvøroyri, the largest in Suðuroy, around midnight on a summer evening; the previously popular Joansøka festival with very low attendance; Lydia hiking in her beloved Faroese mountains, which she misses dearly living in Denmark; the village of Gjógv on an unusually beautiful summer day; the extended family divided by geography, coming together for a brief two weeks on Nólsoy; more of the extended family waiting for the ferry to bring more family members for the brief reunion; Nile, an immigrant woman who came to the Faroes to marry a Faroese man, watching over her young son as he sleeps; Durita, a young lesbian woman living in Argir just outside of the capital, catches a smoke on her balcony together with her housemate Birgita.

Weekly highlights: Went to Suðuroy, the Southernmost island, to photograph their biggest festival of the year and also interviewed and photographed two young women there, one who is a young mother and her best friend, who will probably move to Denmark soon. Her two sisters already live in Denmark and her parents will probably move too once she moves.

Spent more time with the woman in my village, photographing her when she had a

farm and a home visit from cruise ship tourists. Met several other young women to photograph and interview in my village, several of whom are home visiting from Denmark. Interviewed several tourists about why they came to the Faroe Islands and what they had heard about the Faroe Islands before coming.

Interviewed and photographed a young woman, still in Faroese high school, in Klaksvík. Interviewed and photographed an immigrant woman from the Philippines. Interviewed and photographed a young lesbian woman living in Tórshavn.

Interviewed and photographed a family on the island of Nólsoy. The mother of the family has never been out of the Faroe Islands. Meanwhile, four of her five children have moved abroad and only the fifth, who does not work due to psychiatric issues, remains in the Faroes. The children were all visiting, together with THEIR children, for the summer holidays. They are the most critical people of the Faroe Islands that I have spoken with so far.

Conducted two more formal interviews for my research component, meaning I only have three left to go now, and two of them are on the books and planned. Interviewed a Faroese journalist about journalism in the Faroes and foreign coverage of the Faroe Islands.

Explored and photographed extensively in perfect summer weather four amazing and often visited villages – Gøta, where I live, Funningur, the oldest village in the Faroes, Gjógv, widely considered the most beautiful village in the Faroes, Nólsoy, just a short ferry ride from the capital and a model of idyllic Faroese village life, and Viðareiði, the northernmost village in the Faroe Islands.

Went to a Concierto Grotto in the island, one of the most amazing touristic experiences of my life, which I will definitely be writing about in any travel article. We sailed to the bird cliffs and sea caves of Hestur on an old wooden schooner, then explored the sea caves with small boats and went to the biggest one for a hauntingly beautiful vocal concert amidst the sound of the waves and the voices of the puffins.

Ate a lot of traditional Faroese food. Now I have tried almost all of it, including

rotten fish, sheep tallow, guillemot in its own gravy, and fresh rhubarb. I've also been to and photographed a fairly large percentage of the Faroese restaurants and cafes, so I can also write about those.

Continued to develop contacts in the travel industry, so getting information and quotes for my travel pieces will be very easy.

Work issue: I think everything is going really well, but I'm quickly running out of time here. The first month, I was making contacts, learning Faroese, and learning to drive. Now that all of those three things are settled, all I'm lacking is time! Some days, I've done three interviews in a single day. Now, in my remaining two weeks here, I want to do several travel experiences, photograph both major festivals (G! Festival in my home village, one of the world's most unique music festivals, and the national festival, Ólavsøka) and still do a few more interviews. Pretty much everything I don't have to do here (which is sensitive interviews, contact gathering, and photography) will be done at home, for better or for worse, because the time is just flying so quickly.

I've found people in all the categories I was hoping to. Now I just have to complete those interviews and keep working to find people to interview in Denmark during my four days there. I still want to talk to a politician and feminist living in Tórshavn, who has agreed to meet me, several of the girls I have met in my home village, my last research interviews, and another friend in Tórshavn.

Barring a Grind being sighted and killed during my last weeks here, the stories I am prepared to tell with my photographs and interviews include my research story, a huge variety of travel articles, an article about Faroese music and its deep entrenchment in the culture, and a huge article about the variety of Faroese women, why many are moving to Denmark, and what is being done or could be being done about this.

Research progress: I did two more interviews for my research project. There are only three left to do, and I have already planned two more of the interviews. I just have to find one more older person to interview formally.

Briefly outline your agenda or goals for next week: This week I plan to travel to Mykines, considered the most beautiful island and one of the most visited by tourists. Maybe I will also go to the bird cliffs of Vestmanna, or the village of Tjørnuvík. I also plan to meet up with some of my contacts in my home village (I have talked to three girls who are visiting from living in Denmark and one girl who lives here full-time who have agreed to be interviewed and photographed). Finally, I will go to the G! Festival, one of the biggest events of the year in the Faroe Islands and happening in my home village. Everyone will be there so I will have the chance to both photograph and experience the event, and photograph several of my sources in a new environment. I'm also continuing to plan the next week and a half now that I am down to the last half month in the Faroes.

Field Reports 7 and 8: July 15th - August 5th

Once again, a delay on my field notes. Sorry! I just got back to Missouri, so these field notes catch up my last work in the Faroe Islands. Now I'll be doing the transcribing, editing, writing, and maybe even a few last interviews by Skype for specific stories.

Weekly highlights: Did my last three research interviews, with two people in the older category and one younger person.

Visited the islands of Mykines, Fugloy, Skúgvoy, and Svínoy, which are more remote islands and, in the case of Mykines, often visited by tourists for its exceptional beauty and huge number of puffins. Unfortunately the weather was not good during my visits, but I spent the entire night awake in Mykines waiting for breaks in the fog and was rewarded by two five-minute intervals of being able to actually see the island I was on. I also took a helicopter to Fugloy so I got some shots from the air which was amazing. Taking helicopters is really common in the Faroe Islands as it is part of the public transportation system and is very cheap (for a helicopter ride).

Went twice to the island of Sandoy, where I got to see and photograph a sheep-shearing and some landscapes that are unique in the Faroe Islands. Visited on the island of

Vágur the famous village of Gásadalur, where a waterfall spills over cliffs into the sea,, and the beautiful neighboring village of Bøur, to photograph on a beautiful sunny day.

Assisted one young Faroese woman with a fashion photo-shoot (she is studying to be a fashion photographer), during which we waded up to our chests into the sea by the famously dramatically located village of Tjørnuvík, and I also photographed her in the process of doing this. I had previously also photographed her hiking. I also interviewed her for my project about young Faroese women.

Interviewed and photographed a young woman from my village, and was able to photograph her working in the fish factory. I was very excited about this as most Faroese women will work at the fish factory at some point in their lives... even the students often come back to work there during the summers.

Went to the island of Kalsoy, in my opinion the most beautiful place in the Faroe Islands, and had amazing weather after a long wait in the rain to photograph Kallurin, the lighthouse at the end of the world. That same day, taking advantage of the sunshine, I climbed the highest mountain in the Faroes and took photographs there as well.

Visited the Bird Cliffs of Vestmanna, one of the most popular tourism attractions in the Faroes, huge cliffs with many birds living in them. It wasn't peak season for birds so I had seen more and better birds at different times and places, but the sea-cliffs and caves were amazing.

Interviewed a journalist on the island of Sandoy who now works hard to promote Sandoy, attending conferences about stopping population decrease in remote places etc, about women in the Faroe Islands and living on the smaller islands, and how population growth can be slowed in such places.

Visited the "Visit Faroe Islands" office, because the people working there wanted to meet me and hear about my project. They were very nice and I think would be great for putting me in contact for any additional interviews with any tourism-related people I might need for specific stories as I write.

Interviewed two female Faroese politicians about gender equality in the Faroe Islands. Interviewed two volunteers from Sea Shepherd, the eco-terrorist group attempting, and basically succeeding for the summer, to shut down whaling in the Faroes.

Spent a lot of time with Matthew Workman, an American journalist who I think is doing great work in the Faroes with his Faroe Islands podcast. We had a lot of conversations about the Faroese culture and portrayal of it abroad, Sea Shepherd, and other topics, and he also interviewed me about my master's project, and the online Faroese course my friend and I are creating, for his podcast.

Accomplished my goal of photographing every island (18) and village (136) in the Faroe Islands. Some of the pictures are bad and from a distance (I actually didn't visit the two smallest islands, just passed them by boat because visits are hard to arrange) but I was still happy to have accomplished it. Oddly enough, in my last week I made a list of all the villages and started crossing them out, and did a long drive around the last large inhabited peninsula I hadn't visited, only to find on the last day that the three villages I was missing were very close to home! I made a drive out to Rituvík and Æðuvík, only 25 minutes away but which I had never visited (although they are set in a unique-in-the-Faroes landscape of rolling hills and heather) and also photographed Kambsdalur, a neighboring village that isn't very picturesque so I had never bothered to take a picture of it before.

Attended and photographed the G! Festival, the second biggest annual event on the Faroese calendar, a three-day music festival that took place in my home village and involves lots of food and drink, hot pots and sauna on the beach, and of course the best of Faroese music and even some reasonably well-known foreign acts (the headliner this year was Sister Sledge, who's only actually famous song is "We are Family"). I saw both possible sides to the festival this year, as the first day was beautiful warm weather and the second day was stormy. Each year can go either way... this year it went both, and the second night, one of the stages had to be abandoned because of high surf and the last concerts were played on the high-ground playground stage under a deluge of pouring rain, but everyone still partied on

until dawn.

Attended and photographed Ólavssøka, the Faroese national festival, a two-day event that takes place in Tórshavn, the capital, and doubles or triples its population during that time. For this festival, everyone wears national costume and basically wanders around meeting everyone they know by chance in the streets of the capital, taking photos with them and eating and drinking. There are also rowing competitions and concerts, and everything culminates on the second night with a massive all-song, where everyone gathers to sing 22 songs from a songbook. This is the official end of the festival. But as soon as the last song is sung, a kvæði starts playing over the loudspeakers and everyone joins for a massive and crazy ring-dance, just as the Faroese have been doing since the 10th century. This goes on for hundreds of verses of singing and dancing before finally breaking up so people can run home, change out of national costume, and either go to bed or go back to the downtown to party until dawn or later.

Attended and photographed the Faroese Pride parade and mini-festival. Oddly, in such a politically conservative country, this event had a great turnout. 5,000 people, or one tenth of the entire population, attended. The weather was perfect, in fact it was the hottest day I was in the Faroes and sunny. The event organizers are genius, getting top music groups to perform and setting the festival for the day before Ólavssøka, so some people just come one day early to the capital and extend their Ólavssøka weekend by a night. Also, there is growing talk that a narrow majority of Faroese people are now in fact in favor of gay rights, but the politicians are more conservative than the people they represent.

Went to Denmark, where I was a bit frustrated because most of the many Faroese people living there were currently on their summer holidays in the Faroe Islands. Nevertheless I managed to interview and photograph two women... one young woman working in Copenhagen temporarily who misses home and spends her time mostly with Faroese people in Denmark, and one middle-aged woman who was interesting for multiple reasons. She is much more assimilated into Danish culture and has few Faroese people in

Copenhagen. However, she considers herself “Faroese with a capital F” and does make frequent trips home to visit friends and family. She is also originally adopted from Korea and had some things to say about that topic, being an ethnic minority in the Faroes, etc.

Work issue: In general, I was overwhelmed by how well everything went during my last weeks in the Faroe Islands. Literally everything on my personal to-do list was marked off... at least everything that was possible or even remotely within my control. It was almost unbelievable how everything came together in such a short time.

However, I was still frustrated during my last weeks by a few things outside of my control. One was the lack of Faroese people in Denmark when I was there. I even visited the 'Faroese ghetto' and the Faroese Cultural House, only to find them abandoned for the summer holiday. That was just bad timing. Even if I had known, however, I don't know if I could have come at a different time to avoid the summer holiday. So oh well. I was happy to find two women to interview there anyway.

The biggest issue was the lack of a grind. I really wanted to write about the whale hunt, but I never saw one in person, so I don't feel like I can. I lack the photographs, the first hand experience, etc. I'm frustrated about this because I think it is something that needs to be tackled from a balanced perspective. However, they had a small grind two days before I arrived, and then, shortly after I arrived, Sea Shepherd came, preventing two grinds while I was on the Faroe Islands. Just after I left, I heard that they had prevented a third grind. So far, there has not been any grind at all since they arrived. It will be interesting to see what this means for the future. Will Sea Shepherd, bolstered by their success, come back to occupy the Faroe Islands next year? Will the Faroese continue to let Sea Shepherd prevent their grinds?

Research progress: I finished all of my interviews for my research component. Now I just have to transcribe them and write up my results.

Briefly outline your agenda or goals for next week: Now that I am back home in Missouri, I plan to lock myself up and get very busy transcribing, writing, and editing.

Evaluation

My work project in the Faroe Islands consisted of a variety of blog posts, two feature stories for Parrot Time (one about my experience learning Faroese and visiting the Faroe Islands, one about summer festivals in the Faroe Islands, with a sidebar about modern music in the islands), a film review of a Faroese film, editing (an article about the whale killing, a phrasebook, an article about language conflict, and samples from the kvæði) and providing photos (including the cover and several full page photos and spreads) for Parrot Time, work for for the G! Festival in the Faroe Islands (photographs, writing, and translations) and pitches for and drafts of two additional feature stories: one about women in the Faroes and one a travel piece, with a map, practical information, and three sample itineraries making up a service guide to travel in the Faroes. Since my interests are varied, I was happy to do a mixture of travel pieces, personal pieces, and news or informational pieces.

I learned a lot from working on this project and the research component. In terms of practical skills, I became much more comfortable with all of my equipment – I now use the manual mode on my camera, shoot in Raw, and have a much better editing and toning workflow. I record interviews whenever possible and have gotten much better at doing so and at transcribing.

I also learned so much from having to land in a new place, network, establish myself and what I was doing, organize my time, and more in order to get work done. While the Faroe Islands is a friendly place, and I was lucky enough to have some initial contacts to vouch for me, it was not always easy to work in a foreign environment, and my situation was sometimes complicated by the simultaneous presence of Sea Shepherd, an anti-whaling organization, which meant that I was always under initial suspicion before I could convince people that I wasn't an undercover activist. Throughout the summer, I noticed that I got infinitely more comfortable approaching people and asking if I could photograph and interview them. I started to feel like a real journalist in a way I never quite felt before, when

a part of me always knew I was a student or an intern.

Working in the Faroe Islands could present certain practical difficulties, but these were greatly ameliorated at least in my case by the helpfulness of the Faroese people. You really need support from the inside to be successful during a long stay in the Faroes, as there are few hotels, everything is expensive, etc. The locals get by with both higher wages and a long tradition of sharing, helping each other, etc – for example, they can supplement expensive groceries with sheep, fish, and whale that they either help to get themselves or are given from neighbors, family and friends. Likewise most Faroese live in their own houses, which are quite large, and are extremely hospitable.

For most of the summer, I lived in the village of Norðragøta with a friend of mine and his family, which I met two years previously on a vacation in the islands. When they heard about my project, they invited me to stay with them for the duration. Not only did they provide me with housing, they were also incredibly helpful when it came to transportation, teaching me to drive a manual car and letting me borrow theirs whenever I wanted. Although Gøta is not a large village, it is well situated with many busses a day going to Tórshavn and Klaksvík, the largest towns in the Faroes, so I was not very isolated. My “Faroese family” included me in many of their routines and activities, and I really felt that I understood Faroese life on a deep level from living with them. My experiences with them run through every aspect of my project, although I did not actively profile any of them out of a desire to avoid conflicts of interest and because it seemed a little bit too lazy and easy.

Making contacts and getting around were things that initially seemed difficult but quickly became easier. I remember being frustrated initially and worrying about making my first few contacts. In the off-season, which it still barely was when I arrived, people don't meet outside very often and it's harder to meet new people and strangers. I would also probably have had an easier time if I had gone to the capital where there are bars and other places where it is possible to socialize, as opposed to Gøta where I thought it would be creepy to just go up to people in their yards, so I was spending a lot of time waiting for

introductions and the occasional social event.

I was worried about meeting enough people, so I called up every contact I could think of. My “starter friends” were the family I stayed with, a friend of a friend who lives in Tórshavn, and the American expat community (there are about 10 Americans living in the Faroes). This was more than enough; in a small place one contact quickly leads to another and soon I had more people than I knew what to do with. I got more and more comfortable just saying, “Hey, can I talk with you about this?” I was shocked how rarely I was refused.

Getting around was also initially a concern for me. Coming from Missouri and used to having my own car, I was worried about the complexities of ferries, helicopters, busses, driving, hiking without paths, etc. But it all soon became second nature to me, and I was happy to successfully learn how to drive a manual car. I remember the first time I took the bus to Tórshavn by myself for a day and how nervous I was. Just two months later, I had a busy day where I had to drive to the capital to meet a friend for lunch, then interview a woman at her office, then drive to a harbor to catch a ferry to the island of Sandoy for dinner and an interview, then take the ferry back and drive home from there, stopping in Kirkjubøur on the way to photograph a nice sunset. I got used to the rain, the fog, the sheep, the mountains... they never stopped enchanting me, but they did stop intimidating me.

From my research component, I learned a lot about the various forces that constrain travel and international journalism and what the barriers are to changing that. While I was studying the impact that these have on the Faroe Islands in particular, I could see the ways that similar forces would act on other small countries, other tourist destinations, and really in any sort of international journalism.

On the one hand, I found that some of the problems that concerned me were not as severe as I had initially been lead to believe, or at least that there are many people aware of these problems and working to help improve and diversify journalistic coverage of the Faroes. But I still believe the general trend is problematic, and so do most Faroese people. But the more I considered the reasons for this, the more I understood them and understood

how hard they were to change... so at the same time, I also felt that the problem was much harder to solve than I might have naively imagined.

Photo elicitation as a method worked well, especially when people initially claimed they didn't know anything about foreign media or were nervous about the interview, because it helped to break the ice and get them talking. Some interesting things came up once they started looking at the photos, in some cases. Also I found out specifically how they thought about the objects in question, which because the Faroes are so small was already quite interesting.

Most of the Faroese I spoke with weren't prone to descriptive elaboration, perhaps because they know their small country so well, that even when speaking with foreigners they forget that they are unused to giving explanations. There are classic Faroese novels that, rendered in translation, grew by some 20% or more, swelling with the explanations and descriptions that were absent – unnecessary – in the original. The same goes for native Faroese media today; it's like a high-context language wherein much is left unsaid.

The Faroese know their world not only well, but in a sort of specific way that seems to make it hard for them to generalize. They know the exact places, throughout their country, more intimately than I know any town I have ever lived in. The lack of trees, I think, helps – with scant foliage, the landscape is dramatic, exposed, and unchanging – but size, boundedness, and long history and deep cultural identification with these places also play a roll, I think. It is hard to stump the Faroese with photographs they can't place (often in both time and geographic location). In fact, this is a game they like to play on social media! They are baffled and amused when they don't recognize a particular cliff or boulder.

You cannot show the Faroese a picture of a Faroese church without them understanding it as a specific and known church, located in a specific and known village. If you show them a photograph of a person – wishing, for example, to talk about fisherman, or farmers, or the Faroese national dress – they either know who it is or ask who it is. Therefore, when I asked them to just consider archetypes or symbols, it seemed to many of

them an unnatural and silly way to think about their nation and all the things in it.

As an example, once several years ago I idly drew a picture with things in it that I imagined to be Faroese. There were sheep grazing, a waterfall, a cliff, and a little village with a church. But when I showed it to a Faroese friend, he immediately frowned and explained patiently that there was no such place in the Faroe Islands. At the time, I couldn't understand his lack of imagination, and he couldn't understand my casual make-believe. "Well, maybe not," I said. "But there could be, right?" "Um... I don't know. Where would it be?" I imagined drawing a similar scene of things that made me think of Missouri – rolling hills, some cows, an old barn, some trees... no one would ever find it uncomfortable that they didn't know the exact spot I had imagined.

Now, I think I understand. I have been to 132 villages in the Faroe Islands – I can now play that Facebook game. When I see a picture taken from just about anywhere in the Faroe Islands, I know it as well as downtown Columbia, Mo. I know that shed, down where the river meets the beach in Norðragøta. I know that rusted-out bomb casing, out by the shore in Hvalba. I know that with Tindhólmur in the background, at that angle, this photo could only have been taken from the village of Bøur on Vágur, and judging by the bit of roof I see in the corner, I'd guess from that old concrete platform above the road.

And the same goes for people. The Faroese usually knew the specific people in my photos, and rarely said things about all Faroese people, focusing on the differences instead. They also hesitated to give examples and tell stories. Many don't want to tell other people's stories (at least to the media)... or even their own stories, because they involve other people. There's nothing like anonymity. There is just no way to provide anonymity in any sense. The slightest identifying characteristic is enough for everyone to identify you and anyone you mention in the story. Once I interviewed a person who worked at the Faroese power company. This person told me some very interesting stories about working there that would have been interesting to write about. However, if I did so, there would be no way to anonymize it. I could not just say "a person working at a Faroese power company" –

everyone would know it was this one, and quickly realize therefore who this person was relative to their position in the company.

When I pitched my stories, I realized that the kind of stories I most dreamed of writing were hard pitches. The general audience doesn't care much about languages, for example, or the anthropological view of everyday life... unless, of course, you exoticize it, which I didn't want to do. I thought the news stories would be an easier sell, but of course, it's hard to determine exactly the right outlet. There was no grindadráp while I was in the Faroes, so I wasn't able to write a story about the grind, which probably would have been the most newsworthy peg for an American audience. Instead, I focused on another story which became close to my heart: women and rural depopulation. However, I am still trying to place this story. I am also continuing to pitch my travel story. The problem with travel stories, of course, is that they are almost uniformly positive. I am still hoping to be quite honest in mine, even while the point, of course, is to sell the location. But we'll see how it survives the pitching and editing process, if it gets that far.

Of course there is much that I would do differently if I could start all over. But I'm told that's normal, for a master's project, and that's part of how you realize how much you learned. Looking back at my field notes and thoughts early in the summer, I feel like I was so unorganized, nervous about the wrong things. Although two and a half months is already far longer than most journalists get to spend in the countries they are covering, I would have loved to have as much time again, because by the end, I felt that I was finely really ready to begin my work – I spoke the language reasonably well, had many contacts, and had come to understand so much more about the stories I wanted to tell. It's only natural that I wish I could start again at the beginning, already knowing everything I had learned along the way.

Ultimately, however, I am happy with how the project went, excited about the work I have done and grateful to have learned as much as I did and to have had so many amazing experiences along the way.

Physical Evidence

Please see attachments:

- ^ Transcripts of Research Interviews
- ^ Samples from Adventures in the Land of Maybe, my Faroe Islands blog.
This blog can be found at www.landofmaybe.com and comprises 20+ blog posts (5,500 views to date) I made while I was in the Faroe Islands and upon my return from the Faroe Islands, on topics ranging from the shortage of women in the Faroe Islands to my experiences learning to speak Faroese and drive a manual car on the islands.
- ^ Work for the G! Festival: Photographs, blogging, writing, and other work I did for the organizers of the G! Festival in the Faroes.
- ^ Parrot Time: Faroe Islands Edition: For this language and culture eMagazine (2,865 views for this edition), I contributed three articles (a feature about learning Faroese, a feature about summer festivals in the Faroe Islands, and a review of a Faroese movie) and also contributed many other photographs for the issue and helped to edit several of the articles, including heavy editing, compilation and introduction writing for the whaling article.
- ^ Pitch for story about Women in the Faroe Islands
- ^ Pitch for Professional Analysis
- ^ Draft of Faroese Women Photo Story
- ^ Draft for Faroe Islands Travel Guide

Professional Analysis

Images of The Faroe Islands

In a remote stretch of the North Atlantic ocean, approximately equidistant from Scotland, Iceland and Norway, are the tiny Faroe Islands – home to 50,000 people with their own language, national identity, and a vibrant modern society. Despite their small size, the Faroes function as a fully autonomous nation within the Kingdom of Denmark.

When the islands are portrayed in the international media, they usually take one of two forms: an idyllic, tradition-bound natural paradise... or a barbaric backwater stained red with the blood of slaughtered pilot whales. The islands, however, are rarely covered in a balanced way that seems relatable and authentic to modern Faroese. The modern story of the islands seems at first glance full of contradictions – turf roofs sheltering homes with the latest high-speed internet and satellite television; fridges packed with frozen pizzas and sheds still stocked with mutton, dried fish and salted blubber; a society that functions as both a small community and an entire nation. Many Faroese feel that their representation in the media is cropped by strict frames and narratives that go for the exotic and the dramatic at the expense of authentic portrayals of this complexity.

In many ways, the Faroe Islands serves as an example of many small nations throughout Europe and the world whose cultures and societies are often marginalized, misunderstood and misrepresented. The media's role in portraying these cultures should be to shed light on the reality of their modern situations while remaining sensitive to authenticity. Unfortunately, several factors leads to the media resorting to well-worn frames. Every form of media has its agenda and its inherent biases, and the representation of the Faroes that results leaves a lot to be desired: a well-rounded representation of daily life.

“Glansbilleder are always pretty...”

Johan Petur Dam, a 32-year-old Faroe Islander who watches a lot of foreign media and documentaries about his nation, groups the coverage into two categories – “the very positive ones” and the very negative ones – without much in between. He says some visitors describe the Faroes as a sort of paradise. “It's almost ridiculous how positively they talk about it.” he says, “and sometimes it translates into media as well. Like *National Geographic* making the Faroes the best place to travel in... what was it, 2007? People are still talking about it.”

The tourism industry, naturally, has a positive bias. Travel writers and tourism officials seek primarily to market the islands as a vacation destination – which can result in a overly simple and idyllic portrayal focused on certain aspects of Faroese nature and traditional culture. Súsanna Sørensen, the press officer for Visit Faroe Islands, explains that while her office strives to present a balanced, accurate, and layered vision of the Faroes, simple messages work better in marketing, and the ultimate goal is to get people to come to the Faroes to experience it themselves. “Painting that picture of the unspoiled gem in the middle of the ocean,” she says, “is fine for tourism purposes.” But even she believes that this depiction can be updated, as the country has more to offer visitors than blue skies and green mountains – food and music are among several areas of growing touristic interest.

Uni Johannesen, 21, says some Faroese refer to the idealized tourism pictures they see of the Faroe Islands as “glansbilleder” because they resemble the sort of overly precious imagery seen on stickers and paper dolls. “*Glansbilleder* are always pretty, you see... and perfect.”

“We see so often pictures of the Faroe Islands with sunshine, and clear skies, and that doesn't happen so often actually,” says Heri Olsen, 58. In reality, the Faroes are one of the cloudiest places on earth; rain and fog – often so severe that helicopters and boats can't travel – are far more common weather forecasts than the sunshine that often fills the brochures.

Matthew Workman, an American journalist who has spent the last several years working on The Faroe Islands Podcast, first became interested when he noticed his blog had a visitor from the islands, which he had never heard of. As he did some research, he found himself one of the outsiders who has been completely taken by the beauty and exotic strangeness of the country, which he says “just kind of spoke to me.”

Workman says it is understandable that “almost every article says something about 'the staggering austere landscapes of this windswept land' and there's always talk of the mountains and the fjords and... how can you not? It looks like Lord of the Rings over there.” While he agrees that “there is something sort of mysterious and wondrous about the place,” he also thinks that most depictions of the Faroes are overly simplistic for better or for worse, ignoring a lot of the nuance and complexity.

Cultural depictions likewise tend to focus on a single slice of the Faroese reality. Nineteen-year-old Elinborg á Tjaldráfløtti Olsen says pictures of the abandoned farm at Saksun, for example, “could have been taken in the seventeen-hundreds... eighteen-hundreds... it's like nothing has changed. It's unspoiled. It's pretty.”

Johannesen said that he only remembers a few media pieces that really represented the lives of ordinary people in the Faroes. One was a photo essay, shot in the off-season, comprising pictures of normal houses, idle children, and religious activities. Johannesen appreciated the series. He said, “it was interesting to see. It was different than just like nature and more nature, and the occasional 'Viking Boat,' Faroese rowing boats and turf-roof houses ... I didn't really think it looked that sad. They were a good depiction of the lonesomeness and isolation that I can relate to here.”

Some of his friends disagreed. The headline of the piece spoke of a lack of possibility, and one of his friends said she thought that the series sent a horrible image of the Faroe Islands. But he said, “Isn't it also bad, or wrong, to send out just the best pictures we can? What is there of possibility in picture-perfect images?”

“The sea is red, and it makes everyone see red...”

Despite all the positive attention the Faroe Islands receive in the media, a foreigner is more likely to have heard about the grindadráp, or whale killing. The Faroese have hunted and eaten pilot whales for more than a thousand years, and continue to do so today despite outcry from anti-whaling organizations such as Greenpeace and the splinter group Sea Shepherd. Sea Shepherd has driven a lot of attention to the Faroes by disseminating viral images and forwards about the slaughter, attracting media attention to their protests and 'direct action' activism, and even filming a Discovery Networks TV series, Whale Wars, in the islands.

“They go back to (the whale killing) all the time,” says Olsen. “There we are often represented as barbaric monsters, worse than animals ... It must be a really strange impression of how we are here. And I understand well what they think. Because they haven't seen anything else.”

When pilot whales are killed in the shallow Faroese sea, their blood turns the water bright red, which makes for a striking image. “The sea is red, and it makes everyone see red, too” says Dam. “I mean, taking the whole, whether it's correct, or proper, or healthy to even do this, I mean... well, that's another discussion. But seeing a picture like this, I can understand the furor from people who see this.”

Sørensen says that they are “obviously unhappy” that whaling is so visible in Google results about the Faroes, dominating other aspects, but that she is happy that it doesn't seem to have influenced the portrayal of the Faroese in mainstream media. “We can see that there is a lot of noise on the social media, but it doesn't really get into the established media.”

Most available descriptions of the grind are filled with factual inaccuracies. Some reflect outdated information, while others appear to contain mistakes or intentional misinformation. Commonly, the grind is described as a kind of festival or coming-of-age ceremony, from which the meat is not used, but simply thrown away or left to rot. Sea

Shepherd's releases often contain misspellings and factual mistakes, and their Whale Wars program shows the same disregard for facts both polemic and mundane – once labeling Lerwick, the capital of the Shetlands, as the Faroese capital Tórshavn.

“I guess some people look at (the propaganda) and they think, “OMG, why are you killing these animals? Why do you need to kill them?” says Jóna Venned, 24, “Because a lot of people think that meat comes from the supermarket. I guess they don't know that we actually use the meat to eat, and that it's an organized kill. It's not just a massacre, as some would call it.”

The anti-whaling media usually does not come from reputable journalists, but from activists with a clear agenda. Workman says that groups like Sea Shepherd “are not actually interested in portraying anything accurately. They're interested in forwarding their specific cause, and they've enlisted the Faroese as unpaid extras in their little morality play.”

Ed Ou, a Canadian journalist, came to the Faroe Islands in summer/fall 2014 to shoot a documentary about the grindadráp for Vice News. He says that he is trying to look at the grindadráp from an objective journalistic stance. His documentary may be one of the first to do so. When he was reading up about the issue, Ou said, “there was such an absence of information, at least in mainstream traditional sources. You would read all of these stories that were single source, just Sea Shepherd or Greenpeace dictating the story to outlets that were too lazy to send someone or do their own research.”

Ou says that the grindadráp occupies a lot of space in the public consciousness despite being a somewhat rare and non-representational occurrence in Faroese life. When a place becomes defined by certain conflicts and ideas, it can be hard for a journalist to cover anything else. Ou has also done a lot of work in the Middle East, and frequently has to find a way to connect his stories to larger terrorism and war narratives, even when there are many other interesting stories to tell about the region.

“I wanted to go to the Faroes to show the culture,” Ou says. “But of course for any editor in New York, I have to hook it to the whale hunt, because otherwise, why would they

send you? It's a battle. I'd rather go there hooking it on something that's pretty done to death, but still go there and do something slightly different than not go there at all.”

“In depicting the Faroe Islands, the media often goes back in time...”

The common thread found in almost all depictions of the Faroe Islands – travel pieces, anti-whaling propaganda, and news coverage alike – is a predilection for the exotic and traditional. A focus on the past, or on tiny villages and islands where only a small percentage of Faroese live today, often yields an out-of-date and misleading picture of Faroese life.

One explanation for this bias is easy to understand. Usually differences, rather than similarities, with the rest of the modern world are what most excite the foreign imagination and bring international attention to this out-of-the-way place. In addition to the drama and controversy of the grindadráp, there is the historical romance of ancient ballads and ring-dance, the plights of small villages that lose population year by year, the exoticism of life on an isolated island – all easier to sell than the modern reality of most Faroese lives.

Á Tjaldráfløtti Olsen has grown up in Klaksvík, the second largest town in the Faroes, and says she often can't relate to what she sees about the Faroes in the international media.

“Of course there are small villages,” she says, “but most people live or work in like the big cities where there actually is a store, and, like, a gas station. And they don't really show that ... because it reminds them too much of the normal... of ordinary cities that have been modernized ... Like, it wouldn't be fun taking a picture in Klaksvík of people drinking Red Bull. That's not what we're attracted towards. So obviously they're going to go to houses with grass on it and do something, something that they aren't familiar with. I get that.”

Sørensen says the media is often interested in covering the extremes. She frequently sends journalists to meet the family that lives alone on the remote island of Dímun, and to the 17th generation farm in Kirkjubøur. Although she tries to balance these stories by always

matching them with something in Tórshavn so that the visitors get the full perspective of life on the islands, she understands that these outliers are what “people find fascinating, and therefore very often take pictures of. It's those pictures that we have as well, because it's those pictures that people want. So it's sort of this circle, and how do we show the modern side as well?”

While they understand the reasoning, many Faroese believe that the result of this exotic coverage is that foreigners have the wrong idea about how life is throughout the nation. “One doesn't see the modern... the computers and so on,” says Elin Hansen, 63, “They think certainly that we all walk everywhere and catch puffins and when we are hungry, go down to fish by the shore. Or kill a sheep.”

“In depicting the Faroe Islands, the media often goes back in time,” says Johanna á Tjaldrafløtti, 51, “For example, there are the programs about the tunnel to Gásadalur, and the old Faroese – so birds, and sheep, and Faroese dance, and... and one forgets perhaps to depict the Faroe Islands as they are right now. What are the young people doing? What do they do in the town? And what is it like on the weekends? Maybe in Klaksvík or in Tórshavn? Or what is the daily life like in a normal family?”

“We're these Viking descendants that speak a language that is almost like the viking language, that's the classic,” says Dam. “And the controversial stuff, like we are still killing whales. Those are staples that are always in all documentaries about the Faroes. So seeing one that doesn't mention these is really, really fun sometimes.”

Olsen has a different feeling about how the media handles modernity in the Faroes. Instead of just ignoring it, he finds that “the Faroe Islands are depicted as a mixture of an ancient society which is hypermodern at the same time. They write very often about, yeah yeah, about the sheep and the grind and that we have lived here and we have this language and so on, but at the same time they often add that it is a hypermodern fishing nation for example. And it is possible to fly, and we have roads, and we have tunnels, and we live in houses, and so it is.”

But Olsen went on to add that, “of course one also sees strange depictions of the Faroe Islands, with old houses, and men with Faroese hats, and you know, things that aren't really true.” He says that the coverage of the Faroe Islands in Scandinavian newspapers has remained very stagnant for a long time. “If you read the articles that were written twenty years, or thirty years ago, and articles that were written yesterday, by a Danish journalist in a Danish newspaper, I don't believe it has changed very much,” he says. “Yes, even though (the Faroe Islands) have changed a lot. If one has a preconceived notion of what it is, that is what you're going to keep seeing.”

“Oh wow, did you know there's such a thing as the Faroe Islands?”

Even news stories that would seem straightforward and modern often frame the Faroe Islands in an exotic way. The interest of a small island nation sometimes takes over other interesting angles on Faroese issues, constraining them once again into the same stereotypes. Because the Faroes aren't well known, they can and sometimes do get away with gross factual errors. This is perhaps most noticeable in Danish and occasionally other European media, who sometimes cover the Faroes in normal news or culture stories that still often focus on the exotic, spend a lot of time establishing a place they assume you have never heard of, and rely on stereotypes – for example, stories about football (there is a Faroese team in FIFA), fishing disputes, Faroese artists, and local concerns or events in the Faroes.

Workman says, “one of the two biggest drivers of media attention is any time the national football team plays some other country. It... you know, whatever country it is like, “Oh wow, did you know there's such a thing as the Faroe Islands? Do you know our team is going over there to some weird field to play a bunch of schoolteachers and auto mechanics?”

Venned remembers a football match that took place between the German and Faroese teams on a Wednesday night in Tórshavn. The bars closed at midnight, and the German media wrote a lot about that. “So a lot of Germans just thought that actually we didn't have

any beer and that it was just really boring, a boring country,” she says, “but of course that was just a weird, weird view, because it was a normal Wednesday, so that would probably also happen somewhere else, but they just made a big deal out of it in Germany.”

The view of the Faroes coming out of mainland Europe, particularly Denmark, tends to carry a more or less subtle air of condescension. Workman says that what he often hears from Danes and some other Europeans is that they think of the Faroese as “what we would call a hillbilly in the US, that sort of unsophisticated rural type.”

Danes often see the Faroes society as old-fashioned and conservative. Compared to the mainland European culture, it does have those tendencies – Denmark is very progressive in terms of social issues, whereas, as many Faroese told me, the islands are more religious and tend to lag behind on hot topics like gay rights or gender equality. “We are western Europe, but in many ways we are still 20 years behind,” says Dam. But the media often portrays them as being farther behind than they are.

In late 2013, the Danish public network DR TV made a documentary, 'Kvindeflugt fra Færoerne', or “Women fleeing the Faroe Islands.” The documentary was widely viewed in the Faroes and generated quite a bit of controversy from those who thought it was biased or atmospherically inaccurate. Faroese broadcasting network Kringvarp Føroya reported at the time that the documentary “has been under harsh criticism by Faroe Islanders, who don't recognize themselves in the picture it paints of the Faroese and the emigration problems. ”

(1)

Although the documentary was nominally about the lack of women in the Faroes, the filmmakers spoke mostly to men, and the majority of the shots were scenes of sheep slaughter, small villages, and other images that are not a part of the daily life for the majority of Faroese today. Johanna á Tjaldráfløtti remembers it as a “strange picture” of the Faroes, representing the situation of a few as the general Faroese reality. She also said it failed to take into account the rapid cultural transformation that the larger towns in the Faroes have undergone in recent years, with many new cafes and other things for young people to do.

In an editorial from November 2013 in the Danish newspaper Information, 'Is it possible to drive to the Faroe Islands?' ('Kan man køre til Færøerne?') Bjørk K. Olsen critiqued the *Kvindeflugt* documentary and more general Danish stereotypes and ignorance about the Faroe islands. "What the viewer learns," he writes, "is that the Faroese fish, slaughter sheep, import women from the Philippines, and there is one Faroese woman who would like to live in a big city... and the style is common in the Danish media."(2)

Sørensen says that '*Kvindeflugt*' upset a lot of people, herself included. "It bothered me that they obviously came with an agenda," she says. If they had contacted her, she says she could have introduced the journalists to a dozen interesting women who were choosing to stay or move back to the Faroe Islands, to balance the coverage. Instead, she feels like they went looking for remote parts of the country to make a statement on what they thought the Faroes were like, making it seem backwards. "They could have done the same on the west coast of Denmark if they wanted to. But it bothers me that they keep on looking for those stereotypes"

Depictions of the Faroe Islands are, for the most part, moving in the right direction. The Internet has helped to bring the whole world closer together, and Faroese people can now leave comments on articles, chat with foreigners online, or blog in order to help change perceptions of their islands directly. More journalists are coming to the Faroes and writing about a wider spectrum of topics, and the tourism industry is growing and broadening its appeal.

If coverage of the Faroes continues to increase, there should be enough room for good, realistic portrayals alongside the stereotypical ones. The VICE documentary about the *grindadráp* and other Faroese food issues will be coming out soon, and several other media pieces currently in the works are also aiming for a more realistic angle. Workman's Faroe Islands Podcast, which has released more than two hundred episodes since its creation in 2009, was also cited by several as a good source of English-language news and information about the Faroes.

The historic and continued stereotypical framing of the Faroe Islands is easier to explain than to resolve. Although the tourism industry may continue to improve and diversify its coverage, it will naturally continue to have a positive bias, while anti-whaling advocates, as long as they exist, will seek to negatively depict the grindadráp to advance their own cause. However, international journalism from Danish, European, and other outlets worldwide has itself not been immune to the strong pull of the exotic in Faroese narratives. Serious journalists should also do more to cover Faroese issues, and to do so in accurate and sensitive ways.

Naturally, exotic details are arresting and photogenic, ancient traditions and remote settlements lend themselves well to storytelling, and conflicts such as whaling and depopulation are easy to pitch and frame along a dichotomy of old and new – but good journalism means finding the untold stories and rounding out the authentic picture.

The Faroe Islands are a unique and complex place that has changed enormously in recent years and continues to change. The Faroese cherish their history, their beautiful nature, and their villages greatly, but also emphasize that they are “normal people.” What they value most about their nation is the sense of community and familiarity, their language, their food, their music, their bright, festival-filled summers and long, dark winters. Despite all their special characteristics, the Faroese are ordinary people, first and last, and are moving into the future at – take a few antiquated social conventions and give a few high-tech undersea tunnels – the same speed as the rest of the world.

Those depicting the Faroes ought to keep this in mind and strive to craft more well-rounded portrayals of the Faroe Islands and the Faroese people.

1 – “hefur verið undir hörðum afþinnum frá fýroyingum, sum ikki kenna seg aftur í myndini, sendingin gav av fýroyingum og trupulleikanum við fráflytingini.”

2 – “Overordnet set fik seeren at vide, at færinger fisker, slagter får, importerer kvinder fra Filippinerne, og at der findes én færøsk kvinde, der gerne vil bo i en storby... Og stilen er gennemgående i de danske medier.”

Appendix A: Proposal

Faroese Modern Cultural Identities and Feelings toward Portrayal in the Media

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Faroese Modern Cultural Identities and Feelings toward Portrayal in the Media

In a remote stretch of the North Atlantic ocean, approximately equidistant from Scotland, Iceland and Norway, are the tiny Faroe Islands – home to 50,000 people with their own language, national identity, and a vibrant modern society. Despite their small size, the Faroes function as a fully autonomous nation within the Kingdom of Denmark.

Most foreigners, if they've heard of the Faroes at all, know it only for its football team (an anomaly beside European FIFA giants such as Germany and Spain) or their continued hunting of pilot whales. When the islands are covered in Danish and other international media, the portrayal usually oscillates between the Faroes as an idyllic, tradition-bound paradise of curiosities and as a troubled, old-fashioned society plagued by problems ranging from a shortage of young women to mercury contamination.

The islands, however, are rarely covered in a balanced way that seems relatable and authentic to modern Faroese. The modern story of the islands seems at first glance full of contradictions – turf roofs sheltering homes with the latest high-speed internet and satellite television; fridges packed with frozen pizzas and sheds still stocked with mutton, dried fish and salted blubber; a society that functions as both a small community and an entire nation. Many Faroese feel that their representation in the media is cropped by strict frames and narratives that go for the exotic and the dramatic at the expense of authentic portrayals of this complexity.

In many ways, the Faroe Islands serves as an example of many small nations throughout Europe and the world whose cultures and societies are often marginalized, misunderstood and misrepresented. The media's role in portraying these cultures should be to shed light on the reality of their modern situations while remaining sensitive to authenticity. Unfortunately, several factors leads to the media instead resorting to well-

worn frames.

I will use a mixture of photo elicitation and other questions in semi-structured interviews with a small group of Faroese people who represent various ages, genders, and places of residency throughout the Faroe Islands. They will be asked about their sense of national and cultural identity, their feelings about cultural change in the Faroe Islands, and about international media coverage and its authenticity and relate-ability in regards to their own experiences. Their answers, and the subsequent analysis, will explore how the Faroese see their cultural identity today and how they feel about their representation and portrayal in the media.

The resulting paper will simultaneously be a theoretical study of the interplay between cultural and identity and journalism, advertising and other forms of media and have practical implications as a guide to aiming for greater authenticity in journalistic coverage of the Faroe Islands and, by extension, other small nations and minority cultures.

Literature Review

The two most important elements of the research are Faroese cultural identity and the frames used in media portrayals of the Faroe Islands. There is more scholarly research on the former, mostly conducted by anthropologists, and a brief overview of the main elements of Faroese culture and identity will be given first.

Next, there will be a review of framing theory and how it relates to media portrayals of the Faroe Islands. Several frames used by the media in coverage of the Faroe Islands will be examined from a historical and causal perspective. Finally, the study's research questions related to these topics will be stated.

Faroese Cultural Identity

The Faroese language played an important role in the National Romanticism movement towards Faroese autonomy (Nauerby, 1996) and continues to be a factor in negotiating distance from Denmark and concepts of what the Faroe Islands should be today. (Knudsen, 2010) The Faroese language is very important to most Faroese, who see it as inextricably tied to the culture and proof of their need for independent recognition.

Among other special linguistic elements preserved in the language, Faroese contains a rich vocabulary ideally suited to life on the islands, and is also closely connected with the Faroese musical heritage. Unlike Icelandic, which maintained a close connection to the written ancient sagas, Faroese was for a long time unwritten, but maintained through both daily use and in legendary and historical ballads that would be sung and danced to at various events, for example after a whale hunt. These ballads are considered one of the cultural treasures of the Faroe Islands. (Wylie & Margolin, 1981) Music continues to be very important in the Faroe Islands, and they have an astonishing number of internationally recognized bands per capita. (Green, 2012)

Another important symbol of Faroese culture is the whale hunt, or grindadráp. This traditional method of harvesting whales for consumption involves driving a sighted pod of whales into a beach, then dragging them ashore and slaughtering them. After a successful hunt, the meat is distributed according to a complex formula to various people ranging from those who participated in the hunt to spectators and villagers. The meat and blubber from grindadráp make up a considerable portion of the Faroese diet and are furthermore seen as an important cultural practice. (Fielding, 2010)

Originally seen by other nations as a quaint, traditional practice (Nauerby, 1996),

public opinion in much of the world turned against the whale hunt in the 1980's. Today, the grindadráp faces challenges to its continued practice ranging from international disapproval and protest to high mercury content in the meat and blubber, which has led to ever smaller official recommendations as to the acceptable level of pilot whale consumption. (Fielding, 2013) Most recently, a Faroese doctor has “regretfully” recommended based on long-term studies of deleterious health effects that the Faroese no longer consume any pilot whale at all. (Weihe & Joensen, 2012)

Faroese culture is also defined by political issues such as the relationship with Denmark. Opinions on this subject are complex and split among Faroese, with some wanting full independence and others content with the current autonomous state of the Faroe Islands, which still receive subsidies from Denmark, amounting to about 8% of their GDP. (Ackrén & Lindström, 2012) (Lapidoth, 1997)

Finally, the culture of the Faroe Islands is to a large extent defined by its status as a small and remote island nation. With a population no larger than that of a mid-sized town, the islands have a sense of community that some find enchanting and others suffocating. (Firouz, Gaini 2013) It also has certain things in common culturally with other islands throughout the world in terms of intimate knowledge of place and perfect correspondence of landscape, history, culture, and ethnicity. No one but the Faroese have ever lived in the Faroes – the story and the identity of the landscape is theirs alone and deeply familiar to them. (Wylie, 1987) (Wylie, 1982)

However, the society continues to change, sometimes quickly. In a little over a century, Faroese infrastructure has changed dramatically. What was a collection of isolated island and mountain villages, where the only transportation was by foot or small

boat, there is now a very modern system of roads, tunnels, ferries and helicopters linking every settlement in the islands. (Bærenholdt, 2005)

An undersea tunnel between the islands of Vágur (where the airport is) and Streymoy (where the capital city of Tórshavn is) opened in 2003. A bridge connects Streymoy with Eysturoy (another large, central island), and in 2006, a second undersea tunnel linked Eysturoy with the Nordoyar, the three northern islands, which are home to the Faroes' second largest city and close enough together to be connected by causeway.

According to Bærenholdt (2005), this situation has led to Streymoy and Eysturoy, and now also Vágur and Nordoyar, becoming a sort of “Faroese mainland.” (p. 115) Smaller, unincorporated islands, as well as the two large southern islands, Sandoy and Suðuroy, which are separated by larger expanses of sea, are now losing population to the so-called mainland. (Matras Kristiansen, Andersen, & Bærenholdt, 2005) Within large parts of the Faroes, people can now travel and commute with ease. They even extend this freedom further, to Denmark. I observed people speaking casually of going to Copenhagen for school, shopping, a spa-weekend, or a new work project.

The Faroes now also have all the latest technology, including the culturally transformational internet. Historically the Faroese had to wait for books and other media to come over to the islands physically, often long after countries like the United States had enjoyed it. Now, the Faroese can watch the latest viral YouTube videos or download the latest eBooks instantly. This has made them much less isolated and remote culturally. It has also brought English into their lives in an ever-growing way, and English may begin to challenge Danish as the second major language of the Faroe Islands.

Frames used in media portrayals of the Faroes

Speaking anecdotally and from primary sources, I perceive the bulk of international media coverage of the Faroe Islands as falling into the following five categories: the Faroes as an idyllic paradise where nature and traditions are preserved, the Faroes as an exotic and hardcore adventure destination, the Faroes as an old-fashioned backwater society plagued with problems, the Faroes as a nation of whale-murdering barbarians, and the Faroes as a joke or curiosity among nations. However, there is not a lot of scholarly research on this topic, which is why I think its an important hole to fill.

Framing in media refers to the way that information is selected and presented to the audience in a way that emphasizes certain elements at the expense of others. Frames also usually have a positive or negative valence, based on their tone and message. As Tewksbury and Scheufele write, “at their most powerful, frames invite people to think about issues in particular ways.” (2009)

Frame theory analyzes the different frames that are chosen for coverage of a certain issue, and the power that those frames can have in influencing media consumers. The theory started with analysis of propaganda, and the way that different frames applied to the same events and facts were intended to lead media consumers into different emotions and opinions. (Scheufele, 1999) Studies have shown that news frames can have a strong impact on media consumers opinion about issues. For example, a study about opinions towards Turkey's possible integration into the E.U. Showed that the average person's opinion could be greatly swayed by the frame of an article they read on the subject. (de Vreese, Boomgaarden, & Semetko, 2011)Therefore, frames are important not only from a theoretical perspective or as an indication of larger trends in society, but also for their role in shaping thought and opinion – particularly in this case about a region of

the world that media consumers are likely to know very little or nothing about.

Scheufele breaks down analysis of frames into categories based on whether the media or the audience frame is examined, and whether the frame is treated as a dependent variable (the result of a process) or an independent variable (the cause of a process).

(1999) In this study, I will be looking at media frames from a third perspective. Although I will speculate and research the possible causes for each frame to be employed, and the likely effect this will have on consumers, I will look at the frames from a third perspective – that of the subjects of the framed stories – and consider their perceived authenticity and verisimilitude.

The first two media frames that apply to the Faroes, where the islands are presented as an “natural/traditional paradise” or an “exotic, exciting, dangerous other” are the frames most frequently seen in the United States through coverage of the Faroes in travel publications such as “National Geographic Traveler.” They are also the frames promoted by the tourism board of the Faroe Islands. While theoretically distinct, the two frames often appear in combination or in juxtaposition. Both are a form of exotification and also reflect the specific agendas that these publications and tourism industries have. In the case of the North Atlantic, the frame has deep roots.

In *Imagining Iceland*, Karen Oslund (2011) examines the draw that the North Atlantic (including Iceland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands) has had on travelers throughout history and into the present day. She writes, “with respect to nature or with respect to civilization, the idea that the North Atlantic was a series of stepping stones on a journey to another world is implicit in the writings of many European travelers.” (Oslund, 2011, p. 15)

When Oslund writes of the common frames used to describe Iceland by writers, she could almost be speaking of the Faroe Islands as well.

The characterization of Iceland relies on a number of motifs created by visitors to the North Atlantic since the eighteenth century. “Geographical isolation,” “homogeneity,” and “the old literature and culture” have been for hundreds of years the lens through which foreigners saw the country. (2011, p. 130)

To modify this description for the Faroe Islands, I would only subtract a bit of emphasis on old literature, replacing it with an emphasis on ballads and folk dancing and perhaps the whale hunt as well. Part of the danger in this kind of thinking is that it reduces the locals to certain simplistic stereotypes, caught in time. It laments any change as a disappearance of the old ways, and begrudges modernity and technologies as ruining the sense of otherness and separation. Bærenholdt writes that “colonial definitions of otherness are part of these narratives,” when “tourists expect locals in peripheral areas to be living in pre-industrial ways.” (2005, p. 154)

Oslund also discusses the difficulty some travelers and writers have had in reconciling the “new” modernity of the region with their exotic ideals: “However, the general pattern is that the North Atlantic became “not exotic” over this period... The North Atlantic countries became “thoroughly modern. One does not have to accept these standards of modernity, of course.” (2011, p. 155)

The North Atlantic has an interesting position in the hearts of travelers today, being at once close to home and safe and accessible, familiar enough to be comforting, and simultaneously seen as part of another world and century, an exotic place you can travel to both physically and mentally in place and time.

At the beginning of the third millennium, this elusive quality is one that continues to draw travelers to the North Atlantic, with Iceland and Greenland being promoted by tourism companies as “Europe's last wilderness” and the “last unspoiled” or the “last untouched” places on earth. (Oslund, 2011, p. 169)

The “Faroes as an old-fashioned backwater” frame seems, at first glance, to be similar to those above; but there is an important difference in the sense that this frame disparages a perceived backwardness in the Faroes instead of celebrating it. This frame may be found more often in Danish coverage of the islands due to the nature of the relationship between these two nations, as well as the fact that the Faroes is more often covered (outside of the travel section) in the Danish media than elsewhere. Hard news tends to have a systematic bias for reporting on problems due to their perceived newsworthiness. Scheufele, for example, mentions “conflict” as a common news frame. (Scheufele, 1999) Although currently this frame often focuses on the flight of women, it has been used throughout history by Danish authorities to justify their control over the Faroes, therefore it also has a certain post-colonial aspect. (Oslund, 2011)

“The Faroes as a nation of whale-murdering barbarians” is the simplest frame of all. Unfortunately, many people around the world know the Faroe Islands only due to the whale-hunt they continue to practice. Public opinion turned against the whale hunt in the 1980's, and organizations such as Greenpeace, Sea Shepherd and PETA have been spreading anti-whaling information ever since. This frame also shows up in various email forwards, viral Facebook campaigns, and other anti-whaling media as well as in journalism. (Nauerby, 1996)

In opposing the whale hunt, many employ strong rhetoric that attacks not only the

practice, but the Faroese themselves. This involves graphic language describing the killings as brutal and inhumane, even sadistic, threats to do the same thing to the Faroese as they do to the whales, comparison of the whole ordeal with genocide and cannibalism, and comparisons often made to the Vikings or barbarians in general. Historically, the same comparison was made, but in a more positive light – as an admiration of the Viking spirit. (Nauerby, 1996) As Oslund writes,

The narratives invoked [by the whaling controversy] were old news. The modern controversies retold stories about the North Atlantic that travelers had written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but they told them in the international press and on the Internet rather than in travel books and expensive natural histories designed for an elite and select audience.” (2011, p. 156)

The final frame, “the Faroes as a joke or curiosity,” is often found in European media. There, the Faroes are seen as a sort of humorous anomaly among larger, more recognized nations. This frame is used, for example, when the Faroese FIFA team comes up in sports stories. The other team is always expected to win – and when the Faroese score it is an upset that humiliates the other nation. (Firouz, 2013)

Small countries are vulnerable to misrepresentation because most of the audience of a particular article may be learning about the place for the first or only time. Therefore, there is a greater responsibility for media to present them from a balanced and authentic perspective.

While not all of the discussed frames are negative, they are all potentially problematic because, as frames, they include and emphasize certain traits while excluding others. In addition, rarely does coverage of the Faroes escape these frames enough to

explore the reality of the modern Faroe Islands, which are both modern and traditional, remote and well-connected, otherworldly at times and mundane at others, unique in many ways and yet, at the same time, home to 50,000 people who live complex, balanced, and recognizably modern lives.

Methods

Because this study will be a preliminary look at a complex topic that concerns feelings, identity and fine shades of meaning, I believe a qualitative research method is appropriate. In particular, I would like to conduct semi-structured interviews partially based on photo elicitation and partly on more traditional verbal prompts.

Photo elicitation is known for being a good technique for helping people reconnect with memories, identity, and ideas about change. (Harper, 2002) All of these are important to my study, which deals directly with identity and portrayals of identity. In a similar study about the people of Mazunte, a Mexican town, Faith Cathcart (Cathcart, Rees, & Journalism, 2006) used photo elicitation to start conversations about change and identity, which she used to inform her subsequent journalism in the community, just as I would like to do.

However, I don't want my study to be restricted only to photo elicitation, as I have other questions to asked that would be more appropriately asked directly. For example, I want to ask about what portrayals of the Faroes they are aware of in the international media, without leading their thoughts and answers by asking them to consider specific stories or photos immediately.

Based on previous experiences with the culture, I suspect that Faroese people will

be happy to talk about their identity at length. I also want to move beyond the surface level which is part of the problem of much Faroese media coverage. Therefore, I want to have a fairly open format for the interviews that allows participants to speak at length and steer the conversation in different directions so that I can discover new insights. I also hope that, as they become more comfortable with me over the course of the interview, they will feel free to approach more controversial subjects, such as the whale hunt.

Interviews will be broken into four parts: establishing basic information on the participant, more formal and non-leading questions about portrayal in the international media, and then periods of photo elicitation that ask them to consider first photographs representing life in the Faroes throughout the last century as well as recent changes in Faroese life and modern culture, followed by photographs and other artifacts taken from international media coverage of the Faroes, ranging from the National Geographic Traveler article naming the Faroes the world's most appealing islands, to a recent Danish documentary about the flight of women from the Faroes, to the anti-whaling postcards that were sent to the islands en-masse by organizations such as Greenpeace and PETA.

Throughout this process, participants will be able to skip questions, images, and artifacts they prefer not to discuss. I will also ask additional questions based on their initial responses in order to clarify and expand upon their answers.

The participants in this study will be Faroese adults living throughout the Faroe Islands and abroad in Denmark. The formally studied group will consist of between 6-15 participants representing a variety of ages, places of residency and both sexes. Young adults will provide an interesting look at the future of Faroese culture, while older adults will show the perspective of the changes that have occurred in the Faroes during their

lifetimes, as recently as the last ten and twenty years. Places of residency should include a mix of locations including the Faroese capital city of Tórshavn, the Faroese community in the Danish capital of Copenhagen, and both large and small villages in the Faroe Islands. Where questions of national and cultural identity are concerned, as they are in this study, it is important to represent a range of voices of different ages and areas.

In order to gain access to these participants and conduct the interviews, I plan to spend approximately nine weeks in the Faroe Islands, followed by one or two weeks in Copenhagen. I will attempt to conduct the majority of the interviews soon after arrival so that my early findings can inform the journalistic work that I plan to complete as the professional component of my project. However, it may take longer to locate willing participants of certain demographics. Having previously visited the Faroe Islands and Copenhagen for short visits in 2012, I have some contacts there who can help me enter the community and meet possible participants. Since I will be spending the summer in the islands, I will also have the chance to attend some social and cultural events where it will be possible to network further.

One of the more complicated aspects of my research involves language. All Faroese are functionally bilingual, most to a very high degree, in both Faroese and Danish (either formal school-Danish, more common among the younger generation, or a sort of Danish dialect called Gøtudanskt, more common among the older generation.) Many Faroese, especially young adults, also speak English at a high level. Therefore, depending on the participant, it will make sense to use different languages during the interview. Although I speak English best, I also find it quite easy to work with Gøtudanskt, as it is mutually intelligible with Norwegian. My Faroese is not as strong, so

conducting interviews entirely in Faroese could limit my ability to respond with new questions as the interview continues.

However, my primary concern is for the participant and their level of comfort with each language. The important thing is that they feel comfortable expressing complicated feelings about culture and identity in the language they are using. I will record all interviews, and will be able to look up unknown words in the dictionary and even ask for clarification from other native speakers before conducting analysis. Therefore, even if I don't understand all of their responses fully at the time, I have time to consider their exact wording later, during the transcription process. As a Germanic language, Faroese is close enough to Norwegian and even English that an accurate transcription and a good dictionary will enable me to come to a close understanding of both the denotations and connotations of words used.

Therefore, my plan is to prepare all possible materials, such as the introductory formal questions, in all three languages, and leave the ultimate choice of language used up to the participant, including the option to change languages throughout the interview. Since language is a critical part of culture and identity, it may also be that, given this freedom, they reveal more information by their choice of different languages at different times.

The fairly large range of interviews I plans to do reflects my desire to have both variety and depth in my results. If my first six or seven participants are diverse across the fault lines previously mentioned, and give good, in-depth responses to my questions, I will stop there and concentrate on transcribing and analyzing the interviews I have already conducted. Otherwise, I will continue searching for participants until those two

conditions are met.

Conclusion

In conducting this study, I will learn a lot about the way Faroese people see their culture now, in a time of change: what historically documented cultural values and practices are still relevant in their lives, and which are outdated and outmoded, which changes seem sad or threatening to them, and which seem exciting and hopeful. This will inform my project and my journalism as I write about the islands and the people who inhabit them as they are now, and not as they used to be or as I imagine they are. I have my suspicions based on preliminary, non-formal interviews as well as my previous visit, but I am willing to be surprised on any count.

Based on the same preliminary research, I also expect to hear that they feel that many participants are aware of and annoyed, wearied or confused by the common frames utilized in the media to talk about their homeland and community. I expect that they will feel that it is unbalanced, out of date and out of touch with the complex reality of modern Faroese culture and life on the islands. If this turns out to not be the case, then something can also be learned from these assumptions and from the contrast between the people who accept and those who reject these portrayals.

One of the limitations of my study is that, as a purely qualitative study, I will not gather any generalizable information, limiting my ability to make broad statements about Faroese public opinion. It would also be nice to gather coverage of the Faroes in a more comprehensive way, and code it for frames. However, this is something I don't have time for, and something that would be difficult for me due to the fact that the Faroes are

covered only sporadically (I would have to look in an exhaustively wide range of publications to get a decent sample size) outside of the Nordic countries, and within the Nordic countries I would have linguistic and other obstacles to interpreting such a large amount of data.

If it turns out that my study participants are largely unaware of international media coverage, that will also pose a problem as, while I can show them artifacts and examples, I don't want to lead them into focusing only on the frames I myself have unscientifically observed and gathered information on. However, in my experience this will not be the case, as the Faroese are very interested in what foreigners know and think about their islands, and quickly spread media throughout the community.

Another limitation of my study is that it focuses only on this third aspect of the frame – how it is perceived by those within the frame itself. There is a lot of room for this study to be followed up by studies analyzing the other two components of the framing of small, island, and minority cultures such as the Faroe Islands – namely, the creation process of the frames and their reception by the intended audience. How and why do editors and writers decide to frame the Faroe Islands in these ways? And how does it affect public knowledge and understanding of the Faroes? I can speculate on both of these inquiries, but investigating them more thoroughly is outside the scope of this study.

My hope is that my study will serve as both an insightful look into the modern cultural identity of the Faroese, and as a sort of guide to avoiding overused and damaging frames in covering the islands. This will be useful to me as I work to compile journalistic stories about the islands, and hopefully also to others who seek to do the same in an authentic and sensitive manner.

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Appendix B: Research Process and Results

For the research component of this project, I did semi-structured interviews with Faroese people, with a photo elicitation component. They could choose to do the interview in English or in Faroese. These are the scripts and photos I used:

English Interview Script:

What have you heard about the Faroe Islands from foreigners and foreign media?

How do you think the Faroe Islands are depicted in foreign media?

What do you think are some common misconceptions about the Faroe Islands?

What elements of the Faroese culture and modern life do you think are ignored in the foreign media?

Is there anything in particular that you remember seeing that did a good or bad job at depicting the Faroe Islands?

What do you wish more people knew or understood about the Faroe Islands?

What do you think of tourism in the Faroe Islands, and what do you think brings tourists to the Faroe Islands?

What do you think potential tourists should know about the Faroe Islands?

How do you think foreign perceptions of the Faroe Islands have changed and are changing?

Please look at the items provided, which I have taken from various Faroese and foreign media about the Faroe Islands, and comment on them freely. There are 13 printed pictures and 2 online resources. You can look at the items in any order and spend as much or as little time on any of them as you wish. Please tell me if you have seen the item before somewhere. You can say whatever comes to mind, but particularly in regards to the topic of how they are representing the Faroe Islands:

Faroese Interview Script:

Hvat hefur tú hoyrt um Føroyar frá útlendingum og útlenskum miðlum?

Hvussu heldur tú at Føroyar verða lýstar í útlenskum miðlum?

Hevur tú nøkur dømi um eitthvørt, tú hefur hoyrt um Føroyar, sum ikki er samsvarandi veruleikanum?

Hvørjir partar av føroysku mentanini og modernaða lívinum í Føroyum heldur tú verða

ignoreraðir av útlenskum miðlum, tá teir lýsa hesi?

Minnist tú eitthvørt ávíst, sum tú hevur sæð, sum antin væl ella illa megnaði at lýsa Føroyar?

Hvat hevði tú ynskt, at fleiri fólk vistu ella skiltu um Føroyar?

Hvat heldur tú um ferðavinnu (turismu) í Føroyum, og hvat heldur tú dregur ferðafólk hendanvegin?

Hvat heldur tú møgulig ferðafólk áttu at vitað um Føroyar?

Hvussu heldur tú útlenskar uppfatanir av Føroyum eru broyttar fyrr í tíðini, og hvussu heldur tú rákið er nú á døgum?

Vinarliga hygg at útflyggjaðu lutunum, sum eg havi tikið av ymsum føroyskum og útlenskum miðlum um Føroyar, og viðmerk lutirnar sum tær lystir. Tilsamans eru 13 prentaðar myndir og 2 keldur av alnetinum. Tú kanst hyggja at lutunum í teirri raðfylgju, tær lystir, og tú kanst brúka so nógva ella lítla tíð, tú vilt, uppá hvønn lutin. Vinarliga sig mær, um tú hevur sæð lutin onkrastaðni áður. Tú kanst siga júst tað, sum tú kemur í tankar um, men serliga viðvíkjandi evninum - nevnliga hvussu lutirnir lýsa Føroyar:

Photo Elicitation Materials:

PLACES RATED

A report card for the world's islands

BEST-RATED ISLANDS
In excellent shape, relatively unspoiled, and likely to remain so.

Rank: 1. Faroe Islands (Denmark) (score: 87) "Lovely unspoiled islands—a delight to the traveler." Remote and cool, and thus safe from overcrowding, the autonomous archipelago northwest of the Shetlands earns high marks from panelists for preservation of nature, historic architecture, and local pride. "Spectacular waterfalls and harbors."

2. Azores, Portugal (score: 84) This temperate mid-North Atlantic archipelago's "green volcanic mountains and picturesque black-and-white towns" offer "driving tours, handicrafts, and cuisine" plus an ecosystem "in great shape" and a "strong and vibrant" Portuguese culture. "Locals are very sophisticated," but inappropriate development is beginning to appear.

3. Lofoten, Norway (score: 82) Chilly, high-latitude islands form a "masterpiece" of spectacular outcrops steeped in cherished tradition. "Many of the villages rent



National Geographic Kallurin: "World's Best Islands" opening spread. I selected this picture because most Faroese are aware of the Faroes being chosen as National Geographic's Best Islands, and I thought therefore it was a good example of positive and natural themes in Faroese media depictions. The weather is neither terrible nor perfect in the picture, but photogenically turbulent.



Blue Grind: The cover of *A Thousand Years of Whaling: A Faroese Common Property Regime*, by Sean Kerins. I selected this picture because it shows the grind rather neutrally and is in fact the only grind picture I have seen without blood.



Tórshavn: A generic photo of Tórshavn from a travel article. Most short articles about the Faroe Islands will, at a minimum, include a picture of Tórshavn (this is the classic view taken from a cruise ship on arrival or from a ferry to Suðuroy). I thought it would be a good picture to talk about the more modern and 'civilized' side of the Faroes.



Winter: A photograph I took of a sheep crossing a road during a snowstorm in a remote part of the Faroes. I wanted to talk about the Faroe Islands in the winter, which is rarely depicted in the foreign media.



Saksun: Another typical tourism-piece photograph from the Faroes, this one taken in the village of Saksun at the farm of Duvugarður, which was abandoned after the harbor silted up and is now a museum. It is a beautiful and historic spot that many tourists visit.



Red Grind: Facebook/Email Forward: Dolphin Cruelty in Faroe Islands: <http://www.thedailyclick.net/2014/02/dolphin-cruelty-in-faroe-islands.html> I asked people to look at this photo (and, when possible, the link) to talk about negative portrayals of the Faroe Islands and the grind.



G!: A photograph of the G! Festival, showing people standing around a stage in traditional Faroese sweaters with Gøtufjord in the background. With this picture I wanted to talk about modern Faroese culture, musical traditions, etc.

Horisont: Kvindeflugt fra Færøerne

10/22/2013

0 Comments



Áhugaverd sending í Danmark Radio um konufólkini, sum flýggja frá Føroyska samfelagnum "Horisont: Kvindeflugt fra Færøerne", klikk her og síggj sendingina: <http://www.dr.dk/tv/se/horisont/horisont-64/#/>

SáH

Bjarni Ziska Dahl í Horisont. Her flettir hann.....

Horisont: Kvindeflugt i Færøerne - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnB4jN3oWy8>
This is a controversial Danish (DR) news documentary most Faroese people are aware of, which was produced in 2013 about "the flight of women" from the islands. We often watched the first minute of the documentary during the interview.



Puffin Hunting: A photograph of a man pretending to try to catch birds on Stóra Dímun (a one-family island) from a travel article on *Roads and Kingdoms*. I liked the photographs very much, but did think they fit largely into the stereotypical portrayal of the extremes of the islands, despite the author being very transparent about his focus and interests. This one was especially strange as the photographer asked this man to pose with this net as if he were catching a puffin, which he was not (since it was then illegal).



Tourism Pamphlet: Visit Faroe Islands Brochure:

http://issuu.com/visitfaroeislands/docs/f_r_erne_tag_en_dyb_ind_nding_-

We looked at this entire brochure during the interviews, as there are many images contained therein. The large spread images mostly consist of Faroese celebrities in various famous places throughout the islands, mostly with beautiful weather, but the smaller images are also nice and show more diversity. There was a lot to talk about and look at in this brochure, and I was also able to interview the tourism department about their goals in creating it.

I formally interviewed eight people with the aforementioned process. Four were in my “younger generation” category: Elinborg, 19, from Klaksvík, Uni, 21, from Norðragøta, Jóna, 24, from Argir, and Johan Petur, 32, from Funningur. Four were in my “older generation” category: Jóhanna, 51, from Klaksvík, Mildrið, 54, from Norðragøta, Heri, 58, from Klaksvík, and Elin, 63, from Glyvrrar.

For these formal interviews, I tried to find a mixture of genders (5 women and 3 men) and a mixture of larger town and smaller village backgrounds (4 from larger Faroese towns, 4 from smaller villages.) I also interviewed several other people with more specific questions about different angles on the topic, for example journalists covering the Faroe Islands. Comments by Photograph:

National Geographic Kallurin: Many liked this, and liked that it was moody weather... but still, it only shows nature which is an old theme and possible problem.

Blue Grind: Some were confused by the lack of blood. Seemed to be a pretty neutral grind picture.

Tórshavn: Liked. Cozy. Colorful. Appeal to tourists and also shows a city. “a tourist would think that the houses are all like colorful, and like, yeah, kind of actually reminds a lot of like Greenland.” Elinborg

Winter: Liked. Unusual to see winter pictures. But really remote so could be misleading. “Of course it's great if these pictures also show not just great summer glansbilleder photos. Well of course this shouldn't be the only one. I mean, yeah. It's not like we're like... the north pole or anything. It looks unmodernized, because it's only a one-lane road, and it has ice on it, so it looks kind of scary I guess, for other people.” Uni “ What do people think about this. I guess they would think, “It's true what I thought, it's cold up there!” and it's snowing, and there's a lot of sheep, so... and I think also there's this barren

landscape with no trees and a lot of rocks everywhere” Johan Petur

Saksun: Really liked. Know why it appeals to tourists. But its the old stereotype. “It is fantastically beautiful. This must catch the guest's eye.” Mildrið

Red Grind: Talked about Sea Shepherd. Understand why it's scary to others. Text is really misleading.

“It looks gruesome, but not for me, because I have been used to this since I was so little.” Mildrið

G!: Really liked. Could relate to. Like the coziness, Faroese sweaters, modern stage.

Kvindflugt Documentary: Disagreement. Thought it was weird and only showed a very small section of the situation. But it is a real problem. And true for some. “It's weird that they start a show about women's escape from the Faroes with a man. It's like they're saying that the reason for women fleeing is the men.” Uni

Puffin Hunting: Kind of liked, but others thought it was staged. Very much the old stereotype.

Tourism Pamphlet: Many liked the mix of famous people and places, but others thought the photos seemed too staged or photoshopped. People commented about how unrealistic the arrangements were. But they loved the landscapes and thought this would be effective at bringing in tourists. “In this brochure you have a lot of picture of different places, and all are sunny!” Jóna Many liked the smaller images which they thought were more natural or showed less famous things that they found more interesting.

“I think this does a good job of showing the Faroes” Elin

The picture of Týr and the picture of the ring-dance had especially varied and interesting reactions. People knew many of the people in the photographs and wanted to tell me where they lived or about them. They really liked the picture of Týr because they looked so happy, and fishing is a big part of Faroese life. It really represented the

masculine stereotype and ideal. “Here in fact you get everything... you get what's really the principal industry of the Faroe Islands, and you get beautiful nature, and you get famous musicians. A good advertisement for multiple things. And Faroese sweaters.”

Mildrið In the ring-dance photo, some noticed the church. Some thought it was cool that Teitur was there, others thought it was strange. “It's kind of weird to see Teitur playing guitar in the middle of a ring-dance. I don't think it's that normal. Ummm... I guess he's been photoshopped in there or something.” Uni

The most divisive pictures were the picture of the football team downtown, because some people thought it was strange that the team was playing on a boat and others were just proud to see sports represented, and the picture of Barbara í Gongini in Saksun, because some people thought it was weird, even “tasteless,” but others thought it was really cool and creative. “It looks really cool. See, this is the kind of stuff I like. Because this, with the sweaters and all of that, that's very comfy and all of that. But I like like the dark stuff, and the mountains, and all of that.” Elinborg

At least in my formal interviews, the younger people tended to have more to say than the older people, and the men had more to say than the women. This is probably because the younger generation tends to talk to more foreigners. While everyone has travelled abroad, Uni and Johan Petur talk to many foreigners online, and Jóna and Elinborg have both lived abroad. So they had more to say about the topic. Heri has also likely talked to more foreigners than women of his generation, because he has travelled on fishing boats and also afterwards, with the money he made from fishing. In that generation the men saw the world while the women tended to stay home. Johanna had a lot to say as well, but Mildrið and Elin were a bit quieter and seemed less aware of and less concerned with foreign perceptions of the Faroes. However, all were welcoming of tourists and were at least aware of some stereotypes in Denmark and Sea Shepherd's

depiction of the Faroes.

I have a lot more to say on this topic than will ever fit in my professional analysis, so I hope to go more in depth through a series of posts on my blog.

Transcriptions of Research Interviews:

Elinborg Á Tjaldráfløtti Olsen, 19 years old, from Klaksvík

Interview conducted in English with some parts in Faroese.

Media Interview:

So what have you heard about the Faroe Islanders from foreigners and from foreign media?

Well, not that much. But I think I met two or three people on my exchange in Florida that knew about the Faroe Islands. And what there is is usually positive. Of course the negative stuff about the whale killings and all. But I think that's about all the negative there is. It's all very positive and stuff.

What do you think are some common misconceptions about the Faroe Islands?

Ah well, the obvious one is the whale wars. Or the pilot whale killings, or slaughterings. That, well, its more about the people who are doing the killing. That, because we, people kill or slaughter the dolphins, or the whales, that they're horrible people. And that's obviously not the case. That's the biggest one I think.

What part of the Faroese culture and modern life do you think are ignored in the foreign media?

Uhh... I don't know. Mom, help me a little?

Haha, no, it's fine, we can skip this one. Is there anything you remember seeing that did a good or a bad job depicting the Faroe Islands?

Um, well, all those tourists videos and stuff like this, they only show the nature up in the mountains, and only like the really small villages, and you kind of, well of course there are small villages, but most people live or work in like the big cities where there actually is a store, and, like, a gas station. And they didn't really show that. I mean the people watching must know that there is a store, but they don't show that. I don't really know how to say it...

You can speak in Faroese, if you like.

Yeah? Okay. That it shows so much of the small villages, and all the grass up in the mountains, and small villages... but not very much really of the middle of Tórshavn, or the middle of Klaksvík. It's not so incredibly beautiful in Klaksvík and so on. Do you understand what I mean?

Yeah yeah yeah. But why do you think they do that?

Of course in order to attract more tourists.

Yes, but, why do you think Tórshavn and Klaksvík can't attract tourists? Haha.

Because it reminds them too much of the normal... of ordinary cities that have been modernized. It is something of course that is still, you know, holding on to the traditional Faroese. Huh? Unspoiled.

What do you wish more people knew or understood about the Faroe Islands?

That we have electricity. Hahaha. That we actually are normal people. I mean when they show it, like I said, they will show like the small villages and stuff. You could get the idea that we're some cave people kind of thing. And obviously we have internet, everyone travels all the time, we're just normal people. And we're not really like, we don't wear our national outfit every day and you know... we're just normal people. We like our tradition but we're still normal people.

What do you think of tourism in the Faroe Islands and what do you think brings tourists here?

Yeah. Nature probably the most. And... I don't think they're doing, like the Faroese people are doing a good job with the tourism. I mean there could be way more tourists, and there should be a way to better get the tourists involved with stuff like, make more trips to Kalsoy or... with a group, or whatever... but there's not really a lot going on like that. They have some stuff but not a lot.

You see. When there are tourists here they usually just walk around like wwwwaaa, what are we doing now?

They seem kind of confused?

Yeah, like... well maybe that's the right way to travel, kind of to figure out by yourself. But if you with like a group up to a mountain or, someone would tell them where to go or something, they'd maybe get a better experience.

Yeah, I see what you mean. Like I noticed that the paths are usually unmarked and people don't know where to cross the fences...

Yeah yeah.

What do you think possible tourists ought to know about the Faroe Islands?

Um, these are questions I've never thought about before. I don't really know. Hahaha.

No problem. How do you think foreign perceptions of the Faroe Islands have changed in the past and how are they changing now? If they are at all.

I don't know if they are changing. I don't know what their perception of us is really. I mean I can only guess. But... well, obviously with the internet its better to connect with people. So you can just... every Faroese person just posts online of what its really like, instead of just getting an idea. So... hopefully its getting more realistic.

Media Photo Elicitation:

This is pretty. I don't know where this is, but it's pretty.

It's Kalsoy!

Oh yeah. Yeah! Oh yeah. Kallur. Yeah, I've been there like a million times. That's weird. Yeah, it looks... unspoiled, and yeah, from a fantasy movie or something. Pretty.

Yeah this is a whole 'nother image.

Yeah. Tórshavn.

I... well... a tourist would think that the houses are all like colorful, and like, yeah, kind of actually reminds a lot of like Greenland. Like if you see pictures of Greenland, the houses would look exactly the same. These pictures are really different. This shows more like the city life, and this is nature... and stuff.

Oh, he's going after the... puffin. Have you had puffin?

No, you can't get it now. I'm sad, I wanted to try it. I've had lomviga (guillemot).

Mom, what is a lomviga?

Mother: Lomviga, it's a bird. A wild sea-bird.

I don't know what that is. I'm not cultured at all. Haha. Well, tourists won't be getting to see this. Anytime soon at least.

Why is that?

Because he's trying to catch the puffins.

And it's not allowed now...

No. I like this picture. Because it kind of shows, well, the people in the villages actually

like do this. They go out every day, or not every day, but every now and then... I have a friend in Kalsoy, in Trøllanes, and we would go to his birthday and I would ask him, "Hey, where's your brother?" Maybe something like that. And he would say, "Oh no, he's out catching puffins." or "Oh, he's out in the mountains getting a cow" or whatever. So out in the villages they actually do these things. But I can't relate to it because I haven't lived there.

When it's snow... I haven't driven in snow before yet. And I'm scared. It's scary. It really is.

Yeah I've seen this. Yes some of my friends from America shared that as well.

So what do you think about it?

Oh. I think it's funny how some foreigners think that it's an actual event. We were talking about it a couple days ago. My cousin, she lived in Denmark, and someone has asked her, someone asked her what time is the grind gonna start? Or something. Like they think it's an event that you actually go to and look at the calendar, like, "oh, okay, we're going to go there." but... and the "mature" part, I don't know about that. Like "to prove that they're mature," I dunno. Maybe in some sense it is kind of. Like if you can kill a whale, you're kind of cool, I guess. But it's not like a test. It's not like the father says to the kid, "Okay, now you have to grow up and kill a whale." Well, this is a big discussion. Or, this is a very interesting conversation starter at least. Hahaha.

What do you tell your friends from America when you share it? Do you say anything?

Yeah. I always just say that they're misinformed. And I understand, because when you read... if you never heard about it before, and you read that, then of course you're going to think the worst, or believe what you read.

What do you say to correct them? Do you show them something or?

Oh, I just tell them that... it's just like killing a cow underwater. Of course, of course the water's red. And it's done in the most humane way... or, they're trying to do it the most humane way possible. Yeah.

What do you think personally about the grind?

Ummm... I try not to eat it as much because it has, like, health... what's the opposite of benefits?

Effects... ramifications?

Yeah. Cause if you're a girl, and you eat it, and you have a child later, the kid could be all weird and stuff. Like it's not good for you.

Do you know any kids who are like that?

Well, there are... um. I think my teacher said that one in twenty or something... it's always

boys. They get... because... the grind has some estrogen-looking hormones or something. So when they... so the kid is gonna have more of a woman-shaped body or something. Kind of curvy, have kind of boobs but not really. It's something really weird about it. But... I dunno. I only heard it from him. But I know it's not good for you because it has like the mercury in it. But we only... we don't eat it that often, so.

How often do you eat it?

I had it once this year. Or, no, we... you know the dry one? The pieces of dried whale? I've had that a lot. More than I like to admit. But... if its served, I eat a lot of it.

When do you eat it?

Mostly at parties. And when someone graduates... or... its new years or something like that. So, again, not often, but...

But the whale steak, you eat just... once or twice a year?

Yeah.

And what about the spik (blubber)?

Um, not a big fan. It's not good. My mom once had a friend visit from Denmark, and she was like, "Oh, you should have spik!" and she was like, "Ok," so she put it on the bread. And my mom was like, "I'm not going to say anything." So she had spik on bread!

Did she like it?

No! Haha. She was like, "What is this?"

And spik has the most mercury.

Have you ever seen an actual grind?

Oh yeah. If its in here, we always go down there. Or... if we know that its coming, we stay in there waiting...

How does it feel watching it?

Its very exciting.

Can you explain to me how it goes?

Well, it's been a long time since its been here. But... it's always like we're just sitting around here or something, and then someone yells, "Ahhh..." maybe my brother, "Oh my God, it's grind, it's grind." And then like, everyone rushes down to get ready. And I kind of just sit, me and my mom, kind of just sit, because we're not tuning in. So they're all getting ready, and then they go down there, and we kind of take it slow and then we go afterwards. Or its like we're somewhere and someone posts it on Facebook, and so I talk

to my friends, and we agree to go down there together.

How do the men get ready?

I dunno. They put on weird clothes. Like clothes they can get dirty. And like... you know the Faroese sweaters? So they don't get cold. Something like that.

Do all the men go?

I dunno... if its a... I think every male gets ready. Or everyone who wants to be in it gets ready. But if they see that its not many whales, then not all of them go. I don't really know how it goes. I just sort of stay on the sidelines.

When did you see your first grind?

No, I can't remember. But I have a picture of me standing next to a whale. When I'm really, really small. Can't really remember it though.

How does it feel to see the actual grind?

Obviously it's sad. It's never good to see an animal die. I mean, that's never fun. But, I dunno, the atmosphere is really exciting, because everyone is so excited, like to finally get it. And, um... so that's, you kind get like the adrenaline rush and then, and you kind of just walk around across so you get the best view. It's a, I think it's fun kind of because it happens so rarely. Or like, I don't go around all the Faroe Islands to chase, I only go if its right here. So that happens... like... I don't know. I can't remember the last time it was. Like four or five years ago. Something like that.

That one is from a video called Kvindeflugt fra Færøerne.

Oh yeah, I've seen that one! It is pretty good. I think it shows the men in a really bad way. Like the women are... like the women are running away from them, they're like, "Oh no, fuck this?"

How does it show them in a bad way?

Oh, yeah, you know. Well it makes them kind of look weak. Like they're doing their stuff, and the women are like running away from them. Kind of abandoning them. And I dunno, kind of seems... or it seems to me that they're portraying them as kind of stupid or something. I don't know.

Why do you think they have this music and all the visuals of killing sheep?

Yeah, it's probably to get a scary atmosphere. So you can like understand these women, why they're running away. Like... cause like a Danish person would watch that and they're not involved with any of that and probably not used to it, so they would obviously be on the women's side and be like, "Oh yeah, I understand why she's leaving."

Oh, that's G! I love G! I've only been there once, but I love it.

Are you coming this year?

Yeah. Are you?

Of course, I live in Gøta. I wouldn't miss it.

Yeah. Faroese summers, they're just great... Since there's... there's so little activity in the Faroe Islands, so everyone goes to all the festivals there is. So its always a lot of fun.

Is that your favorite thing to do in the summer?

Yeah. Definitely. All of the festivals, and Ólavsøka, and... Everyone's always so happy. And we're all gathered. And we're all... you know, you get a sense of nationalism. Like, "Yay!" And at Ólavsøka you get to wear your national oufit, so that's good. And it's a tradition in G! Festival to wear a Faroese sweater. So that's kind of...

I like it. I love it.

More Grind. Oh, this one isn't bad. It's not red! Yeah, it doesn't really show the barbaric side of it, of us.

What does it show?

"Faroese Common Property Regime"?

It comes from a book... it is the cover of a book about whaling.

Oh yeah? So with a positive attitude?

I think it's trying to be neutral. Seeing as it just kind of like any other animal slaughter.

Oh, that's interesting. So they just take it... they explain how...

It's a very academic book.

Oh, interesting.

So there are chapters about like the history, and what people are thinking about it, and how its done, and the whales themselves, and the health concerns, and everything.

Oh, cool, I didn't know that. That's really cool. Oh, is that your Faroese sweater?

Yeah, I designed it.

Ohhhh nice. Really? I never saw anything like it before. It looks really good. It looks really good.

I think they did a pretty good job with it not being red. Because... because then people

would expect some kind of horror story when they read it, and then they read it and its only an academic book, they'd be like, "Oh, fuck this," and put it back, you know? I've actually never seen a picture of whale killing where... without the blood.

Yeah, when I found the book I thought, there's the grind, but...

There's something missing! It's an interesting picture. It really is.

Oh, this is really pretty. Is this in Saksun? It's pretty. Yeah, this could have been taken in like the seventeen hundreds... eighteen hundreds... Like, it's like nothing has changed. It's unspoiled. It's pretty. My dad is trying to get the look with the... I dunno what it's called... you know the hjallur?

Yeah.

Yeah and with the grass on top. And its not really working out for him. Hahah.

This is the last one, and the biggest one. It's got a couple pages.

She's so pretty. She has a sister called Elinborg.

Yeah, I know the song about them.

And this is pretty. And it has Risin and Kellingin, right behind it. It's pretty...

Oh yeah, when you go to Mykines, you go past this part right here. Yeah, you can really take some pretty pictures up in here.

Oh, that's a funny one. Haha. Oh, it's in Mykines isn't it? I don't know, I don't remember how I should comment...

This is the newest tourism brochure. So what do you think they are trying to show and what impression does it give?

It seems kind of accurate. Well, he's all fancy looking up in the mountains. And that's... Haha. I wouldn't do that. But. And this is what an actual tourist looks like. Yep. Definitely.

Yeah, like I said, I can't really relate to this. Because I've always lived here, like I'm not really all that familiar with, I dunno, like watching over chickens and like getting their eggs and, I dunno, picking rhubarbs or whatever.

I think I recognize this building right here. And then there is a long road right here. I think so. I'm not sure.

Hey, these are the guys from Týr! Yeah, I think this shows like the, I mean I get that they're... like, it wouldn't be fun taking a picture in Klaksvík of people drinking Red Bull. That's not what we're attracted towards. So obviously they're going to go to houses with grass on it and do something, something that tourists aren't familiar with. I get that.

Of course. Yeah, I think they did a good job.

Where's this? It's pretty.

Yeah, it's underwater somewhere... I think I know the photographer who does that. Ingi Sørensen maybe. He's made some books about this and I know he takes people kind of to go scuba diving. My friend went with him. Yeah.

Nice. My brothers are obsessed with going out with the boat to fish. That's actually, yeah, that's really popular.

What kind of fishing do they do?

I'm not sure actually. Haha. Um... my uncle has a boat, so they... because he lives in Dubai, so they use his boat and they just go out whenever.

He lives in Dubai? How did that happen?

I have no idea, he's a plane mechanic or something. And I dunno, he got a job there.

Have you been?

No, I haven't. My parents have, but it was when in America, so I couldn't join them. But my mom promised that we're going. This year maybe or next year, I don't know. Yeah, they use his boat, so whenever it's sunny outside, they just go out. Mainly just to, you know, to get. It's nice to be on the open water. But it's also fun to catch fish. My friends and I would catch fish as well when we were younger?

With just a fishing pole by the water? And then you ate them.

Yeah. And no. We would just throw them back out.

Do you eat the ones your brothers catch?

Yeah. But we would catch them just, by the shore, on the shore. But I think it's kind of oily there, so I think it's not that good to eat. But sometimes we would take it home and just give it to the cat, or just give it to the seagulls or something. But it was always really fun. But it would always get stuck on the... what do you call it? You know the black stuff in sushi...

Seaweed.

Yeah, seaweed. I ruined a lot of fishing poles getting stuck in seaweed.

These are badass. What's going on here? Okay. I guess they're trying to mix some modernism with old retro and I dunno. It looks kind of cool. She doesn't look too happy though.

I think they look like witches, from some sort of fantasy movie.

Kind of. It looks cool. It looks really cool. See, this is the kind of stuff I like. Because this, with the sweaters and all of that, that's very comfy and all of that. But I like like the dark stuff, and the mountains, and all of that. Because you really can make some really cool pictures with that. Do you know Miriam and Janus? They take really cool pictures. Yeah you should look them up. They've done some really cool stuff. They have one of that girl, that specific girl, she has some really cool stuff.

Cool, I will check this out. I'm really excited about it.

They have a picture of that girl in like snow and she's like half naked or something and she has like really long grey hair. Like it's all in the snow and the mountains are behind it, and it looks really cool, like it looks like a fantasy movie.

Do you think that can also be attracted to tourists?

Some. If they're like me, they could be.

Cool. Football isn't portrayed as much, for the tourists. I haven't noticed it actually. But it does play a huge part. That's fun that they included them. It's pretty cool.

I like this one. This is the, like the most legit picture probably. Because this is an actual situation. This could totally happen. Like, this is, this is what would happen. I know this guy, and that girl. And that one. Oh and that one. And that one. Okay. And that one, oh my god, it's so weird! But yeah, like at Ólavsøka this would happen. And this is, I dunno, realistic to me. Of course, this one, I mean we did this just like two days ago. We were sitting there and watching... and this as well. And stuff, but that doesn't happen a lot. Like we don't go, or I don't go, out a lot. To the mountains and stuff. But I'm very familiar with this.

Women Interview:

So what are your future plans? Do you plan to live in the Faroes, or?

I haven't decided yet. I want to live a couple of years in the Faroes. But I want to move to America too. For a couple years. I don't know.

Where do you think you'll get your education?

Denmark, probably, or England.

Have you been to Denmark? Have you spent much time there?

Yeah, I lived there for a year, when I was 9 to 10. And then I've been there every summer.

So when you've been to Denmark or when you went to America, and you came back to the Faroes, what was that like?

Well, when I was younger it was pretty... it wasn't that big of a deal. Because I had my parents with me.

Oh, they went too? Why did your family go there?

My mom's education. Well, she wanted to have like an extra, so she could specialize in... like diabetes or something, making food for people with diabetes. So we moved there. But when I was in America I was all alone. So that was different.

And when you came back, what was it like?

I can't really recall. I mean the feelings were kind of the same. Like you see everything new again, that you haven't seen in a long year, or in a year. That was fun. But I think it was more stressful when I came back here from America because I had so much going on and there was I dunno there was a lot of stuff going on at the time. And when I moved from Denmark I was only nine, so I didn't really have any responsibilities.

So what do you think are the main differences between America and the Faroes or Denmark and the Faroes?

In America you can get everything. You can get whatever you want. Like you can see something on the internet or like, be on Tumblr or Reddit or whatever and see a pair of shoes, and you can just backsearch them and then find them on eBay.

You can't do that here?

No. Well, you can. But they probably won't deliver to the Faroe Islands, or it will take half a year to get them, you know, or they cost too much and you have to pay the toll, or the taxes for it, or whatever. Oh, and the fact that McDonalds has open, like 24-7. That's a thing I miss a lot!

A lot of things are open 24-7 in America.

Yeah! I miss that a lot.

Although I have been impressed by the hours of some of your businesses, compared to a lot of places. So, what would be a reason you would want to stay in the Faroes, or what would be a reason that you would want to leave?

Well the thing I like about the Faroe Islands is... it's also con, it's a pro and a con. Because everyone knows each other. Everyone's like very... familiar. And it's all very, you know, it's all very safe and you can do whatever you want. It's all very chill, and it's just whatever. But also everyone knows each other – you can't do anything. Like, you can't just... I dunno, you have to be on your best behavior at all times. Or else the aunt of your mother, or the aunt of your friend who knows your mother is going to tell that you were doing that, or whatever. So that's really, really annoying. And people are bored here, so they start rumors like all over town, all the damn time. And everyone knows everything. Like I'm not even kidding. Everything.

I think it's just part of our personality or something. Like, cause everyone knows... and like, also, if there's someone walking here, and we're having dinner maybe, then my dad just looks up and is like, "Who is that?" and then everyone will get up and look out the window and say, like, "Who is that? I've never seen that guy before!" and like that. I think it's weird. And stupid actually. But it's also a good thing, because everyone's so close... and you know.

What are the different seasons like here?

Winter is terrible. Even though it's really... even though it's full of snow and the bus stop is right down there and I can't even walk down there without falling like a bazillion times. And I still have to go to school.

You go to school in Kambsdalur?

Yeah, and you can't drive... and every... it's always so troublesome. Oh, I hate snow. I hate snow so much.

But summer... isn't... I mean, if it's summer and it's sunny, it's amazing. Like a sunny day in the Faroe Islands is great. Fantastic. But...

How do you spend a sunny day in the Faroe Islands?

Outside... Well, if I'm up early, which is rarely, we'd like buy sausages or beer or whatever and we'd like grill outside. And listen to music and then we'd have some wine afterwards and just spend the entire day outside. That's nice. I love those days. But they happen so rarely, and you don't know when they're going to happen.

But like see we were having sun earlier in the day, and now it's like this...

Yeah, and sometimes its so localized too. Like today I was going to go walking in Gøta, that was the plan, but then Gøta was just full of fog. And it would kind of clear and then it would really come back. So we went to Funningur and Gjógv instead. And there it was sunny. Really sunny.

Yeah, it's really weird. I think it's because of the mountains.

What aspects of Faroese society do you think are changing or need to be changed?

I think people are starting to get more open about like all the differences, but I think that's just a worldwide thing. People are getting more open, or more... you know... I think that's because of the internet, because everyone's on the internet, and you know, you get exposed to more stuff. So I like that, but that's a worldwide thing, obviously.

What kind of differences?

You know, people are more open about differences, of, I dunno... like, maybe people... I dunno. Not dressing the same, or... don't believe in God. I mean, that's okay now. I mean, it's no big deal to some people. Most of them. There are still some that are... umm...

You can say it in Faroese.

Okay. I mean people are more open to... but, I think that's everywhere, that people are more open to every possible thing. I don't really know what I'm trying to say. Can you ask the question again?

What are some aspects of Faroese culture that are changing or you think should be changed?

Right. Because of everyone knows each other, politics, its all very, like, you can't... you know Niclasshen? He's a politician who...

Was he the corrupt one?

Yeah. And like they did a full on coverage on him. Exposing him in every single way. And a lot of people were very offended by that because they knew him personally. And like a lot of people know him, and everyone's related to him, or they know someone who is related. So that kind of... like you can't really be neutral on that. Because everyone has like... they sympathize with him, you know. So you can't really... or if you're going to do real news, or whatever, or try to expose a person, there's always going to be some, or like a lot of people, trying to deny it or something. And that's been a lot of the case.

I know about this one girl, she came to a politician and told him that I think her grandfather, or father had raped her. And this politician knew this person, so he didn't do anything about it. I mean it's his responsibility, but... everyone's always connected. So you can't really do anything bad, and everyone has to kind of stay low, and not say too much and just smile and say "It's all good."

So do you have any friends who have like moved away, out of the Faroes?

Not yet, but I know a lot of them are moving this summer. They have just graduated this summer from Gymnasium.

Do you notice the gender imbalance in any way? Do you think it's having an effect?

I did notice at our school. Because in the third grade that graduated right now, there were four classes, and two of them didn't have any boys in them. But... I mean that just shows that boys are not really getting their education, and they're just going to fish or getting their education here so they can work here. And I know that a lot of my friends who are maybe in a relationship with a guy who maybe has his education here, he doesn't want to move to Denmark because he already has an education here. Maybe he's like a mechanic or he builds houses or something. I mean you can do that here. But she wanted to learn... or, she wanted to study pharmaceuticals. She wanted to do that this summer, but if she would move, then her boyfriend wouldn't come with her. And she didn't want that. So she stayed.

And what does she do here?

Well, she just graduated. And now just working at the Pizza 67.

And what is her plan?

She doesn't know. I mean so... but if she was single, then she would move away.

So yeah, that's kind of tricky. So why do you think there's a difference with what men and women want to do? Why do the women want the education and the men don't?

I don't know. I've been asking myself that same question too. But I think most of the jobs that you can get here right after public school, or after 10th grade, they're like considered man jobs. Like, you know, um.... to work as a smith... to weld stuff, and they can go out... like most guys go out fishing at least for a year, or, I dunno, they work with cars, or whatever. That's considered kind of manly. And many of them only think about money, too, so they drive around in nice cars and... many do a lærutíð, that's what we say.

Is that an apprenticeship? Like you try out a job kind of, like you're working at the job but someone is making sure you're doing it correctly?

Yeah! Yeah, and then it takes like 3 years or something, and then they get their approval or something.

So that's more of a man thing?

Kind of. Because the jobs are... like... welding stuff, and like electrician, or mechanic, or... whatever. I don't really know actually. I just know that the guys always come to the kiosk and they're always dirty. Haha. I don't know what they do.

I dunno. But there probably would be some kind of work like for girls to do that as well. To like get their education here, or like, to be in an apprenticeship here. But I don't know if anyone ever does that. I'm not sure.

Uni Johannesen, 21 years old, from Norðragøta

Interview conducted in English

Media Interview:

So what have you heard about the Faroe Islanders from foreigners and from foreign media?

It's just that I've heard so much, because I am like... quite...

That's why you're the best person for me to interview. Start at the beginning.

The beginning? Hahahaha. How long will this take? From the beginning? Hahaha.

Well, usually it's just like, "What?" There's nothing. They don't know anything. And then there are those who just like maybe know a bit about them, like, they know... they've just heard that they existed but they don't know where they are or... anything. And this is not that interesting.

Well, I've had some online friends who I talk to sometimes, and they of course know where I live. And then usually after a couple of... either days or weeks or months... they ask me about whaling in the Faroes. Like, "Is it true? I saw this thing online... on Facebook or that chain mail." And they are all like really, um... scared, or shocked about it. And they often ask me "Is it true, what I read?" And then I always have to explain to them all of it. And usually it's fine. Like... when I have explained what actually goes on... they understand it way better and they, you know, can understand why and they think it's okay. But some people are still like, "Okay, it's like... I understand that you do it, and why you do it, but I still think it's sad." Yeah. And... I don't know.

Once you told me that people would come into your chatroom and ask ridiculous questions, or they would think that Faroese people don't have electricity or that you live in caves.

That was a long time ago. That doesn't happen anymore, no. I think people... I don't know. I can't even remember when that happened the last time. I can't really remember. I mean I was like... ten or twelve or something, so... I have no idea. So you can't really use me as a source for that.

What about in the foreign media?

And Denmark counts as foreign? And media is also TV shows? Like Whale Wars?

Yes.

Well, let's start with Whale Wars. Ohhh... yeah. I think I'll just start with saying that I was disappointed with Discovery Networks, that they can show something that wrong. I thought Discovery Networks was like a serious channel, or, you know, they show a lot of documentaries, interesting documentaries. But after I saw Whale Wars, and all of the faults and errors they had, I started wondering what else they had done wrong with their other documentaries. So... yeah, that was quite bad.

What were some of the mistakes they made?

Um... hahaha. Just really, like, mistakes that could have really easily been fixed. Like they showed a photo, or like a video, or Lerwick, the capital of the Shetland Islands, and they said that it was Tórshavn, the capital of the Faroes. And they had a map of Northern Europe which showed, or like, it was written that... I can't remember exactly... but I think that Norway was labeled as Denmark. Yeah. And then... in the docum-- in the series itself, and I don't even know if I can call it a documentary, it's... so, but yeah in the series itself... they drive around for whales, to spot whales, and once they think they saw a whaling somewhere. And they filmed the action from where they are going until the place... but that's all just fake, because they used recordings from all over the Faroe Islands, which don't follow that route. So, they like, go in the opposite directions, and like all of a sudden, they're like one hour from where they're going, and then the next five minutes...

Maybe they went the wrong way.

No, because they showed the route on a map. So, yeah... Hahaha. And I think they would know the way. The Faroes aren't that... hard to navigate. You can tell yourself.

Ummm... what else is there other than Whale Wars. I don't know.

Are there any travel stories or anything you read, or Danish newspaper articles or anything like that?

Hahaha. I used to like read all of the travel articles written about the Faroes. Because there weren't that many. But now there have become so many, so I have kind of stopped reading them. At least not right away. Maybe I save them for later. But... do you want me to say what I think about them?

Yeah... like what they normally say, or...

Well, usually it's just fine, you know. Hahaha. They just write, like, "Yeah, it's a beautiful country... You should go there... This is how you get there..." Um, yeah. But sometimes they write stuff that isn't entirely true I think. I can't give you an example right now, because I can't remember. But... yeah. And then I feel kind of bad, I guess. Because, you know, they didn't really tell the whole truth.

In other Danish media... um... I mean usually they have not that bad coverage of the Faroes. But it's usually all, I think, yeah... I agree that they are all modernized. I've heard that before... not modernized. What's it called... romanticized. Yeah? I've heard that before and I agree with it. We have what Denmark doesn't have... like cliffs and nature, kind of. And like... wildlife. I mean, I know Denmark has nature, but Faroe Islands have like, more nature, I guess. So, I guess that's what they kind of show... the romantic idea of the Faroes as being like, going back to the basics, and being one with nature, et cetera.

Of course, I think that was more the idea, like, earlier... fyriritðini. Not back in the day, but, until recently. Previously. But nowadays, I guess, more people know, more Danes know about the Faroes. And have a more realistic idea about them... but a lot of them have no clue. So. I guess those who know about them have a more realistic idea than previously.

What do you think are some misconceptions people have about the Faroe Islands?

“Are they near Egypt?” Hahaha. No, not really. I've only heard that as a joke that we tell. Then like someone asked some Faroe Islander that, and then like... I haven't heard that question myself. But... some common misconceptions... Well there's always the whaling. Misconceptions about the whaling... I don't know. That whole thing is included in the Faroe Islands... Like they think we do it for fun... we only do it because its a tradition, that the meat goes into the trash. Whatever. Like, that we just kill them for fun, and that we kill them for like... a rite of passage? To become a man, for the boys to become men.

One other misconception I guess is that they think we're like... in Denmark... or a bigger part of Denmark than we actually are.

More incorporated into Denmark?

Yeah, like either we are right next to Denmark. Or that we are like Denmark... and not like an autonomous thing. I don't know what the official thing is. Autonomous Province of the Kingdom of Denmark?

Autonomous Nation within the Kingdom of Denmark, maybe?

Yeah... okay...

Yeah, because everyone knows Greenland as Greenland.

Exactly. That's why I always tell people, “We are like Greenland, 'part of Denmark'” in quotation marks. I can't really show those on the recording. But “part of Denmark, just like Greenland.” And they are like kind of confused, like, “Oh, okay.” And then I think they get it. They say like, “Yeah, now I know...” So... misconceptions... yeah, that we are a part of Denmark. So I don't know how much it is a misconception as we are not actually, not a part of Denmark... to say that we're a part of Denmark. But usually people think that we are like a bigger part of Denmark than we actually are. Then they always ask, “Are you guys autonomous?” or “How big of a... how much do you rule yourselves?” And stuff.

It would be easier if we were just like our own country. Hahaha. I think. But then we might, you know, get into a crisis and... go bankrupt or something.

So what do you think about independence?

It would make a lot of stuff easier. Because now, I am... I live in the Faroes, I have a passport... a Danish passport... that says my nationality is Danish.

Why don't you have a Faroese one?

Because it's easier, they said, to have a Danish one. But I'm seriously considering having a Faroese one next time I get one. Because everybody, like all the border controls, know the European passport. And so the people with the Faroese passport usually get stopped in those, in the border controls. But only for like a short period of time, like a couple of minutes more. Because they have see, like, “Oh, what's this?” because they haven't seen it before.

Can you go through the EU line with a Faroese passport, or do you have to go through “All

Other Nationalities?"

I don't know. I have no idea actually. Well, yeah, that's a good point. I should ask about that. I'll ask the police station. I've travelled with my class, but that was like out of Europe, so I don't know. And out of EU. And we all just went the same one, so... It was actually all the way out of the EU. We didn't even enter the EU. From the Faroes to Iceland to New York, and then back to Iceland, to the Faroes.

It would be easier... now I don't really know exactly where I am... and like where the parallels are...

You're in Gøta, on the Faroe Islands between Iceland, Norway, and Scotland.

Thank you. Hahahahahaha. No, but I mean... on an intellectual level. Because as I said, my passport is Danish, and on my nationality in there, it says that my nationality is Danish. But of course my nationality is Faroese. It's kind of bad that it says its Danish I think. And, so... and also like the EU regulations considering the Faroes are always really complicated. Like we're not part of EU, but we get to go into the EU, and like have an EU passport, and...

I still don't understand my visa situation, to be honest.

No, it makes no sense. Nothing. But with like... if we were a country... politically a country, on our own, it would be easier like that. We could have all the decisions ourselves. Like now, all of the immigrants have to be either accepted or denied in Denmark. It's really far away, I think, for someone who is here, who has come here, to have their decision made in Denmark. It's pretty bad, I think. At least we have the Útlendingastova (immigration office). But I don't really know what they do. I guess they're just the middle man or something. So it takes a long time for people to know if they can come.

Also, when tourists from non-visa exemption countries come here, it's really difficult for them kind of. Well, not necessarily difficult, but unusual and complicated.

Yeah, it's really complicated because they have to get a visa for staying in Denmark, with an exception or whatever to come to the Faroes also.

Yeah, they have to get a Shengen visa and an addendum saying the Faroe Islands are included.

Yeah, so it's really complicated for them. And I guess that complicates the travel to here for people outside of the...

Yeah, I mean if you want all the Chinese tourists, you better change that...

Indeed. And then we could be a part of fun stuff, like Eurovision and stuff. And the Olympic games, and stuff. Now we have to just take part in the other countries' competitions. Like we have rowers rowing for Denmark, and singers singing for Denmark and Iceland for Eurovision and X-Factor and stuff.

So, yeah... and then of course there's the pride. To be proud of your own... of being a country. I feel bad for having Denmark having to pay for us. Because we can't really manage ourselves. I guess we could if we wanted to, but the politicians... I don't know. I don't know

how exactly, but, it's just, feels bad to have Denmark pay for us. Even though it's not that much, but still. Not as much as Greenland, but still, you know, it's money that we get from Denmark every year. And I would just feel better if we would like, you know, be grown-ups and handle it ourselves.

What do you think would be the problem with independence?

It's less safe. You saw what happened with Iceland. If they were a part of Denmark at that point, they might have gotten help from Denmark. I mean they had the financial crisis.

But nothing really bad happened there, right, I mean no one went hungry?

Yeah, yeah, but they are like a bigger country. And they had the sea, and they had the volcanoes, which they can produce energy from, and you know, aluminum, and they have way more resources. We only have the fish. And maybe oil. Maybe. Probably not, I don't know. We'll see. And then the rest just has to come from the intellect. The people. So you know, we should work on that. Hahaha. Well, we are working on that, I think.

So what elements of Faroese culture and modern life do you think are ignored in the media?

Haha. It's kind of weird to say culture and modern life in the same sentence, like that. Because it's like the opposite. I mean, at least like traditional culture. But you just mean... like culture. Like how we are in our everyday?

Yeah, like drekkamunn for example, it's not the opposite of modern life, but something very Faroese.

I guess. Yeah. I mean what they mention of the culture is usually like that people are really friendly, and that we are descended from Vikings and have like Viking traditions or whatever. Oh I don't know, like the ring-dance, the chants, the kvæði, the boats, the villages that are viking villages originally, like where they are, etc, it's like...

(Interrupted by visitors)

Is there anything in particular that you remember seeing that did a good or a bad job depicting the Faroe Islands?

Well, I just remember this one thing that had actual photos... I can show you later maybe... where there was like... they did a really good job depicting like not always the most beautiful weather and the most beautiful scenery, but just like normal things that happened here. I can look now, on my Facebook profile.

You know, the roads don't look as bad here in the landscape as they would in some places, because you already have the hamar (lines of rock on the mountains), so they kind of blend in.

That's true. But like *grótbrot* (quarries, or places where a lot of rock has been torn away to build something on flat land) are bad.

Those are really ugly. If they would make them more irregular, it would make it look a little more like a gjógv, just like a huge, fat gjógv.

The ones... do you notice any in Kunoy? There was one, or like two. But they are small. They're just like three meters wide, like this... they just went like this kind of... to the mountain. Just next to the road.

Seems a lot better I guess. It's the big square ones that look really bad.

Yeah, indeed. Oh yeah, I remember this.

(<http://www.weather.com/travel/beatiful-remoteness-faroe-islands-photos-20130924>)

(Note: Here are some images from the Weather.com story we discuss. Even after Uni and other Faroese complained and they fixed the captions for some images, many captions continue to be wrong. For example, Sorvagsvatn is nowhere near Tórshavn, and Midvagur is in the Faroe Islands, not on the Danish mainland.)



A view of cars using the Sorvagsvegur road nearby Sorvagsvatn lake on Sept. 7, 2013 in Torshavn, Faroe Islands.
(Simon Hofmann/Getty Images)



A view of seagulls in the harbour of Midvagur on Sept. 7, 2013 in Midvagur, Denmark. (Simon Hofmann/Getty Images)

Oh yeah, but it said that it was in Denmark...

Yeah. And like I asked the Greenlandic people if they ever experienced that. Like if under the photos they would ever write, “this is Denmark” and then a picture of ice floating in the water, et cetera.

I want to read that later, can you open that as a tab for me?

This is in the private group where we talk to the Greenlandic people about things. But no one replied.

I don't think it would happen. It would be really unusual.

I think they changed it in some of the pictures, to Faroe Islands. Vágur, Tórshavn...

This one is also a little bit less stereotypical. I mean it's not just Saksun and stuff, but a little more of what you would see in everyday life.

This isn't the one I'm talking about.

Yeah, but this one too, do you think so?

Oh, maybe. But also, look here. But yeah, yeah, I understand. But there was one that really had, like... Oh, I think this was it. Like you know, stuff like this... just normal photos. I mean like, yeah... and the fish factory. Not like just nature. But people, and houses... and a lot of Christian stuff apparently. Yeah. (<http://www.information.dk/fotobloggen/314755>)



Foto: Daniel Hjorth



Foto



Foto: Daniel Hjorth

That's really interesting.

I just remember a Greenlander on the group asked if... what we liked... what we thought about this. So yeah, I just wrote, "Yeah, it's like interesting to see." And then someone else wrote, "What? Why? It's not this sad to be in the Faroes... young in the Faroes..." because it's kind of like, if you look at the photos, it looks kind of sad, like ughhh...

And the photos are like that different tone...

Sepia, yeah.

Yeah, that kind of gives it an antique and sad feeling.

Indeed. I mean it's interesting... I think that it was like interesting to see. It was different than just like nature and more nature, and the occasional "Viking Boat" in quotation marks, or....

Why do you put the quotation marks?

Because like... haha... that story about the American saying that Norðlýsið was a Viking boat. And stuff. And also those, like, Faroese rowing boats, and turf-roof houses, and... (We read the Facebook thread discussing the images)

What does Glansbilleder mean?

Oh, you know, those... those things that you can... I think they're used to like... it's easier to do a search. These. You don't know these? No? Oh... and these? I think you can like... put them onto paper. They're like stuck with these in between, and then you cut those off and you glue them onto paper.

Kind of like paper dolls? I don't know. These are strange.

They're really common. They were. And you would like... in school you would exchange them. At some point.

We don't really have these.

There's all kinds. You see. And you cut that paper in between and glue them onto stuff.

(Note: Glanzbild is the German word, they are a German invention of colorful printed images, they look kind of like paper dolls or stickers, except that you just cut them out or leave them on the sheet. They were popular starting in the 40's especially among children who traded and collected them. The motifs are often angels, children, idyllic scenes, holidays, nature...)

I see. Kind of like stickers. But you have to glue them. So why are you talking about those?

Because *Glansbilleder* are always like pretty. You see... and perfect. And sometimes Danish people or whatever, sometimes talk about the Faroe Islands, the photos of the Faroes, being like *Glansbilleder* photos. Photos that are like perfect like this. And to like show... the perfection or whatever. Or how beautiful it is. *Glans* means like glossy. The glossiness or something. Hahaha. Because these are always glossy.

So yeah. I wrote that the photos weren't that sad. I mean that they had... each of the photos had a story to tell. And then... she like said, this other person hahahahah, whom I wonder, was kind of shocked about what I said, because all of the photos look kind of sad. But they have this, like... old-fashioned *tám* (haze), like... color or feeling to them. So yeah, this person thought it looked really sad and it gave the wrong impression of how it was to be a young person in the Faroes.

And I replied that... I didn't really think it looked that sad. They were a good depiction of the lonesomeness and isolation that I can relate to here. Where you just do whatever you can do. Like, when you're bored, you just figure out something to do. And stuff. And... yeah, and a lot of the comments on that website, they write like... how usually the Danish people just see really like pretty photos of the Faroes in perfect weather and all of that, but in this case they're way more moody and of people doing what they do in their everyday lives.

But I mean the title is kind of sad. I mean... Oh and the entire article is about like this fisherman that dreams of being a poet, becoming a poet. And then it's just like moody photos of stuff that happens in the Faroes. I don't remember what it says here...

This is exactly how we photograph the midwest. They always have a photo like this.



Foto: Daniel Hjorth

Yeah. But I mean this is... a part of the Faroes. But... definitely not the majority I guess. I mean that big house you saw in Skálabotnur, they do that there. And I mean, it's big, it's a big house, but not all of the Faroes are like that. So of course you should have like some of this, like to show the world how we are, but not only this. Yeah. And... yeah. Young guys bored outside the shop, hahahah, with their scooters.



Foto: Daniel Hjorth

And she wrote, “Oh, that's a horrible message to send to the world, that we are the country without possibilities.” But isn't it also... and then I wrote, “Isn't it also bad, or wrong, to send out just the best pictures we can?” Hahahah. “What is there of possibility in picture-perfect images?” Hahahah. I mean, they're not really true, actually. Because... we can't just live off only the perfect weather here. Because yeah, you know. Hahahah. It's not always perfect. Really.

So... and like also in tourism.... it's bad for us if you just show the sun. And I think that the tourism board has gotten better, that they show like moody, and interesting, like... dark skies also... and not only like photos that have the sun and everything is green and perfect. So you know, the visitors get a more realistic idea of what they're getting themselves into. Hahahah. Hahahahah. But nobody agreed with me. Hahahahah.

What do you wish more people knew or understood about the Faroe Islands?

I wish they understood that we're not barbarians. Hahahah. A lot of the time those whaling things give quite a bad impression of how Faroese people are. So yeah, just you know... that they knew how we really are. And don't like believe that. Basically.

Knew or understood... knew of their existence. I mean... yeah... sure it's fun, kind of, when you tell them, “I'm from this place...” and they have no clue and they don't really believe you maybe, and they're like, “Wow...” and then they look it up, et cetera. It's kind of cool, but I don't know. It's also really cool when they actually know about it, have heard about it before. Like even know where it is.

Knew or understood... that Danes would understand that they can't drive here. Hahahah. Nah, I'm kidding. Don't say that, don't write that! I guess it's... I don't know, I haven't heard a Dane say that to me personally. But I've heard that someone asked about that, or something. Yeah. I don't know.

What do you think of tourism in the Faroe Islands and what do you think brings tourists

here?

It's another leg to stand on. We only have fish, almost... oil doesn't look that promising. Tourism could definitely be, you know, another leg to stand on... if we do it the right way.

What's the right way?

Mass tourism is a no-go. Like, both the tourists would hate it and we, as a nation, would hate it. We don't want, you know, hah, I don't know. Like the other day we were driving around Klaksvík, and there was a cruise ship there. And I had to stop every five seconds to let tourists pass. And they were basically just walking around the town, looking for Wifi... yeah, hahah, I mean. They aren't really that interested in coming here. Most of them, I mean, I guess. You talked to some of them, so you know better. But... it's not really like that... like great... to have people here that don't really want to come here.

Do you think that happens more in the Faroe Islands than other countries?

Good question. Because now, at least, we are trying to sell the Faroe Islands as a tourism destination as unspoiled... without other people, kind of. So that would kind of ruin the point. I mean... the Faroes have always been a place you can go to be... at least some places in the Faroes... you can always go and you're just alone. And be on your own... and just think, I guess. And... it would ruin that.

Just imagine Kallur with people lining up... it wouldn't... No! It wouldn't work.

Taking turns for their photos...

Yeah, exactly. And like pushing each other down the hill to get there, and... ugh, no! I mean, you saw how small that passage is. They would need like... traffic lights for people to cross and stuff. It would be bad. It would just ruin everything. Hahahah.

And why tourists come to the Faroes... umm... to experience it? Well, I don't know. Hahahah. Usually the nature. Some come for the culture, like the cultural experience. And part of that is like the music, the music-scene. And just, you know, the whole package I guess. But like some just come to experience the nature, to walk around. Part of it is like the solitude, you know, to just experience being on your own... in your own mind. Yeah...

What do you think potential tourists should know about the Faroe Islands?

Well... like everything I think they should know? Okay, I'll try...

Well, not like a guidebook. You know...

Haha, welllllll... Hahahah. They should know *all* of this before they set foot here.

Umm... That it isn't picture-perfect all the time. Prepare to be disappointed and overwhelmed... in a good way. You're going to have your ups and downs. Because plans will not work out. Other plans... or things that you didn't even plan will work out perfectly... because you never know, kind of.

How do you think foreign perceptions of the Faroe Islands have changed in the past and how are they changing now?

Well, when the internet first got here no one knew, basically, no one, even Danes...

When did the internet get here?

2000 and something.... it came for some people in the late 90's, but normal people got it in the first 0's... the first O's... I don't know, hahahah. The early O's. We call it *nullini*... Hahahah. Apparently.

I just remember that then it was kind of exciting to tell people about this place, because no one knew about it. And... but like later... now, I guess, more people know. It was found. Yeah.

Other things that are changing or have changed... at least the perceptions in Denmark, where they don't think we're like an... old society that still goes out fishing in boats, in like wooden boats, and... like, have a cow in our basement and stuff. And don't have cars and stuff. This is what I've like read that Danes thought. And now that you know, most of them know that we're kind of like them. Live in a modern manner, and such.

Media Photo Elicitation:

Tinganes. Yeah... usually the only photos of Tórshavn is taken with Tinganes somewhere. Yeah... of course it's good to see the Faroese flag and not the Danish one, which is at the Amtmanskriavstova, which I was really angry about the other day on Ólavsøka. It's the capital. Hahahah. It's not Lerwick. I'm happy that they got that right.

It looks modern, like any other place. And mountainous. And like... every house is built quite close. Hahahah. I don't know. And colorful.

And this is a glansbilleder. Kallur.

It has bad weather though.

Yeah, but it looks like it's sunny here.

Sunny in one spot is enough to be a glansbilleder in the Faroe Islands?

No, not really. It's quite good compared to glansbilleder... the things that the Danes would like, see the Faroes as. It's more more moody than that.

We're the best, yay! And of course it says, "Faroe Islands, Denmark" Yay. Because we're a part of Denmark... Make it not sound that bad. But I'm... I'm sad about Denmark getting the credit, usually. But I'm not sure if we can manage ourselves. That's pretty much... how I feel.

There's security in being with Denmark?

Indeed. Security, but... you lose a lot of other things. You only get security, but you lose everything else. Like your decisions, or some of your decisions, credit, opportunity to like...

be a nation, or like, be a country. I mean we are a nation, but...

“In excellent shape,” it says. Hahahah. Great. “Relatively unspoiled.... likely to remain so.” Yeah. I guess that's what we talked about. No mass tourism! Please. But yeah, it looks... yeah, this isn't... definitely better than if it was just like sunny, blue skies... of course it also makes a far more interesting photo, which is always okay, you know.

That's kind of National Geographic's style, too. Because it's like.... a straight travel publication would really want to just have the blue skies. National Geographic is a little bit edgier, a little more like... things that aren't for everyone or armchair traveling stories, not just trying to sell you the trip. That's kind of why I would love to work for them, because they are closer to the truth than most publications.

Yeah, looks like it. Whereas if this were like in the Danish... back in the day... like glansbilled... it would be green, green, everything would be like so blue, blue.

Like the ones we got on Kalsoy?

No, even more so. I mean everything. There wouldn't be a cloud or whatever. Just sunshine and paradise. That's like glansbillede.

I really like this photo.

Oh, it's grind at the hospital. Hahahah. Yeah... if I were a foreigner seeing this... I would be like, “Oh... they're hunting whales or something... looks not that bad.” Hahahah. But I mean this looks way worse, the red one.

That's the only picture I've seen of the grind that's not red.

Hmmm... Hmmm... I can't really remember... I can't remember how red it actually is. Like...

This is before they kill them, so... they're driving them in.

Oh, okay. Makes sense. That's why I'm like... hmmm... but, hmmm, I guess you can't really see, see all the red in this, because of the reflection and stuff. If you use a polarizing filter I guess you can see more of the red in the sea.

Probably depends a bit on the weather and how many whales are killed, and...

Over how big of a stretch of beach and stuff. Yeah. Yeah, I'm not really shocked by these photos. I've kind of seen them in real life and stuff. Of course I understand why people get like... shocked. At least from the red one. This one before they killed them, looks, you know, fine. I mean... can't really see what's going on. Just kind of herding.

This is one of the online things to look at. This is the... in some versions it says Denmark here. I'm sure you've read this one.

I see. Yeah. What the fuck... Yeah. That text has been translated into and from so many languages over the years. So it's... hahah. I wonder if it says like anything right from the first text.

Of course it looks brutal. With men falling over and stuff, and being excited about killing whales.

Would you participate in a grind?

No.

Why not?

Maybe it's hypocritical of me to eat meat but not want to kill an animal. But I... completely understand that the meat I eat comes from an animal. I just rather don't want to do it myself. But I've seen... I mean, I've watched it and everything. So. Also like, lamb and sheep and... other things, so.

It depends on the reason. I would never do it just to show that I'm a man or whatever. And I've never felt that like I had to. Personally. But of course if... I was like stranded somewhere in the Faroes... Hahahah.

But like, if a grind came to Gøta and for some reason there weren't that many people to help with it, would you?

I would maybe help with pulling the whales onto the shore, because you need a lot of men for that. But... I would not do it right now, the actual slicing, the killing, with the knife, because I haven't done it before. So no, of course not. But I could like help with that only.

G! Festival. Yay... Looks like a nice stage, like nice surroundings, you know...

Are you biased, maybe?

Indeed. I've gone almost every year... every year except one... to this music festival. I was in Denmark at the time. I guess I'm biased. I've been there, so... I like it. And it's basically my village. So what can I say about this? Come! Come to the G! Festival! It's awesome! You'll meet everyone!

Looks kind of like a modern scene... with like mountains around it, nice surroundings... and, yeah. "It's cool, they have music too!" Music festivals or whatever. Hahaha.

It's weird that they start a show about women's escape from the Faroes with a man. It's like they're saying that the reason for women fleeing is the men. Kind of... (video says in Danish: men catch fewer fish, while women flee) you see? Yeah... I kind of said what I wanted. I don't know.

Just that it depicts everything but the modern life, basically. Like a guy killing sheep... I haven't even done that. I guess some guys do that, but... it's not really like the... thing that everybody does. Especially not in the capital. Like I guess most guys in the countryside have participated in it somehow. And I have like watched it, because my family... kind of... is from Suðuroy, and I've seen it there. You haven't seen it, right?

No.

Hahaha. You haven't been here at that time. Hmmm. Yeah, so.

I haven't managed to see a single animal killed in the Faroe Islands.

In the Land of the Barbarians!!! Hahaha.

Yeah, I mean I came here expecting to see constant blood, constant killing, and I've been really disappointed on that front. Sea Shepherd has been falsely advertising.

Hahahah, indeed. You should sue them.

It's your photo. Right?

So it is.

Of a sheep... Hahahahah. Indeed. I mean, there's nothing wrong with this photo. I mean I see it a lot, at least when I drive on the smaller roads. It's just like a normal winter day, pretty much. If you drive on the small roads. The big roads are usually sheep-free. Usually. Sometimes they get out.

Of course it's great if these pictures also show not just great summer glansbilleder photos. Well of course this shouldn't be the only one. I mean, yeah. It's not like we're like... the north pole or anything. It looks unmodernized, because it's only a one-lane road, and it has ice on it, so it looks kind of scary I guess, for other people. I mean, it looks fine, because there's a part of the road that is ice free. I would drive this. I have driven it. So I guess for me it's fine, but I guess it would look kind of scary for someone else. And like, harsh... and just like really out, countryside with the sheep and everything, and the small road. Where is this?

On the way to Múli.

Okay. Wow. That road is so bad. Yep. Nice.

At fleyga lunda. (To catch puffins). I mean, it's still a part of some people's lives here.

This was on Stóra Dímun. It's from a photo-story only about Stóra Dímun.

I see. Of course, it's always interesting to see a family living... I mean, for other people. Foreigners... To see a family living alone, on an island, in the ocean. It's always really interesting, sounds scary, whatever. It's fine as long as that's not the only story. Or photo. Or whatever.

And then again to those photos, the photos I showed you, with the people. I mean all of these are just like nature. Most of them. And then there's like... these... I don't know. Those show like... people themselves. This is more like culture... whaling... nature photos... and... town photos.

So... and usually when there are photos of people, they're wearing their national costumes and dancing the Faroese ring-dance, or like in an old Faroese house with a turf roof, or like, outside of it, so you can see the roof. Or like walking up a path to a mountain.

As opposed to?

As opposed to what normal people here do. Hahahah. Just like what everyone else does in other countries. Go online, checking Facebook, watching movies...

Do you think journalism should show people watching movies on their computers?

Not really, but... I mean...

Come to the Faroe Islands, we have Netflix?

Yeah... actually we have. We got it a couple months ago. Woohoo! I mean... Hahah.

At least show... not only... people fleyging (catching birds), people herding sheep... don't only show that, but also people partying, maybe, on a night out or something... or people in a cafe in Tórshavn, or outside a cafe.

I guess it's kind of hard to know what to show people when you don't want to just show either the people outside doing like animal stuff, or like inside what they normally do, because we normally just stay in our homes. Or we used to, until the cafe culture came here. Ummm.... so now, I guess, people go more out to like cafes and have fun there. But before then, before that, you would just go to each other's houses, and you know, talk, and after the tv came, watch movies together or whatever. Or go on car trips, car rides.

That's how people date here too, right?

Pretty much. Yeah. I mean... imagine going on a date wherever you live, and sitting by the window and like seeing ten people walking by that you know. And like... "Oh... I think like..." You see it on their face that they think you're dating this person, they see that you're dating this person. And they get really excited or something. It would be really awkward, right? That's pretty much how it would be if we went on dates... at least the first couple of times... at cafes or restaurants or something. So, here people just go on car rides. Drive around.

Saksun. With old houses. Looks, you know, interesting, nice. I would like to go there kind of, if I saw this. It's fine as long as you show them the Tórshavn photo also. You know? Hahaha. Because it's quite different. It looks really 1800 or something.

What about having information in the caption... do you think it would be important to say in a caption that this is a museum? Or an abandoned farm or something?

I mean... I'm unsure because some people do still live in these houses. And like, they build new houses that look like these. Maybe not with rocks like this, but similar like this, you know? And also there's a lightpole, so... Hahahah. You know it's not like... totally abandoned. And there's asphalt. Hahah. I don't know. I mean, I guess it would be nice to know that it's a museum so that you can go there.

I just want things showing the Faroes to show as much diversity as they can... because I don't want them, the people who come here to get disappointed. So this is fine as long as you have other modern towns or some places...

Eivør in a boat... that would never happen. Hahahah. She wouldn't row a boat, I guess. You know? It looks, you know, fun. It looks nice. This is almost glansbilled.

It's nice how they show different kinds of photos even though they're small. Hmm.

Is this Mykines? And this is like, two photos I guess? It doesn't make sense.

Yeah, I think it is supposed to be one image, because it's bleeding over the middle. But sometimes PR people make composite images.

Yeah, I can see that... It looks like it. It looks like this mountainside has been... and like the puffins have been put into here. I don't know. Hahahah. You know?

I just think it makes no sense where his legs are. He's like sprouting out of the ground. And it looks like the wrong size, like how big the puffins are.

Yeah exactly. Hahahah. Photoshop indeed. Oh, you can even see it, you can see the island... well, I could see all the way to Suðuroy on that day I went. So...

These look nice. I mean, quite inviting, I mean, and all of them... you can clearly see the clouds. That's nice. And it's like fog somewhere... or not sunny somewhere. Ummm... I don't know how often they cut their roofs. I guess it happens sometimes. And of course it's funny for foreigners to see. Hahah. And you know, I like all of these small pictures showing like we actually have... like row houses. And stuff. And not only grass-roofed houses.

And this photo of Týr. Hahahah. On a boat, fishing. On Norðlýsið, fishing. Yeah. Hahah. Nice. I hope the people watching... looking through this also look at the small photos. Because just to see these is kind of unrealistic. To see the big pictures. They're like... staged. And stuff. Whereas the other ones are just like casual, like two people riding a horse, a guy who likes birds, probably, he's looking at something, and like photos of birds... photos of different kinds of houses, like, modern architecture and like houses, normal houses, with different colors.... and like different kinds of food, and like this big... schooner on the main photo, and then like this rowing boat, it actually looks like they're rowing it as a sport. And they have a photo that you can go diving. Which is nice, because you can. If you like diving and you see that picture, you think that you can go diving. So it's nice to have diversity like that.

This woman looks really freaky. And it's quite weird to see all of these sheep. I guess it you know... it happens from time to time, in some villages, still, where it hasn't been made like *vetrarfriðað* (exempted from being used as a winter pasture)... In the winter. In the summer it's always sheep-free, so... but in the winter they used to like come in and eat all of the grass around everywhere, so. We call it sheep-free in the winter. It looks like there are way too many sheep here to be realistic. I don't know if they brought them in or just photoshopped them.

And then the small photos. "Land of Maybe" – good that they explain that. And then there's people outside, waiting... for nothing. Hahaha. And talking more. Our word for gossip comes from, we say like, *túnatos*... talking in the *tún*... talking on the street between the houses. That's gossip, kind of. Or not just gossip, but just talk talk talk about whatever, including gossip. A lot of gossip, usually.

This is the national football team? Probably. I don't know. I don't know much about football. This is in like the center of Tórshavn... yeah... with like football players, on boats...

doing weird stuff. And small photos of like a restaurant, and people in national costume, and food – langoustine.

This... is my teacher. History teacher. Yay. And it's kind of weird to see Teitur playing guitar in the middle of a ring-dance. I don't think it's that normal. Ummm... I guess he's been photoshopped in there or something. Yeah. It looks nice, that they like dance outside. Oh yeah, and she told us about this, when she was invited for this! The guy was like, "Oh, we need some like... big... not like very made-up... but like a good Faroese-looking woman, blond or whatever, in her national dress" and they invited her. It's nice with the ring-dance, which is like really traditional, with a turf-roof house background, and being outside and everything... and like, the kind of more modern, but still kind of folksy Teitur... and then this big music festival in the small photo, and then there's the classical also... classical also, I don't know, a photo of a classical concert.

Jóna Venned, 24 years old, from Argir

Interview conducted in English

Media Interview:

So what have you heard about the Faroe Islanders from foreigners and from foreign media?

Um, not a whole lot. The people that I talk to outside of the Faroe Islands usually don't know what it is or where it is or anything about it, the only people that know about it is from football. They heard about a match or maybe their country had a match against us. And then there's a couple of them that have seen Whale Wars, and know about the Faroe Islands through that. And that's about it actually.

So what do they think about the football team?

Uh, most people just say, "We won," like they won against us, not really much more than that. I met this one guy that, he's from Scotland I think, or Ireland, I'm not really sure, but he actually went to the Faroe Islands often to watch the matches and he was really impressed. Not with the football but with the country.

So, you've travelled around mostly in Europe, right? So these are Europeans and they still haven't heard of the Faroe Islands?

Yes, most are Europeans. Actually I met... the people that I was mostly surprised about that knew about the Faroe Islands were Americans. And that was mostly Whale Wars. But they were on 'our' side so that was good. Yeah.

When you explain to people where the Faroe Islands and stuff, do they understand what you're talking about?

No, not at all. They're always like, oh, okay, so is it part of Iceland? No. Not at all. When I was, I worked at a scout centre in Switzerland. And the first couple of days we were a whole lot of people that arrived from around the world. And all the time they asked me, where are you from, and I would say, the Faroe Islands, and they would just go, "Oh." I'm like, "Yeah, you don't know where it is, do you?" And they would say, "No." I actually had to go around with a map on me to show them, "This is my country, this is where I'm from."

I've heard some maps don't even show the Faroe Islands.

Yes, that's also true. We once went to a scout jamboree in Sweden and there were a whole lot of maps where you could put a pin in your country. So we started measuring up, "so this is where our country is..." with a compass.

How do you think the Faroe Islands are depicted in foreign media?

I don't really think we were really are that much depicted, or how do you say? I'm not really sure actually. I think there's not actually much publicity around us. Well of course in Denmark they know a little bit about us, because they own us.

What do they say in Denmark?

Most Danish people just know that they own us and don't know a whole lot more. Some of

them just go, “yeah yeah, we give you a whole lot of money,” and that's it. And then there are of course a few people who know everything about us, which is nice.

So what do you think are some misconceptions people have about the Faroe Islands?

Well, the first, the biggest one is that we live in caves. A whole lot of Danish people still think that we live in caves up here.

Where did they get that idea?

I have no idea. They're just like, “oh yeah, that's a remote country, and you don't have electricity do you?” and I don't actually know why they have that idea...

I've heard this several times. It just baffles me.

Yes, it's really weird. Well, I think some of it is because... some Faroese people like to... like when we go somewhere, if we say something about our country everyone believes it, so they just tell a lie. And some people also asked me, is it true that all the sheep in the Faroe Islands only walk clockwise, so they have two legs shorter than the other legs? I'm like “No! Who told you this?” “Oh, a Faroese person told me.” Oh, okay. Sure. There's a lot of people who think that we don't have electricity, or heat, or... there are some people who think that we live in igloos but I think they are mixing something up.

So what elements of Faroese culture and modern life do you think are ignored?

Well, probably just normal stuff, like if you look at the brochures and stuff, the tourist brochures, a lot of it is just like old culture and beautiful pictures of mountains and stuff. There's like you said before today, there's not a whole lot of stuff on the normal thing, and just normal family culture and stuff like that. And youth culture.

What would you say is important to understand about the youth culture?

Just that we actually are almost like everyone else. We don't live in caves. No, yeah, we still, we have young people who act like normal young people in Scandinavia I guess and we don't live like in the olden days, we go to universities and stuff.

Is there anything in particular that you remember seeing that did a good or a bad job depicting the Faroe Islands?

Well there was this football match, it was on a normal Wednesday or something, I think it was Germany in the Faroe Islands. And the bars had to close at 12 o'clock, so there was a whole lot of media actually on this subject, that, oh, you can't get any beer... and that the Faroe Islands is such a, I don't know, old and remote country with no, like, bar-life or whatever. So a lot of Germans just thought that actually we didn't have any beer and that it was just really boring, a boring country. But of course that was just a weird, weird view on stuff because it was a normal Wednesday, so that would probably also happen somewhere else, but they just made a big deal out of it in Germany.

What do you wish more people knew or understood about the Faroe Islands?

I wish they knew that we existed. I guess just that they knew that we are a country of our own, we're not... a lot of people, um, think that we're like Greenland, so... that Denmark rules us and that we don't really have anything to rule of our own, just to see that there is a big difference, and we're not all alcoholics. Neither are Greenlandic people, but that's what

people think.

What do you think of tourism in the Faroe Islands and what do you think brings tourists here?

The tourism in the Faroe Islands has been growing a lot the last couple years, so the circumstances have also been getting better. Before I guess there wasn't really anything for tourists, and now we are trying, of course it's almost only in the summer, but at least in every village that you go there is at least a public toilet, which makes a big difference for tourists that come this way. Yeah, I guess most of the tourists who come this way are of course a bit rich, because it's really expensive to come. Either they're rich or they're backpackers, so there's extremes. I guess it's kind of exotic, they hear about it somewhere and they hear about this really remote country with all this old history and culture, so a lot of them come also for the peace and the fresh air.

What do you think is exotic about it?

I don't think it's exotic. Hahaha.

But to them?

I guess that it's so remote, but it still functions as a normal country. And all the free space and the clean air and the old culture.

How do you think foreign perceptions of the Faroe Islands have changed in the past and how are they changing now?

I don't know really know if they have changed that much, of course there's more people that know about it I guess. But right now it might be changing a bit because of the grind and all of the Sea Shepherd media stuff from Sea Shepherd. But I think it's not really making a big difference, the Sea Shepherd propaganda. Because a lot of people still want to come here. And I don't really know what has changed. Or how.

Media Photo Elicitation:

This one I guess is from Saksun. This one actually shows the real weather, or like it's kind of dark. But it shows the grass roofs that people find so interesting. Haha. There's not really much to say about this picture. It's kind of pretty. Haha. Yeah I think it's kind of nice because it shows really, this is an old village, you can see the old houses and with the rough nature actually. So that's kind of representative of... not everything in the Faroes, no, but of our nature and old history I guess.

So this is a picture of the grind in Torshavn. It doesn't really show that much. It's a small grind. No blood, just whales, and people watching. This is an old picture. I can see that because the hospital is not finished. It's kind of also a dark picture. I don't know, it's different... it just shows a small grind and how people are standing by and watching and people that are running out from the beach to help. I guess this is not really a nice picture to show tourists if you want to come this way. Because a lot of people don't really... I guess even though if you're not really against whale slaughter this can look a bit brutal, even though there's no blood. It just looks a bit harsh because the pilot whales are kind of struggling but they are already in the shallow waters, so there's not really any way for them to get out. Kind of weird that there's no blood in it.

Yeah, I thought the same, it's one of the only ones I've seen without blood.

Yeah, but that might be the propaganda that got to us.

This picture of G! Festival, it's kind of a nice ad for the festival. It looks really cozy, and... even though the clouds are a bit dark, but it just shows how it really is. Haha. You see people wearing knitted sweaters and there's a band playing. Not a whole lot of people, but it looks really cozy. I guess it could make people want to go.

Have you ever been to G! Festival?

Yes, I've been twice. Once I broke my hand. So that's my memory from G! I really enjoyed it until I broke my hand.

I remember this documentary and there was a really big debate about it up here. Women weren't really happy about it because, it doesn't really, it shows.... it doesn't really show the real story. Cause almost all of the footage was from, wasn't it from Stóra Dímun or something?

I think it's actually of this guy, who lives just outside of Klaksvík, but they, they don't show the town, they just show him with his sheep kind of.

Yeah, I don't really remember how it was, but it was something about a woman who helped with the sheep and it really showed us like an old culture only. And that there was nothing for women to be here, for, if they wanted to, like, get an education or get somewhere. And not only be at home and make dinner for their husbands or something like that. A lot of people disagreed with the picture they showed of the Faroe Islands. As I don't really remember it I don't really know what to say about it but I just remember that people said that this was the wrong picture and this might be the truth for some of the women but it hardly is for all of the women in the Faroe Islands. Because there is more to it than helping killing sheep.

The channel put an article out on their web-page afterwards, saying like, “okay, we're sorry for showing the wrong picture, and, blah blah blah, we're going to show something from another point of view,” and they tried to make it better or something. And they realized that they should stop just showing old pictures from the Faroe Islands.

So this is the bloody picture of the grind. Which looks really gross. Haha. Um, and there's only men in the picture! No, I'm joking. Haha. This must be a really brutal picture for people to see if they have no idea what this is about. Because there's just dead whales, and one whale struggling I guess... and blood everywhere... and men just standing there. Haha. Yeah, this is a horrible picture to show people who don't know anything about grind. But I guess when you know what it's about, and, if you think that it's water – of course, when blood goes into the water, it looks worse than it is.

So what do people not know about grind when they see this picture that would make it seem bad?

Well it's just like we're, I don't know, to me, it's kind of weird, because I know what it's about, but I guess some people look at this and they think, “OMG, why are you killing these animals? Why do you need to kill them?” Because a lot of people think that meat comes from the supermarket. Haha. I guess they don't know that we actually use the meat to eat. And that it's an organized kill. It's not just a massacre, as some would call it. Or “Bloody Sunday” was the last one I saw. Which was supposed to be like, “yeah, they have this thing in the Faroe Islands called the Bloody Sunday where they go out and kill the whales” and its

like no, that's not really what happens.

Yeah, a lot of people seem to think its like an annual thing or a festival or something...

Yeah. Haha. And a ritual for boys to become men. Well, if you look at the picture there's a lot of boys in it. So if you want it to be about that, you can make it to be about that. But, yeah. Pictures of grind are always, they look horrible to people who don't know what it's about. But just go into a slaughterhouse and you'll get horrible pictures as well. I don't know.

I guess if tourists are in the Faroe Islands when it happens, it kind of looks horrible for them as well, but they can get the background and talk to people and be like, "oh yeah okay so this is what happens."

Did you know actually until about the 80's the grind was considered a tourism attraction and people wanted to see it?

Yeah, there's still some people, they don't really want to admit but I know this one guy, he was working in the Faroe Islands, just for the summer, but he had a deal with the Kunningarstova, the tourism information, that they would call him if there was a grind, because he wanted to see it. So some people find it interesting.

I just look at it and think, "Oh, food!"

Do you like eating whale?

I love whale.

Do you like the spik? (blubber)

Uh, I eat it, a little bit of it. I can't eat too much of it, because it's kind of... gross. I like some of it, depends.

How do you like it prepared the most?

Dried actually. And then whale beef, that's good as well.

You said this is from Norðoyggjar?

Yes, I think the road to Múli.

Yeah, I was thinking that. So it's a picture that shows like the winter. There's a really mad looking sheep on it... haha, no. Just a sheep. And snow on the roads. And, well, this is the road to Múli, so that one is never really taken care of, the road, because no one lives there any more, so it might look a bit rough, but yeah, it kind of shows just the winter on a bad day. Because there's a whole lot of, I don't know, snowstorm, snowstorm coming in or something. It might be an appeal to people who like snow in winter. But yeah, it shows the reality, I guess. Sheep have to be in the pictures about the Faroe Islands. Haha. There's so many of them. That's actually one thing that people know, if they know anything about the Faroe Islands, they know there's a lot of sheep.

So this is from Lítla Dímun you said, or Stóra Dímun? This is a guy going out to catch some birds, with his fleyga pole. This is a nice picture. Just shows him looking out at the horizon thinking about life... or he's watching the birds. But yeah, this is something they do, go out and catch some birds, which are really tasty. So it kind of shows like also the

culture of catching your own food.

Um, was this on National Geographic?

Yes, the Best-Rated Islands article.

This is... Kalsoy? This is on Trøllanes, I guess. It's a really nice picture. With some darkness over it. You can see the lighthouse. All the tourists who go out to Kalsoy they go out to that lighthouse. It's like standing at the end of the world.

I remember when I went out the first time, I was with my last boyfriend, and we had seen the picture and we were just like, I was just preparing him, like, "it's probably not going to be as pretty as the picture." But it was. It was actually a really sunny day and it was really nice. It wasn't actually this picture, it was a picture that went the other way.

What else is in the picture... I guess... are these birds? Yes, which you see a lot of birds there when you go out there.

I think this was like... I used this picture for a project. Anyway, this is a picture of Tórshavn, so you see Tinganes, the place where the politicians make all their decisions. I see where the politicians all have their offices, here the prime minister has his office. This is Tórshavn on a sunny day. Haha. But it's a nice picture. It shows all the colors of Tórshavn. Because there's a whole lot of different colored houses, which tourists find really interesting. They're pretty! And you get to see the boats as well. So it really shows Tórshavn – in it's glory! No. Haha.

And this, this is a pamphlet, I guess it's the most recent tourism brochure from the Faroe Islands.

I brought this with me to Switzerland actually. In this brochure you have a lot of picture of different places, and all are sunny! The first one is of Eivør, which is really pretty, because she is pretty. They're trying to sell, like, there are a lot of tourists who think the Faroes have a lot of pretty girls. So this might be a good picture to sell that. And then of course you have the old boat, so it's a mixture of old culture and... new culture. Because Eivør's a singer, so...

These are all really pretty pictures, with famous people. Haha. Famous people in the Faroe Islands. Guðrun and Guðrun are famous, also outside of the Faroe Islands. This is really a nice brochure because there's a lot of different things, like all the small pictures as well, and it tells a little bit about the story about it. And there's a picture of a tourist.

The puffins. This is... this is not a good commercial. No. Because we don't have any puffins any more! Almost. Like in Mykines there's not a whole lot of puffins left. Well, not this many. You can probably see some puffins, but not a whole lot of them. Anyways, they're only in Mykines. So a lot of people are like, "Oh, I went to the Faroe Islands and didn't see any puffins." They only nest in Mykines.

And then we have the grass roofs. And the guy cutting the grass on the roof. I had a tourist ask me the other day, "Is it real grass on the roofs? Do you have to cut it? How do you do that?" Haha. "You go up on the roof and cut it. Or put a sheep there, I've seen that as well."

Yeah, I kind of like this brochure. It shows... it shows a little bit of everything.

And again, sunny Tórshavn. Because it's always sunny in Tórshavn. Haha. And the chain-dance. Again the old culture... but new culture, Teitur... so it's a good mixture.

Women Interview:

So basically I guess you know that a lot of women are leaving the Faroe Islands right now. Why do you think that is?

Well most of them are of course leaving to get an education. I think in several of the cases they plan to come back, but it ends up like they're living in another country for so long, that they make a home there. So it's kind of... kind of hard to move back. And often in Denmark they have so much better circumstances to have a family and it's cheaper. It's cheaper, and there's just for some people it's more of a choice to stay there than it is a choice to not go back, if you understand what I mean. They don't choose to leave this country, but they choose to stay in another one.

And of course the country we live in is pretty conservative on some areas. And it's kind of hard for women to get good jobs.

Why is that?

Well, I mean, in leadership jobs and stuff like that, it's just kind of because we see men more like leaders than women. A lot of people do. So it's just easier for men to get leadership jobs. And also if you look at the politicians, most of them are men. It's just, it's just something from the conservative, from the olden times that we still have left in us, that men are better at leading than women.

So do more women go abroad to study than men?

Yeah, studies show actually that there are more women that want to get a real education than men. I'm not really sure why, I guess it has something to do with women wanting to have more of an impact. Because it's easier for men to have an impact, even if they don't have an education.

What do you mean?

It's just easier for men to have an opinion and stand by it. For some reason women feel like they need to know more about it before they can have a real opinion about it. Or that's what the studies show. That we think a whole lot more about stuff before we say it. So that's probably also why it's easier for men to be politicians, because they don't think a whole lot about it.

So the women who do stay here, what do you think does make them stay here?

Family. Or, of course, some of them have real good jobs, or just have a good, they just want to stay here. For most people it's the family. That's also most of the people who come back, it's because they want to be with their family. And they find that they want their kids to be raised in the Faroe Islands, because it's such a quiet little place to be. And it's nice to raise kids here, because it's not really dangerous in any ways. Do you know what I mean? Of course there's dangers everywhere, but it's just more convenient here I guess.

So are you happy that you grew up in the Faroe Islands?

Yeah, I'm really happy about it.

How do you think it made your childhood different?

I don't know, I guess more freedom. Because we could just roam around the streets without being afraid of anything. Because you know everyone, so everyone takes care of you. So my parents weren't really that scared to let us go around and do whatever we wanted. I can't really imagine growing up somewhere else. And if I would ever want to have kids, I would really want them to grow up in the Faroe Islands.

So, you're leaving the Faroe Islands soon, right?

Yeah, I'm leaving in a couple of months to get an education.

What will you be studying and where?

I'll be studying, it's kind of like linguistics, it's called Indo-European, and I'll be studying in Copenhagen.

My plan is to come back as soon as I finish.

You have a boyfriend here, so will you have a long-distance relationship?

No, he's coming with me actually. That's why I'm waiting to go, because I was supposed to go now, in September, but I'm going in February because he's an apprentice. So he'll be done in December so I'm actually waiting for him.

Do you think it's common that people actually fall in love abroad and that's why they –

Yeah, I think so. But not as many as you would think. Because Faroese people have a thing about going abroad and finding other Faroese people. Haha. Yeah, there's a lot of people who do that. But of course some people fall in love in other countries and then it's just easier to stay there than to convince the other person to come back to the Faroes.

Do you think that goes equally for men and women?

I'm not really sure. No, I think actually... for my opinion, it seems like there's more women who get their men to come back to the Faroe Islands, when they're not from the Faroe Islands, than the other way around.

Most Faroese men that bring women here, they're women from Asia, from Thailand and stuff like that. But, I think Danish women, and English women have more... I don't know, they want to stay in their own country.

So what do you think could be done to make the Faroe Islands more welcoming for women, or to stop the problem of them leaving?

Well, first of all, you could maybe have more opportunities to go to university here. Because then you sort of stop them from going in the first place. But there's of course limited chance of people getting their degrees in the Faroe Islands. Because people also want to just go, just to experience something else. But that is of course one possibility. And then just making it, making the circumstances for single parents better.

What would those be?

First of all, for them, making some places to live that aren't as expensive. Because if you're

single parents in the Faroe Islands today, you can't afford to live by your own, you have to live with your parents or something, because there's not really, it's because, we're used to everyone having their own houses, so there's not a whole lot of possibilities for renting places. But that is improving. And we're building a lot of apartment complexes and stuff. So that should probably help a bit. But they're still too expensive for single people to live in. Especially with kids.

So, like, for you, what would be the deciding factors for you coming back to the Faroes or not?

If I get a job... that fits to my education. If I go abroad and get an education, I don't want to come back and work, like, as a cleaning lady, or something like that. I would want a job that fits to my education.

Or in the fish factory?

Or in the fish factory. Haha.

So there is limited chances for jobs. Which of course, they should... they could do something about it.

What will you miss when you're abroad and what would you miss if you didn't come back?

First of all my family, because they're all here. Of course, my brothers are also almost going to Denmark now. But family, grandparents, parents. And also the friends that still are here. And then just the country in itself. The environment. The nature. Yeah. Those things.

Food?

Haha. Food. Yeah. Faroese food. Which you can get sent to Denmark, but... I will miss that. And water! Drinking water.

Does it taste better here than in Denmark?

Yes, it does! Haha. A whole lot better. Oh God, I will miss that so much. Haha. That's always the first thing I do when I come back in the Faroe Islands, I take a big glass of water.

Haha, and here you are drinking it right here.

Yeah, just because I'm thinking about it.

Is there anything else you wanted to add about being a young woman in the Faroe Islands?

Well, I think the circumstances have changed and it is a whole lot easier to be a woman in the Faroe Islands, compared to what it has been, not in my time of course, but, it is kind of a conservative, it has always been conservative, so, there's like, I don't know, that's probably not only in the Faroe Islands, but often they think that, like, girls should do this and this and this, and the boys don't have to do so much, in the household. My grandma's really like that, like I have to help with the dishes and stuff and the boys don't have to, and stuff like that, which are small things, but in the end they make a difference.

And also they are trying to make it easier for single parents to live here. And we are getting, like, the jobs, but still, men get paid more, a little bit, but they are changing and they have changed the laws and things like that.

So there are currently 2,000 fewer women than men here, which is a lot. What kind of affect do you think that's going to have on the country?

Well, recently it shows that a lot of the men that don't get any wives. They, well, we say they 'buy them' but I guess they go to other countries in Asia as I was talking about and find wives and bring them back here. So that should be a good thing, because then we get more kids and stuff. But of course it has the effect that there are 2,000 men who don't get a Faroese woman, or, yeah, wife. Um. Of course that will stop the inbreeding that we have too much of.

You think that's a problem?

It is in some cases. There are I think two diseases that are only in the Faroe Islands because of too much inbreeding. But that kind of stopped. There's not so much inbreeding any more. Of course it is... some people are together with their cousin or something like that. Which is kind of weird.

First cousin or?

Second cousin. Well. Haha. I know of some people who are with their first cousin. Weird.

Johan Petur Dam, 32 years old, from Funningur

Interview conducted in English

Media Interview:

So what have you heard about the Faroe Islanders from foreigners and from foreign media?

Well, I think you can group it into two, really. There's the very positive ones, usually from people who have visited the Faroes and find it like paradise on earth, almost. I mean, it's almost ridiculous how positively they talk about it. But oh well. That's one thing you always hear from people. And sometimes it translates into media as well. Like National Geographic making the Faroes the best place to travel in... what was it, 2007? People are still talking about it.

On the other hand, there is the negative media. And that has mostly been the Grind, of course, which we don't really need to go into. You know all about that. And I was really interested when, that, when the mackerel war was the most intense. Even news outlets like Al Jazeera came to the Faroe Islands and made these things about the Faroes. I guess they were trying to be neutral, but, like, you know, about this small community that is defying like 500 million people or something. So, you know.

In short, I hear the very very positive things, and then the very negative things. And occasionally there will be some media that will try to portray both the good and the bad, but I think those are really rare actually.

Do you have an example of one of those?

I think the Faroe Islands Podcast is pretty good at trying to document all of the facets of Faroese society. And... I mean Matthew has been, hahah, visiting the Faroes like, I don't know how often, and he's speaking to virtually everybody. Which is really interesting. And he's even speaking to Sea Shepherd people which is really awesome. So... so I think he is, he should really get some credit for what he does. Definitely.

So what do you think are some misconceptions people have about the Faroe Islands?

Ah, well, that we speak English. When you say that... Oh, well okay, that will be the second one. The first one is that we're in Egypt. That we're Egyptians. Because when people say, "Oh, where are you from?" "Oh, from the Faroe Islands." "Oh, really? Are you like from Egypt." "Uhhh.... no! Those are Pharaohs, but we are not Pharaohs, we are the Faroe Islands, so..." "Okay, where is that." "Well, it's in the North Atlantic, it's like, it's like north of the United Kingdom." "Oh! You speak English!" So there's the second one.

Other misconceptions, well... without Sea Shepherd, of course... ha, that's a really good one actually. I guess that because we're part of Denmark, most people think that we're like ethnic Danes. Like people from Denmark would be, and stuff, but I'm not really sure if that's, like a misconception, well... it's probably a misconception but it's probably more like... one of those things you don't really think about, like, one country has one nationality in it... so to find out that there are more ethnic groups, more native ethnic groups... that's kind of interesting for them to find out usually. Not really something I think about that much, no. So misconceptions, I don't know.

Well, what about with Sea Shepherd?

Well, there's this rite of passage: Grind. Which is... I, well... if there was anything like a rite of passage that would be that the Faroese boys like back in the day when they were 14 years old they left school and they went to row on the boats. That would be like a rite of passage. But the grind isn't really that. So.

There are a lot of anti-whaling groups of course. Sea Shepherd is just the one that is by far the most prominent. But I'm sure that there are other groups as well, just like the main focus of the Faroese anti-whaling is against Sea Shepherd, because well they're the most visible because they're the only ones that actually come here to protest. So. But yeah I guess if you have like Greenpeace or something like that, they will probably maybe use the same or... I can't say for sure because I don't really spend much time on those things. I don't really see the point in doing that, so...

What elements of Faroese culture and modern life do you think are ignored?

Very often which I think is kind of sad, well not sad, but it's interesting for people abroad is that when there are like documentaries about the Faroe Islands, they're always focusing on the really old stuff in the Faroe Islands. Like they always go to Kirkjubø which has like the room from maybe the 10th century.

I was just watching this Norwegian documentary, I think it was on Tuesday or Wednesday. And it had like all of these... well, there was this guy who came to the Faroes and was like very interested in all the things that connected the Faroes with Norway. And the interesting part was that they were only looking at very remote islands and very old stuff. Like they were walking around in út á Reyni, you know where the ministries are today? Tinganes? That place?

Well, sure, it's okay. But you really rarely see a documentary about like... contemporary Faroese life. I mean that is maybe what is missing for a lot of foreign media. You see always the old culture stuff. Which is fine, of course, it's fine... but that's not really all the Faroes are about, the old culture stuff. Old culture, it sounds really bad to say it that way, but yeah.

How do you think it could be more balanced?

Yeah that's the thing, I'm not really sure. Because there was a Danish youth show that was shot in the Faroe Islands and that was criticized for showing too much partying going on. So I don't really know. But maybe just trying to find a balance between modern Faroes life and... yeah, well maybe the shows have their own targets to meet, so... that's what I would say is kind of missing. But you can always... you get the historical things but you rarely get the more contemporary things.

Is there any particular thing you remember seeing that did a good or a bad job at depicting the Faroes? I know you already mentioned the Faroe Islands Podcast.

Yeah. There was also this... I remember seeing on YouTube this Scottish show about life on the... life on the coast or something like that. And they... they went all up the west coast of Great Britain and went to the western isles, and then Orkney, Shetland, and then they came to the Faroes for some reason. Which is really interesting, because it chronicled, more or less, albeit very short, very defined period in Faroese history, which is the occupation by the Brits... the British. So, yeah... it's, it's... I mean, when you see a documentary about war in the Faroes, you most commonly see it from the Faroese point of view. But you very rarely see it from the British point of view. So that was kind of fun to see, even though it was very

short, it was very fun to see a bit of that.

Others... I mean, good or bad... I don't know. I don't really watch that much, I mean I watch a lot of it, but it's usually about the same things always.

Like what things?

Yeah. You know... the old things? Like, that we're these viking descendents that speak a language that is almost like the viking language. That's the classic. And the controversial stuff, that we are still killing whales. Those are staples that are always in all documentaries about the Faroes. So seeing one that doesn't mention these is really, really fun sometimes. "Oh, they didn't mention such and such? This is really new!" somehow.

So yeah, I would say... I would say that it is kind of rare to see a really bad one. Or one that is you know, factually wrong on all levels. Those are really rare. But... it's also really rare also to see a really detailed, usually you'll just see the headlines, or fun facts... but going into the depths... that doesn't really happen that often unfortunately.

I guess the Faroe Islands Podcast is kind of unique in that way I suspect. I mean, if you think about it, they usually take one special subject and then kind of dissect it. Sometimes they will have like several episodes which are from different point of views all the time. So um... you don't see that happen very often in media in general concerning subjects about the Faroe Islands. So that's... that's really one of the very good things about that podcast in particular.

What do you wish more people knew or understood about the Faroe Islands?

Well, I guess in general everything, because being, you know, a small island group in the middle of the North Atlantic with at least one or two hours flight from the nearest larger metropolitan area, you kind of are the unknown bit of Europe, more or less. People know Iceland because it's a big island and the volcanoes, and the earthquakes and all those things. We kind of fall outside of everything. So just that people knew where we were and who we are, that would be enough to begin with. And not just, you know, from biased sources like again Sea Shepherd which we always mention for some reason, as you noticed, so... Just kind of people knowing more in general about us, that would be good.

What do you think of tourism in the Faroe Islands and what do you think brings tourists here?

Well, it's not the weather, that's for sure. Although today, which is July 8th, it's really beautiful, in some places at least. But no, I don't think people come here for the sun. If they want the sun they will go south, definitely. I think... well, it's not really a place that the young families go to, I think. I think mostly people who come here to the Faroes are maybe older, maybe they've seen all the sunny places and now they want to see the exotic places, the places you wouldn't go to normally. So instead of going to a warm and sunny place, they would go to see nature, for instance, mountains and fjords and kind of... maybe you call it nature-tourism or something, if that is a term that is used. Or people come here for the... for some historical purposes, like seeing some ruins that we have or visiting old buildings and seeing maybe cultural events. Or what's happening more and more now is that the language course, which is in August, is attended by more and more people every time. So maybe there's a linguistic curiosity for people who come here as well.

What do you think potential tourists should know about the Faroe Islands?

Well, first of all the weather can change from hour to hour, literally. So pack your warm

clothes, of course. What they should know... it's like... we are really just 50,000 people living in a small place, but it's like a microcosm, I mean, the capital is only has 20,000 inhabitants, which is really small everywhere else. But it more or less has all the facilities that a city of one million people or more has. So that surprises people sometimes, that even though we're small we have everything. So that is maybe something they should think about. Things like that and also... well, what else is there to say. Just knowing that the weather is not something that we trust in the Faroes, and we are called the Land of Maybe just because of the weather. So... if something doesn't work today, then maybe tomorrow. So if they make plans they have to of course be prepared that maybe the plans will have to be postponed, so that is something to really look out for.

How do you think foreign perceptions of the Faroe Islands have changed in the past and how are they changing now?

The thing is that it's really hard for me to say what perception of us is outside of the Faroes, or outside of the Nordic countries because, just because of how unknown the Faroes are in general. So maybe people don't really have any perception of us. Maybe they just heard, "Oh yeah, you had a team that beat Austria in 1990", or "Oh yeah, you are that small football team that always makes these, or sometimes makes these results." So football aside, I don't really think there is any... well, maybe there is a perception, but if it's changing... I don't know. That's a good question, actually. I would have to think about that for a few days before I would give a definitive answer on that one. If there is one. But yeah, that's really hard to answer, actually.

Media Photo Elicitation:

This is a picture from an English language, I think this is National Geographic that I remember the picture from. Let me see if I can place the picture, which I'm not really sure I can, but...

It's the Kallurin lighthouse outside of Trøllanes.

Oh yeah, I usually see it from a different angle, so that's maybe why it's not so... you actually see the island from here, so. Well, maybe not from here, but when you drive into the fjord, you will see this lighthouse. Okay, well. This is like almost, I don't know, this is like a bird-mountain and... well first, for a Faroese person, you'll go here maybe and go here and listen to the quietness. Like you will just hear the birds, and the mountain – it's a very calming thing to do actually, to just sit back and listen to the birds chirping, well, not chirping. The kittiwakes and the guillemots and the puffins and all those things. This is what would at least for me would be a very soothing thing to do, go out in nature and just listen to nature. So this is a very positive picture I think.

Next picture is a picture of Tinganes on a summer day. This is... what... and there's Hotel Hafnia on here as well, I can see. Yeah that was me plugging really shamelessly. Um... this is kind of... uhhh... kind of old meets new, I guess. This shows you what Tórshavn is, you have the historical center and then you have the more modern outskirts, so... This will also be the, if people are coming to the Faroes by boat, this will be one of the first views that they are presented with, so... I guess seeing like a small town like this is kind of a welcome, a welcoming thing really. I would assume, I would ask some foreigners what they really think about this, but yeah, especially if the weather is as good as in this picture, which is not always the case, this would be a really welcoming thing to see I'm sure.

Um, yeah... a man with a pole for catching birds, and of course a ball (home-rolled

cigarette) in his mouth. This is what I would say is sort of stereotypical historical Faroese. Going out in the nature and catching his own food for supper or whatever. So, this is... well, it's still done today of course, but maybe not on such a big scale as it used to be done, so, this is maybe... how we catch our cuisines today, you could say maybe, because not everyone eats puffins or guillemots anymore. So this kind of the old, historical one, but it's become this new, hip, modern thing, eating what these people catch. So it's interesting to see that he's wearing modern clothes and not woolen clothes or anything like that. So it's kind of modern but using old-fashioned tools.

Okay, small road, sheep, and it's winter... this is really death-traps... icy roads, and you have sheep on the roads.

This is my picture, actually.

Oh, is it?

Yeah, when Uni and I were looking at it, he said, "What were we thinking?"

Yeah, exactly. But all in all, but haha, but seriously, this is, this is really what I think most people would think about the Faroes. Because the Faroes are way up north, so everyone's, "Okay, it must be cold." Wait, let me see if I can place this picture... I don't think I can, though. No, I can't.

Can you guess the island?

Well, it has to be north. It's probably Streymoy or Eysturoy. Maybe Streymoy actually?

No, it's Norðoyggjar. It's the road to Múli.

Oh really? Yeah, it would have to be somewhere up there actually. What do people think about this. I guess they would think, "It's true what I thought, it's cold up there!" and it's snowing, and there's a lot of sheep, so... and I think also there's this barren landscape with no trees and a lot of rocks everywhere, so that would be... I would think about this, it's cold, I would put on my jacket just looking at this picture! Or maybe two jackets and a woolen sweater or something. Other than that, I don't know. It's probably one of those pictures that you like to show to foreigners and say, like, "See, we can be like this also." I don't really know what else to say about this picture actually. Maybe I'll get some thoughts along the way.

Oh yeah, this is a picture of a Grind. And this is what everyone likes to... well, the sea is red, and it makes everyone see red, too. Well, what to say about this... I mean, taking the whole, whether it's correct, or proper, or healthy to even do this, I mean... well, that's another discussion. But seeing a picture like this, I can understand the furor from people who see this. But, well, that's the classical thing that... you see this, and people get very angry about it, and then people say, "Well, okay, but have you ever seen what an abattoir looks like? Or have you ever imagined what the sea would look like if the abattoir was next to the sea, and all the cow's and all the pig's blood, and all this was dumped directly into the sea?"

Okay, well, maybe for me, for someone who, well, even though I don't really partake in a lot of slaughtering, but I've seen it... this doesn't really hit me as hard, but I can really see why people would become horrified or angry or sad or whatever when they see this. It's... I guess it would be a perfectly normal reaction, actually. Because I mean it is brutal, I mean the sea is red with blood, and it's like... it's like if you took all the carnage from Game of Thrones

and imagine if they were, all these that have been stabbed and the blood is like spewing everywhere, yeah, this could be, this could be a very shocking picture, definitely. Definitely, yeah.

Anyway, this is the video. This is still from this documentary that I remember seeing. Yeah, it was on Denmark's radio.

We can watch the first minute or something.

Yeah, I remember this one. Ummm... When I saw it this first time, I remember thinking, "Oh, cool, there are things from the Faroes on Danish television," which is kind of rare actually, believe it or not. But now that I see this, I remember that there was a lot of controversy in the Faroes, because it shows kind of a one-sided image of the Faroes. And it may be true because they drop some stereotypes about like the men, he you know, catches fish and tends the sheep, and the women leave the Faroes. Which is... I guess partly true, because there is like a deficit of women in the Faroes, which is statistically true. But it's kind of... grouping the genders too simplified. Because there are Faroese male... how do you call them in English? Academists? Academics. Yeah.

So... it's not really maybe as clearly cut as it tends to show. Also, it's not just the non-academics that have Faroese women, which is also what the show is mainly, a bit... on one side it shows that the women are leaving the Faroe Islands, and on the other hand it shows that the men are instead importing, importing so to speak, women from other countries. Which I guess is both true and untrue, because there is also the opposite. There are women who come back to the Faroes and there are also academic men who have, like, women, wives from other countries, so...

Maybe this is just to show a very particular piece, but its very easy for people who don't know a lot of things about the Faroes to begin with, to see this piece and think, "Oh, this must be how it is for all the people," so that could maybe could be an issue about something that can be unfortunate.

Have you noticed any effects of having fewer women than men here?

Ummm.... well, any effects, per se, well... the thing is that I am currently at university, and the men are in the minority actually at the university, because there are a lot more women academics actually at the university right now. At least the students, maybe the teachers are more commonly male, but... well as an academic in the Faroes I can at least say in my field of study that men are in the minority actually. But I don't think... I think in all the other branches of studying in the Faroes, there are more men, like studying history or social sciences and natural sciences, I think those are mostly male-dominated. But then you also have, you have industry, which is more or less male-dominated completely. Like, you know, carpenters and smiths of various kinds and those things.

I guess in a way the Faroes work-life is still segregated still. Like you have the more normal women's work, like you know, nurses, and you know, people who work with children and those things, those are usually female jobs and maybe still are to some extent, maybe working in a fish factory also is the same. Then you have the males who work on the trawlers, work on the boats, and then... yeah, you still have these old, not class-systems I guess, but you know, still, it's divided. But at least in academia it's kind of changing, because it's becoming more equal, and even in some cases like mine, there are women that are in the majority, so... if it has any effect? I don't think you see it that obviously because of the divide in how people work. So maybe you do see it in representation in parliament or in all the democratically elected things we have in the Faroes, like municipal elections and all

these things, so... which are still kind of male-dominated really.

So maybe that way you do see some of it, that there are fewer women in the Faroes. It's really a big and hard question to answer easily. And the Faroes... well, we are western Europe, but in many ways we are still 20 years behind. So maybe in this case we are still not really thinking about the divide between genders and how that works out. So that could be a part of the answer as well. Yeah, but well... it was an interesting thing to see and it got quite a bit of controversy about it as well. So that was fun, really.

Okay. G! Festival... and, who's playing? I can't tell. This is probably from last year, I guess? Or... this is not your picture?

Yeah, only the winter one was my picture, because so few travel journalists come here in the winter, so I didn't find that many and I just put my own picture in here.

Yeah, that's true actually. Yeah yeah. Well, that's maybe sad, we maybe should have more snow-hunters, or winter tourists I guess. From working in a hotel I know that tourism is virtually dead in the first three months of the year.

When I came last time, I only saw... twice I saw other tourists. Once it was some Danes, and once it was some Asians in Viðareiði.

Well, the Danes could just as easily be Faroese people who live in Denmark who were coming to visit in the Faroe Islands.

No, but they were Danish, actually, they were speaking in Danish. They were climbing Slættaratindur, in fact they were the only ones climbing Slættaratindur in the snow.

Oh, really? I have never done that actually. Well, but I have only been on Slættaratindur once, and that was in 1989. That was almost 30 years ago almost. Well it was 25 years ago. I'm old. Anyway.

G! Festival. This G! Festival is a really fun thing, because it began as, "Okay, we're going to put a stage on a beach and then just party, and have live music." This big... this came like the new trend in the Faroe Islands that we're going to have festivals everywhere. And there are, like there are literally festivals everywhere. Usually every two... every weekend now these days, so... um... let's see about this.

I really like the way that there's a lot of people wearing Faroese clothes in it. Because there was this time in Denmark in the 70's where everybody was wearing woolen shirts. And they called it Icelandic shirts, but you could tell from the pattern that they were actually Faroese shirts. There are Faroese stuff in there but they usually don't recognize it as being Faroese. So if you ever hear a Danish person talk about islændinge trøjer, I'm pretty sure it's Faroese.

Have you seen The Killing, the Danish show? Everyone thought she was wearing an Icelandic sweater, but it is a Faroese sweater. It is a Faroese sweater, yeah. And there was even a controversy about this one... it's a Faroese company that made this sweater. But there was a Danish store that sold this sweater and said that it was the sweater from the show and there was a lawsuit about it in Denmark. The Faroes woman who made the sweater for the show sued the other one for, well, not because of the pattern, because the patterns are the public domain, anyway, but for wrongful merchandising or something like that. They are selling their shirts as being the ones in the show, when it was the Faroes one that was in the show.

And then in Denmark, that became synonymous with the 70's, so for them, if they saw these shirts they might seem a little retro, or even kitsch. Anyway, so... kind of in the Faroes it became this stereotype that people wearing woolen sweaters had to come from the villages, so they were maybe kind of hick, or, you know, rural...

Bygdasligur.

Bygdasligur, yeah exactly. It's funny that you know that word.

I live in Gøta!

Yeah, you live in Gøta, yeah, so you know what it is. So this... in the back of the Faroese mind, it might be still that stereotype lives, but well... when you are out and about, and it's three o'clock in the morning even though it's light outside, and it's cold, then the Faroese sweater is the best thing you can wear.

But yeah, I mean this is really what the summers are about now. You go to maybe Gøta and you stay on the beach and you listen to nice music, or... depends on what genre you like, of course. G! Festival, that is... it's kind of alternative rock, maybe, with all this... I call it weird stuff, but some people really love it, some of them. But that's what G! is all about. And then you have Summarfestivalurin, which is more like...

Mainstream?

Not really. It's more like... a very... mean way to say it is like the has-beens. Because it's not really the most up-to-date bands they have, or the most contemporary bands they have, they have the ones that were well-known maybe ten years ago, or maybe twenty years ago some of them.

Well, G! Festival is getting Sister Sledge, which is like from the 70's or something.

Yeah, they are getting those, but... Summarfestival this year is having Twisted Sister. And a few years ago, they had The Scorpions. So... they usually call Summarfestival the more 'folky' one, because it has more of a wider appeal maybe than G! has. But, well, a festival is a festival, and people will come to it no matter what. So, if it's G! Festival, which has alternative music, or Summarfestival which has more, maybe, music for a bit... bit older audience, people will go anyway. So it doesn't really matter.

And Voxbotn?

Voxbotn is more maybe the here and now, the modern music. And of course it's in Tórshavn, so that... Tórshavn had to have its own as well. So... Voxbotn I think was... there's going to be Tórsfest in a few weeks, and I think Tórsfest is what used to be called Ólavsøkkakonsertin. There was a concert before Ólavsøka, on the 27th. This year it's on the 26th, because the 27th is a Sunday, so... I think with Tórsfest, they're trying to modernize Ólavsøkkakonsertin, but Voxbotn is a way to modernize even more. So now they have two of them. So we will see what happens with Tórsfest.

So yeah, if you want to have a good time, then you will go to one of these festivals, definitely. And G! Festival is kind of like Roskilde, okay, Roskilde is a whole week, and G! Festival is usually three days, so, it's one of those big, big things.

And... what do we have here... a Faroese Common Property Regime. It's a picture by... well, it's an Irish name, so I'm not really sure how it's pronounced. And what do we

see? We see a couple of boats that are driving a school of pilot whales. Well, where have we seen this before? I'm not really sure what to make of this picture, but at least the whales are not killed yet, so the ocean is kind of... is not blood-soaked, at least. Let me see if I can date this picture... you can see they're building the new... the new building at... What's so funny?

Haha, no, it's just that this has been the funniest thing to me about doing this in the Faroe Islands. If you would do this in America, people would say, "Oh, it seems to be a church," but when you do this in the Faroe Islands, people are like, "Oh look, a person... do I know that person? When was this taken? Or exactly where is this?"

Haha, yeah. Well, I can date this picture based on... based on two things. First of all, there is an oil silo, or an oil canni-, an oil cylinder, container or whatever. It says Statoil. We haven't had Statoil in the Faroe Islands for at least five years. So that's at least 2009. They're building a new building at Landsjúkrahúsið which has been open for at least ten years. So this is probably early 2000's, late 1990's. And... the cars are probably late 1990's as well. So. Anyway...

Well, first of all its kind of positive that there's no blood in the ocean maybe. But it says "Faroese Common Property Regime." It's probably one of these pictures that is not really anti-whaling, but not really pro-whaling, but kind of... wanting to document how whaling really is. Which is... okay, some people kill a whale, but everyone gets something, you know? So that's maybe what this picture is supposed to be showing.

Yeah, it's from a book about whaling that I think is pretty objective. That's the cover of the book.

Oh, okay. Well. But it's still the last few minutes of the life of the whale. So people who don't like killing at all won't like it anyways. But yeah... this is one of those things that you don't really hear about that much, because you... if you don't know anything about Faroese whaling you will maybe automatically think that it's only the ones that participate that get all the catch, like its fishing for instance, but no, its a completely different system altogether, so... but people don't know that. What people see in this... I don't know. I guess it's the same divide as everything else with whaling. You see kind of what you want to see, I guess. But yeah, it's a nice picture anyway. And funny that I can date it only because of Statoil, so...

Okay, then we have a picture of Duvugarður, which is... Saksun. This is maybe... well, if people don't know it, and they've seen the movie Barbara, then they've seen the church, and they've seen Duvugarður, because it was used for Sandavágur I think, because the movie was set mostly in Sandavágur I think, yeah, Sandavágur, that's where the priest still lives today, for Vágur.

I guess this is what people usually see when they see something from the Faroes, that it is these old buildings, and the old churches, and, well, the mountainous area around it, so this is kind of like the normal tourist picture I guess. And it's kind of cozy I guess, you see a small church, you see the old houses, so this is what kind of draws people to see, this is what they want to see when they come here, I guess. So this is a good picture, actually. Very nice.

The cover is Eivør Pálsdóttir in a Faroese boat, in Tjørnuvík, which you can see, because, well, it's so obvious. Umm.... yeah, I don't really know what there is to say. I mean there's a beautiful woman in a boat, and why wouldn't you want to come here, then? Especially if you're male. So... We could talk a lot about Eivør Pálsdóttir, but we are here to watch pictures, not really talk about her, so I'll save that for another time.

Um, the second picture is Guðrun og Guðrun, which is, the picture is taken in

Gásadalur, which everyone knows from the waterfall. Um, well... the thing about Guðrun og Guðrun is that they are both wearing Faroese sweaters, which is a very Faroese thing, and this one is very similar to the one used in *The Killing*, but I don't think the pattern is the same. My mother would know because she knits. But, well.

But also, I mean, they are trying to lure people using the Faroese landscape and the Faroese culture, so I think in pictures like these... this one, and also the one with Eivør Pálsdóttir, is really, okay, like, this is what you should use. And also they are using the colors very well. I mean there is the blue sky, and the blue ocean... very blue ocean even. And the green hills. So, yeah. And of course there's pictures of sheep and horses everywhere.

And... then we have Sunnleif Rasmussen, which is the only one who has written operas. Maybe not anymore, but he was the first person to write an opera. What I like about this picture, which was taken in Mykines, you can see that this is definitely Mykines... is that it's one of my favorite hobbies, which is ornithology, because he is using birds, and bird music, and it's juxtaposed with the Faroese musician, so, why not. Nature-music, I guess, you could call this. The thing is that you have the puffin, which is the most numerous bird in the Faroes, and also... it's also used quite a lot in merchandising. Not just in the Faroes but also in Norway they also use the puffin a lot. But I mean it's kind of cute, it's not called Sea Parrot for no reason, I guess.

But then you also have the gannett, which is endemic, or at least, in the Faroes it's found in just one place, so... endemic, that would mean it was a local subspecies or something, which it is not, I guess, so... and then there's the oystercatcher which is the natural bird, and this is a... Faroese goose. Which is interesting because this is the domesticated goose, and it has been domesticated for 1,200 years, so it is one of the oldest European domesticated species. Yeah, it is. That's really fun actually.

So for pages... 6 and 7... "An Exploratory Journey through the Scandinavian Heritage," well it's like, it uses Faroese architecture, and especially housing architecture... and then you have the houses with the grass roofs. Which even Bill Clinton liked a lot, so... there's this... he's often quoted as when Hans Blich were in the Faroes, in I think it was 2008, I think, or 2009, he was talking about the grass roofs. So everyone is like, "Oh, Bill Clinton liked the grass roofs!" so that was kind of cool.

I mean this is um, this is just the, about the Faroes architecture, you have old ones, new ones, then you have the Nordic house from a very interesting angle, which is now that I think about it, when you see it from up top, you probably won't see it, because it's kind of hidden in the landscape. But the thing about the Nordic house is that it's in the Faroes, but everything about it is non-Faroese. The glass is Swedish, I think the rock is Icelandic... it's kind of interesting. I remember when it turned 25 there was this big show in Norðurlandahúsið about it and they were discussing where all the bits and pieces from it came from, so it was really interesting. Made with Swedish glass and Norwegian wood, something like that. Norwegian Wood, yeah. That was not intentional, sorry!

Yeah, but then you also have like the houses from the 1960's, and then the "row houses," I'm not really sure what you would call this. Row houses is what we would say in Faroese. And they recalled Bill Clinton on this page, so. But you also have the Faroese hospitality, or Faroese guest... hospitality-thingy, which is that the man has come to cut the grass on your roof, and you give him a cup of tea in return, so yeah, that's really nice.

Yeah, I love this picture. I've seen it so often, but... yeah, I've seen it, I think they've used it on their website once or something. But it looks like they are photoshopped into the picture, but I don't think they are, I think this is actually a real picture, but no, I can't really

say, so. Anyway, this is the... this is Heri Joensen and Terji Skibenæs of Týr, with the now former drummer, Kári Streymoy, on it. Gunnar is missing from the picture for some reason. But yeah, they are... they are being super macho-Faroese in this picture, hahaha. They're on the sloop called Norðlýsið, and they are catching fish. With woolen sweaters, and of course they are wearing these, what are they called, rubber-slash-plastic coveralls, yeah. This is what the Faroese male stereotype really is, so, yeah...

But it sounds like, it looks like these three guys are really out having a blast, catching fish. This is probably for people who go fishing, fishing tourism could benefit from this, I guess. They have caught a steinbítur (wolfish) not sure what it's called in English. At least I think that's what it is. Anyway this is, this is a fun picture. Because usually when you think about metal groups, they are all these dark, Emo types... but this is like the complete opposite. Three guys who are having fun catching fish... yeah, it's really funny.

On the other hand, this picture is really interesting because now we get Emo, but they're emo women that are surrounded by sheep. And again they are in Gásadalur. Well Emo is maybe too much said, but it looks like that at least, or Goth I guess you could call it. Barbara í Gongini avant-garde garments. Well, maybe that's true, but I don't really know Barbara í Gongini so I can't really say.

She's kissed by fire as well. Maybe that's positive in some cases, but red hair in the Faroes usually is seen... well, usually, I mean, it... sometimes it's seen as like a negative thing. It's just that, I don't know... red-haired people are, haha, they are full of – they are very temper people... and they... yeah. I don't know, I mean my mother has red hair and my grandmother had red hair and they were always talking about it. And when people are even half negative, or not even intentionally negative but just talking about having red hair my mother gets offended by it, so. Actually if my great grandmother also had red hair, and red hair was like generations back, then... then maybe one of my maternal great-something-a lot mothers was Celtic.

That's normal here, right?

Yeah, it is. You know the story about how the Faroes were colonized? Norwegians came, made a stop in the Irish sea, stole a woman and settled in the Faroes. Haha. That's the stereotype, but yeah... it's pretty... it's ummm... it's kind of an accepted theory in the Faroes that the colonists were not Norwegians per se, but they were Norwegian gael who lived around the Irish sea who came from the Irish sea and settled in the Faroes. Because we have place names that suggest... but we also have place names that suggest immigration from Norway proper. So it's probably a mix of both. So that's interesting.

Anyway, and I don't know much about Barbara í Gongini, but this looks really, you know, I mean leather and these big gothic dresses... yeah, it's an interesting, it's interesting...

Um, yeah. Faroese football. Yeah, this is like the really fun, from a fun era when we had Brian Kerr as our coach, our team coach, which really sucked that he didn't continue for like two more years because we showed real promise when he was coach. Also interesting in this photo is that we have Gunnar Nilsen who is the only Faroese player who ever played in the Premier League. And that only happened because he was the third goalkeeper, and the second one was already injured, and the first one became injured in the match, so he got like one half of the match. So... still. He is credited for one, he is the first one to. This is really, the national team is one of the things that we really... I mean we lose all the time, but we are really...

I'm kind of impressed that you even have a FIFA team to be honest.

Why? I mean the United Kingdom has four teams in it. And all UK overseas territories have membership in FIFA.

But I've heard that FIFA has gotten a lot more strict now and if the Faroe Islands tried to join today they would have a hard time.

I don't know. But if you have Montserrat as a team, then well... or you have British Virgin Islands or US Virgin Islands as teams, then, I don't know. And you have American Samoa... So yeah, they are nominally part of the United States. Puerto Rico has a team as well, and they are also nominally part of the United States. And Guam, and Northern Mariana Islands, and all of these things.

Okay, I stand corrected.

I read, also that some unincorporated areas.... anyway, this is a fun picture of downtown Tórshavn, and you have Faroese footballers, and you know they are signing autographs and not charging for it, which is fun.

And then you have the more folksy thing, you have the chain-dance. This is the last two-page spread, in the thing... and you have Teitur Lassen. And what the chain-dance really is, it was a European dance that because of our remote location we were able to preserve because it was banned in the rest of Europe because, I don't really know why...

They thought it was pagan, I heard.

Yeah, probably. Well, if you read most of the things we sing for it, that would make sense actually. But it just goes to show that in the Faroes we tend to take old traditional Faroese and mix it into our music. I mean Týr began... or became famous because of taking Kvæði and singing it and... Eivør Pálsdóttir has some of it, although a lot of her stuff is ethnic, but not necessarily ethnic Faroese, so. I mean some of these chants that she does... I'm not really sure if they are Faroese. Haha, so. But it's interesting nevertheless. And if it makes her famous, then cool for us, yay.

Yeah. That's, um. And then there are, uh, key facts, which are always interesting. Those were the pictures.

Johanna Á Tjaldráfløtti, 51 years old, from Klaksvík

Interview conducted in Faroese

Media Interview:

So what have you heard about the Faroe Islanders from foreigners and from foreign media?

The typical things I have heard about the Faroes are... one comes from other countries to see our nature... it's mostly that. And also the stuff from sea shepherd. It's that which has been the focus in the most recent years. What else... We don't really see so much foreign media.

And what do Danish people for example say about the Faroes?

They know very little about the Faroes. They don't know especially much. And I don't think the Danes are very interested in the Faroe Islands. I don't think so.

Even though the Faroes are part of Denmark?

Even though we belong to Denmark? No, that's the big difference with Greenland. They are more interested in that. Danes are really not very interested in the Faroe Islands.

How do you think the Faroe Islands are depicted in foreign media?

Do you mean generally, or only as a travel destination, or?

Generally, basically anything you have heard.

Of course, one thinks about fish, herring and mackerel, that topic got a lot of attention. So that's probably mostly negative. In Norway they talk a little bit about the Faroes. In recent years there has been more of an effort to depict the Faroe Islands as a travel destination. Otherwise... there has been more and more research in the Faroe Islands. We are getting more and more professors who perhaps are also helping to shed light on the Faroe Islands. For example, there was just a new report that came out, which Faroese people have made... so there is certainly a lot, perhaps a lot more than we know about, when one lives here in the Faroe Islands, hah, one doesn't see so much foreign media about the islands. But on a daily basis, I don't believe the Faroe Islands has such a big place in the international media. I don't think so.

So what elements of Faroese culture and modern life do you think are ignored?

What I maybe forgot to say earlier when we were talking about it, culture and art are perhaps also... for example, there are a few artists who are really well known and get place in international media. For example, Tróndur Patturson, he is an artist who is most famous for his work with glass in the nordic countries. Yes, he is very well known and has participated in big exhibitions also in New York, what was it, in the Smithsonian in Washington D.C.? So, he gets a lot of coverage. But what kind of art topics are not... I don't really know. Perhaps authors? No. I don't know. I don't really know. Then you get into the topic of what art is, about the definition of art.

But also about culture and modern life.... for example, yes, perhaps they don't talk so much about towns and more about small islands, or something like that?

Perhaps it is often that, in depicting the Faroe Islands, the media often goes back in time. For example, there are the programs about the tunnel to Gásadalur, and the old Faroese – so birds, and sheep, and Faroese dance, and... and one forgets perhaps forgets to depict the Faroe Islands as they are right now. What are the young people doing? What do they do in the town? And what is it like on the weekends? Maybe in Klaksvík or in Tórshavn? Or what is the daily life like in a normal family? It is maybe those parts which aren't so well depicted.

I have read a little bit from something in Denmark that says "In Klaksvík, a tiny hamlet" or an extremely small village.... while Klaksvík is second...

The second biggest. But it is often that the picture which gets out about the Faroes, is sheep and birds and fish, and Faroese dance and sort of just the old stuff, meanwhile many, or even most of the young people are just like those who live in Denmark or Reykjavík, they do the same things, listen to the same music, and often that part doesn't really come through in the media I think.

Faroese people are very creative. There are very many artists in the Faroe Islands. And of course a little part of what comes out of the country, what is perhaps the most well established, when one thinks about painting, so we have Edvard Fugløy, he is from Klaksvík, he is incredibly skilful and has been to a lot of exhibitions, and so we have other painters also... Film is an area which is new in the Faroe Islands and it is becoming to emerge a little bit perhaps... theater, there's not a lot of talk about that I think, although there is a lot of theater in the Faroe Islands.

But there are many very skillful... those who knit, for example Guðrun og Guðrun, that's a company that has become very well known. And so we have another very skillful designer, who is called Barbara í Gongini, and she is very international, she does a lot of international work among the greatest designers. She is very well known, do you know that name, Barbara í Gongini?

No, that one is new to me.

Yes, she is, she is mega-well known. She is in London, New York, and Japan, and so on. She is, she has, she has a workshop in Copenhagen but she sells a lot more outside than she sells within Denmark. There is not a week where she is not in some sort of international newspaper. So she has a wide reach. She is a big international name.

And there are many, many more who also dare to use that as their life-bread. So many different ones who study handcrafts and art.

What do you wish more people knew or understood about the Faroe Islands?

Perhaps that the description that often comes out that we are, how should I say it, that we are scarce and just live of fish and sheep and perhaps Faroese dance, and perhaps that one can better portray how we really are, that we are also modern people.

What do you think of tourism in the Faroe Islands and what do you think brings tourists here?

What brings tourists here, that is that our country is unique. People who come here are not coming after sun and summer. Many come to experience the unspoiled nature, the birds, and the mountains... all the beautiful things we have.

And that... everything here has a story. And also when one thinks about food... When you get a meal, something on the table has a story. Like for example, if you get rhubarb jam, so can we say that the rhubarbs have grown outside and this is homemade rhubarb jam. Hah? And if you get skerpikjøt, so we can say where the sheep has grazed, and that one has raised it themselves... something like that, that's how it is at our house, for example, hah? That the meat that we have we have because my mother comes from a little village, and her father was an important farmer, and so she inherits the sheep, and so it is my husband, who goes up in the mountains, and shears the sheep, and slaughters them. So it has a special story, and perhaps when we eat fish, so it could be we ourselves who go out and fish for them. So that is very charming for tourists. It is the story one can sell. It makes it more interesting.

That's what a lot of travelers want. There is a story behind so many things, especially when it comes to food.

What do you think possible tourists ought to know about the Faroe Islands?

Well, first and foremost, of course, about the weather. And, I don't know exactly, what they should know about the Faroe Islands. That's a really broad question, but... What is one used to knowing when one goes to a foreign country? Of course, how one can get around, that there are roads and how one can move, and lodging possibilities, and what kind of language people speak, and... of course what one should look at, and about various places that one should look for. And what kind of possibilities there are for excursions and organized tours.

How do you think foreign perceptions of the Faroe Islands have changed in the past and how are they changing now?

I think that we are getting more tourists here now, compared to before, and and I think people come because they think it's exciting, that it's unique, that you get something else. And we have perhaps gotten used to apologizing, whenever we meet foreigners, to saying "Oh, it is so cold today," or "It is raining," and they say, "We haven't come here for the sun. We have come here to experience... the full diversity of weather that you can have in one day."

Perhaps people are also getting better at showing a more modern picture of the Faroe Islands, compared to before where it was only the old fashioned stuff, that one only sold the old skin-shoes and Faroese sweaters and sheep and so on, hah? Perhaps people have been more successful at depicting the Faroe Islands as they really are.

Media Photo Elicitation:

If you look at all of these pictures here, so they are all showing old fashioned stuff. This is a museum picture or something. No one lives in this house, this is at Saksun, it is an unbelievably great village. Have you been in Saksun? It is unbelievably beautiful. It is beautiful to look at, but it is not an inhabited village. But it's a natural pearl, and these photos... depict the Faroe Islands as an exciting travel destination, but perhaps they don't really show how people have it here, how they live and so on, they don't really do that. This is also sort of a natural picture, showing some old fashioned stuff...

And so is there the grindadráp. This is... this is a part of our culture. The Grind. Yeah. Um...

This here is another nature picture. This here is one that shows a little bit more about the young people, that one can also come to the Faroe Islands and listen to music, there are many good musicians, this shows G!, G! has also been a big part of the depiction of the

Faroe Islands, but in another way, perhaps for another target audience.

This is from the tourism department. This here is Barbara í Gongini. That's her, yes. This is a really great photo, I think, because it sets together the old and the new. She is really creative in making new fashions, and here in this old village, where you use Saksun as a backdrop. And it is actually used in many large publications, Saksun, as a backdrop.

Should I say what I think about this one here? Here you use well known people to brand the Faroe Islands. Eivør Pálsdóttir is really famous. Almost worldwide. So they use her to sell the Faroe Islands as a nature-beautiful island where there is Risin and Kelligin back here, there's the Faroese boat.

Here is Guðrun and Guðrun. They are also very well known. And this here is, what is it called?

Gásadalur.

Gásadalur. Yes. A really exotic village. You look out to the see. And it's peaceful. No rush.

And this is Sunleif. Another very well known musician. And this here, he is, he's a composer.

Do you think this is a real photograph? Where is he standing?

Whether this is a real photograph? This is Mykines. But it doesn't look exactly that today. But it looks like they just put him... like he isn't really standing there. It is a composite image. That it is. But before it could have looked like this, a few years ago. But today there are not so many puffins. Yeah. But it could be... actually... almost... look this way twenty years ago.

Husband: Where?

Mykines. That this is a composite image. There are so very few puffins left.

Yes, it's not allowed to eat puffins now, right?

Not to kill them, no. Yes. You can still catch puffins. No, it was forbidden. When? Only for a few years. It has been such a little time. But a few years ago... But you can see so many puffins, you're just not allowed to kill them.

Husband: There were thousands, thousands, thousands.

It can good be, yes it can good be that you can sit there and see so many, there where the puffins are. Are you going to Mykines?

I want to go.

Out on the islet, huh?

Husband: Or out on Trøllanes.

Or out on Trøllanes, yeah. It will be soon.

I like Trøllanes, but I haven't seen puffins there.

Husband: No, puffins are only here in the summer. That is when the puffins are here in their colonies.

Rannvá Kunoy, she is also a famous artist.

It is only famous people.

Yes, it is almost famous people. And here is also Týr, they are also famous. But, but, that which you see that is repeating everywhere, I don't know, the Faroese sweaters, sweater, old house, boats, and sheep, huh? And this here is perhaps, these are the football players. "The town's young pulse beats in the old streets"... these pictures can good be a bit bigger, I think. (looking at the small images in the pamphlet) I don't know why this one is taking up so much room. Maybe it seems a bit odd to go on board a boat to play football. What I think is that they should have made these other pictures bigger.

And... again with the Faroese dance, here. But these pictures here, which also show the Faroe Islands get only a little bit of room, I think. All these people are from Klaksvík.

Yeah, do you know them?

Yes, I know them all. And this is Teitur, he is also really famous. But of course foreigners come namely to the Faroe Islands to look and listen to them. Of course they come to look at the nature. As tourists. And of course if one should move to another country, it's of course perhaps other places that would be interesting.

But I would perhaps want to see a little bit more food. Huh? What can we eat, how is it... yes, I don't know.

So now this one is from the internet, have you seen this documentary from Denmark, Kvindeflugt fra Færøerne. Have you seen this before?

Yes, I've seen it before.

What did you think of it?

It is a strange picture of the Faroe Islands, I think.

How so?

I don't really remember all of the details, but once again here you, people see sheep, and slaughtering, and Thai women, and I don't know. It's a strange picture, I think. Of the Faroe Islands. I don't remember the details, but it is... if one takes, percent-wise of the Faroe Islands, there aren't many men who slaughter sheep and work with them in the mountains. No, there aren't that many, it's not a majority of the men.

They don't speak with many women in this documentary.

No, no they speak with –

Only with one woman, who –

Lives in Denmark. She says that there is no place for her in the Faroe Islands. Isn't that what she says?

Yes, that there are no cafes or concerts, or...

Yes, that is the unbelievable transformation that we have had recently. Like in Tórshavn, there are many more cafes to go to, and recently many more have been created in Klaksvík as well. I don't think this is an accurate picture of the Faroe Islands. And also, as you say, they speak with very few women. They speak with men. Huh? But I don't really remember the details.

Shall we watch the first minute of the documentary?

Sure, we can do that.

Ugh, it really matches the headline.

What do you think?

One sees here a woman, that is perhaps the unfortunate thing, it is that women who are of the fertile age, do you understand that word?

No. What does it mean?

Women who are in the age of fertility, you understand?

Oh, yes.

So women who shall have kids, huh? Yeah. Most women go to Denmark for higher education. And it seems that right now there are more women who pursue higher education than men. And... they go out when they are 20 perhaps and they are away for a long time. And, but, many do come back home. But it is... that so many go, that there are problematically many, I don't know, I don't think so. I don't think so.

But yeah, there are many, Thai and Filipino women who come here. That's just fine. That doesn't do any harm.

But what's interesting for me, is what this documentary says about the Faroe Islands. Not just with the words, but also with...

With the pictures?

Yes, with the pictures and the music. I don't know. This isn't what I see in the Faroe Islands.

No, me neither. No. And once again here there are sheep, and fish, and it doesn't show the daily life of ordinary people. You get the wrong picture of how we live. And this is often the signal that is sent out. And this is perhaps why people in the nordic countries have a different understanding of us. I don't think that we are, like, at the same degree as others. Do you understand what I mean?

We are not very good at showing the Faroe Islands. I don't think so. But of course it depends on what you want to show. Huh? If you want to show the Faroe Islands as a travel destination, for tourists, then these pictures are great. Because they are the pictures that are great and unique and undisturbed nature.

But this documentary is not for the travel industry.

But this is not for the travel industry.

This is news.

This is the news.

And this. Well, you've certainly seen this before. So what do you think? This is on Facebook. Many of my friends have only seen this about the Faroe Islands.

Yes, but this has a lot to do with how distanced we have become from what we eat. Nowadays we eat food and we don't know where it comes from. We don't know the origin, we know well enough that beef comes from a cow but the whole process where the cow is slaughtered and packed, we don't know that process. We just know that there is a cow there, and then there is beef here. Nowadays we are so distanced from the food that we eat, from the process, and so it seems really dreadful, and I think if people really understood what was going on... well, in my opinion its completely fine.

It says here for example that you don't eat the Grind.

I've read that before. No, that's not true.

It's written, "Why? A celebration to show that they are adults and mature. WTF"

Yeah. Haha. Who wrote this? Is this Facebook or what?

Yes.

Yes. This is the wrong information once again. It's not true. But of course this is a really scary looking picture. But if you think about how it takes only a few seconds for the whale to die, it is humane, you can say, in comparison to... to other ways that pigs or cows are raised, just to be a steak.

Ashlyn also said that she didn't like to take the cow and process it...

And that's why I said to Ashlyn that it was a good idea for her to get, because so many many people have never seen how it happens. And that is the difference with us. We are used to... we take a fish, and we cut off the head and we turn it into frikadeller (fish balls). Since we are really little we are used to looking at how one slaughters a sheep. So we are not distanced from it. We are still hunters (and fishers). In comparison to a really big percentage of the people in the world, who don't recognize that anymore. Out of sight, out of mind. They don't understand, they don't understand us. They don't understand that part. And one has to partake in order to understand it, I think. People who are, these big city people, they don't have a relationship with the process. Not the same relationship we have, I think.

Well thank you very much for talking with me.

When I mentioned your name, Ashlyn. She asked what I thought about these pictures. I said I think it was good for you to see the huge, how do you say it, body?

Body.

The huge cow body. So you could experience... City, city people. They only see a beef. They are not, um, a part of the process. Hmm? And I think that that's also why so many

people are against the whale-hunting. Because they guess, they just eat the meat and the fish and the chicken and everything, but they never see them slaughtered.

Ashlyn: They just see like a bunch of blood and a bunch of people being like, torturing them. That's what they see.

Yeah, yeah. But it's not torture.

Ashlyn: No. It's just normal.

Mildrið Eivindsdóttir, 54 years old, from Norðragøta

Interview conducted in Faroese

Media Interview:

So what have you heard about the Faroe Islanders from foreigners and from foreign media?

I don't think that... well, many foreigners... that what they write about the Faroes in foreign countries is often not so great, it is maybe because the ones who are writing often don't know so much about the Faroe Islands.

What do you mean?

Maybe they haven't spent much time here or talked to too many people. They haven't really set themselves into the Faroese society.

And how can you see that?

You notice it when you watch or listen to or read the articles.

Do you have an example?

No, I can't really say concretely.

How do you think the Faroe Islands are depicted in foreign media?

Not well enough.

What do you mean?

We have so much to offer, but there are so many that don't know anything about the Faroe Islands. The Danes... we belong to Denmark, but there are many Danish people that don't know anything about the Faroe Islands. If you try to pay down in Denmark with Faroese money, they don't know that it's the same currency as the Danish crown. It isn't right.

So also in Denmark there are many people...

Who don't know anything about the Faroe Islands. Yes. But of course it has changed a little bit, because the society has gotten tighter now that there is internet and so on. But yeah, I think there are many in Denmark who don't know anything about it.

Do you have any examples of stereotypes you have heard about the Faroe Islands?

Yeah. I have sometimes heard before, not now, that Faroese people live in caves.

When was that?

A long time... it was probably many years ago now. But it is really weird for us, because we actually have better accommodations than people in many other countries. Almost all Faroese live in their own houses. So... it's pretty weird to hear that that's the impression.

Is there something you hear nowadays?

Hmmm. Well, you know of course well how it is with Grindadráp. It is not really what it's broadcast to be, it's not correct.

How so?

What you hear when people talk about the Faroe Islands and the Grindadráp, what is broadcast is not the truth. It's not done in that way that the media describes.

What's different?

It's not so brutal as they make it out to be. They don't look at the good that it gives us... that it's traditional and that all our lives, since we were children, we have eaten grind and experienced the feeling of a grindabóð – oh! And we would all go running out of school and everyone would get out of school and work and it is something really special, huh, to experience a grind, and that's something we have grown up with. And what they say about the grind is not really true. Of course it is not as crucial today as it was before, but it... it has always been here... and it is not the truth, what most of them are writing about it.

What part of the Faroese culture and modern life do you think are ignored in the foreign media?

Well the tourism industry usually focuses on nature. I don't know if they talk so much about the people themselves. About how... how one is and so on... I don't know if that comes out very much in the media. Faroese people are really friendly and... perhaps... I don't know. I can't really answer.

What do you wish more people knew or understood about the Faroe Islands?

That this is a good place to be. That this is a paradise for children, a wonderful place to grow up, because they can do everything. *Birds chirping and sheep baaing in the distance.* And we are all kind to one another because we are so close... ok... it can also be a nuisance, it can be positive or negative. But because we live so closely, we know each other so well, and it gives us something positive. And one can't really understand that unless they spend a bit more time here living among us. It is hard for a journalist to come here and write about the Faroe Islands, if they are only here for two days. And I think it happens often that one meets some people, and it happens quickly, when one lives among the locals, and then you can see how the Faroese are as people. And I think that that is very important to get out, for foreigners to hear about the Faroe Islands that the people themselves are good and friendly and, of course, there's also the nature... but that's being represented, huh? Always. I don't know what else I can say.

What do you think of tourism in the Faroe Islands and what do you think brings tourists here?

I think that tourism has changed a lot in the last years. More people are coming here, but we could absolutely certainly do it better. We could manage it better. It doesn't work well enough in the Faroes with, for example, the busses, the timetables... the bus is supposed to come at five, and it might come ten minutes before five, or ten minutes after five... so, it's not precise enough. We have a lot to learn, which we can do better, or which we can do differently.

The ones that come here come most of all to see our nature. And that is different. We don't have such good weather, that's not why they come. They come to see the remarkable in the

nature here, they don't come after warmth. That's what I think they usually come for. And also the birds... the sheep... and so on. And there are also some who are here because they are interested in trying the Faroese food, the Faroese culture, the Faroese dance... so there is an audience which is a little bit different, which also chooses that... but I believe that in general it is the nature which brings them.

What do you think possible tourists ought to know about the Faroe Islands?

What shall I answer to that? What they should know... They should know that we don't live in holes! But I reckon that most people know that nowadays. I wish they could know more about, for example, the grindadráp, what it is... and that we don't *only*... one hears often about the Faroes that we live *only* on the fishing industry. Well, we do, but we also have other things beside the fishing industry which we live of. And I don't think that's often represented in the media, one always hears about the fishing industry.

How do you think foreign perceptions of the Faroe Islands have changed in the past and how are they changing now?

Well, the Danes... once in awhile we get money from Denmark in order to survive, because we are after all under Denmark. So, it has often been so that, a part of the Danish people think badly about... that "okay, you guys get money from us." But I believe that most of all, for the most part, it's so that people don't think about it at all.

And Faroese people have always gone abroad to study, for example, and I think that it is positive for the Danish people that many Faroese come down there to study. And that is... natural. Because it's always been that way. Back in the day, for example, a long time ago, people used to go down to study everything. You couldn't get any education at all in the Faroe Islands. It was almost always Denmark that people went to. So, I reckon, quite a few Danes know that the Faroese come there and have a positive opinion about that.

And I believe also that now that they... now that everything is available, now most of them know more about what's happening in the Faroe Islands than they did before. They are more able to follow developments in the Faroe Islands than they did back in the day.

Media Photo Elicitation:

Shall I answer what I think for example about this picture?

Yes... and what it says about the Faroe Islands. If it were for example the only thing you had seen...

Yes. It says more that this is something... fantastic. Both... intense, intense we would say... raw... and beautiful. And the colors...

This here is Tinganes. And... here you see together the old harbor, and it shows that it is cozy, the old... and you also see the new.

Here is a man who is going out to catch puffins. And... it shows the possibilities of what one can do and see in the Faroe Islands. And that... what Faroese people in the past had to do, that they dared to put their lives in danger in order to get food. So... if one sees, if a tourist sees only this picture, and doesn't know anything else, they won't know what it is. But if one explains a little bit, they will understand why he is on the cliffs... and that is to get himself

some food. And that's what one had to do in the past. It was the only way... you had to either go out on the cliffs, or out on the boat, or get sheep, or get grind (pilot whale). That's what this here shows. That you shall go up here in order to get... you can't just open the freezer and buy...

Here are the sheep. A snowy picture... here is also beautiful nature and, this shows wintertime in the Faroes. Which can also be very hard, but this picture doesn't show that. It can be... really severe weather which is hard for us to come through, but it is very seldom that it is like that. And the sheep, that is also something we live of. So it shows life in the Faroes.

Here again. The grindadráp. This is... it looks gruesome, but not for me, because I have been used to this since I was so little. We have always seen this, so it looks natural for me. It is something we do. Everyone is excited, when there is a grind. And... we don't do it for fun, but we kill grind in order to get food which we really like, and we use all the food, all, all the whale that there is. All Faroe Islanders are happy about it. Or almost all. When we get to get grind. But it could look gruesome if one sees this picture and has never heard of the grindadráp before and only says, "oh, what are they doing here?"

This picture comes from a forward sent out on Facebook, which has more photos and says that most of the people participating in the grind are young teenagers who are celebrating that they are adults now. And so on. And that the pilot whales are nearly extinct.

That's not true.

So what do you think when you see such things on the internet, on Facebook and so on?

So what do I think of the pictures, or?

About everything...

Everything that's shown about the grind? I don't think so much about it because I have my opinion about the grind. So, I know what the truth is. And therefore... I don't think so much about what's written. But... it's frustrating when they say things that aren't true. And it is... back in the day it was so that fathers brought their sons with them when they killed grind in order to teach them to kill the grind. But it wasn't for fun, it wasn't a celebration.

And now I have something that comes from a Danish documentary about women in the Faroe Islands. And we could watch the first minute... and you can say what you think about it.

I think that it is a little bit difficult, because Faroese women leave to study and many come back home again, but the only group that has it badly in the Faroe Islands, that's young single mothers, who get more possibilities abroad to live, they don't have it easy in the Faroes economically. I don't believe that the Faroese woman is just fleeing... no, I don't believe that. And I don't think it's going to be like that going forward. It's more so that they go abroad to study, they come back home afterward, and of course there are always some that find themselves a partner abroad. So I... I... no, I don't really think it's like one says here.

In addition to the words, can you also think a little bit about the pictures and everything else in the video and how it shows the Faroe Islands? Does it look for example like your life, what you see here?

No... Not exactly what this is showing here, I don't have sheep. But I know some people

with sheep. But I can easily set myself into this as well. The pictures show that this farmer here, he is excited because he is about to slaughter some of his sheep. And that is exciting for his family, because now they are going to get meat and everything that we have been looking forward to. And they go really high up, and “How much do the sheep weigh now?” huh? and “I am good at taking care of these sheep.” So, so one also saw pictures of fish and that is also the daily life for many in the Faroe Islands, who work, that they work in fish.

And that foreign woman that he has brought here, as a solution that we are getting women in to the Faroe Islands. And that is also going to be. Many more women have come to the Faroes in the last few years than came before. There have always been foreign women coming to the Faroes, but now there are more, largely because it is easier with the internet and everything... to... perhaps there would be even more old bachelors in the Faroes if there weren't that possibility, haha.

I don't really remember what other pictures there were in the video.

I don't know if you've seen the rest of the documentary. They talk to two women. The Thai woman and one woman who is living in Denmark and says she doesn't like the Faroes because there are no cafes or anything. And we can watch the beginning again.

Yes. That there... he is getting ready, the knife there, it will be used to... one sees also old sayings, that you have heard I think, “A knifeless man is lifeless,” huh? That is because, also because... you know why. For sheep, for whales, everything, you should have a knife... also if you go after birds, after fulmar, everything, you should have a knife for everything. Even if you are rod fishing from the shore, you should have one with you. So that's where the saying came from. And that's where they begin the documentary, with sharpening the knife, in order to get a good sharp knife before he takes the sheep.

G! Festival. What shall I say about this? Hahaha. It is fantastic. Hahaha. For me it is fantastic because I am from Gøta, I have always been here. I think it is a fantastic place and it is our pride, those of us who live here, to be able to host such an event. On a beach in the Faroes, here where we who live here try to do everything we can to show, of course, our beautiful village and our hospitality. It isn't just easy to organize such a big event. And so there's a lot of work that goes on in the background. It's a huge job and a lot has been done to bring the event to what it is today. I think personally that the first years, then it was perhaps the music that was the most important, but as the years have gone by I think it has become more about the solidarity, about coming together for a weekend with all of these people. It's really a wonderful experience for a lot of people. And also for Miranda. Hahaha.

Here is the grindadráp again, in Tórshavn. Ummm... Yes. I don't really know what I can say about this. I think I have said what I... well, this here shows...

Is it the same as the other picture?

No. This shows the whales that have come in, not the slaughter itself, it's whales that have come in and are ready to go up on the land. And it should be that they swim in on their own, but it doesn't always work that way, so... but it is natural for us. And it is exciting. When there is a grind it is exciting for us who live here. It is nothing like... ooooh, what a shame, huh? I'm not really able to see the difference, as Faroese to see why it should be more of a sin to kill a whale, which we eat, than a pig that lives in Denmark or wherever. Why? What's the difference? Both are animals. Or a chicken, or whatever.

I actually like this photo, it comes from the cover of a book about the grindadráp, but it has nothing to do with Sea Shepherd, and what I notice is that it shows the grindadráp without

blood, and you can also see some normal buildings and so on... It is actually the only picture of the grindadráp I have seen without blood.

Yes. This is a natural photo, where the whales come swimming in, and they have almost come onto the sand. Because they have to swim in and then they are killed. It is the truth. There are two different kinds. This is before they come in to be killed. It's interesting. Especially for the press, that they show this, with the whales on the way in, without the blood.

This one says to me... this is Saksun. It is fantastically beautiful. This must catch the guest's eye. Do you understand what that means? The visitors, the tourists who come here... you for example as a guest here. I'm sure this must catch the guest's eye, because it is something special. The high mountains... the sod, or the grass roofs... the peacefulness. That's how I see it, what I see in this picture. Cozy and... cozy and... (herballt? Severe?) and intense (ógvisligt). And if one imagines that this picture were taken on a day when there was a blizzard, then there would be a completely different... maybe not cozy, but really... yeah, cold, and... severe.

This is the last thing, but there are many pages. It is the newest pamphlet that Visit Faroe Islands has done.

This is Eivør. She sits here, it is an advertisement for the Faroe Islands of course. Here we see nature, we see the Faroese boat, we see her as a famous singer. This here is, who is this?

Guðrun and Guðrun in Gásadalur?

Yes, Gásadalur, yes. It is an advertisement for, or it is a really beautiful place, and Guðrun and Guðrun sweaters, which are known worldwide, it's a good advertisement. One advertises both for Guðrun and Guðrun and for the Faroese nature.

Here are some birds, the nature, and... puffins are our national bird.

No, the national bird is the oystercatcher.

Yeah.

Isn't it?

Yes. But this is what, a puffin?

Yeah? But didn't you say it was the...

Yes. Isn't the puffin the national bird?

I think it is the oystercatcher.

No. I don't think so. We must find out. I think...

Yes, well. This here? Summer... lovely, or, beautiful colors... and this here shows, or gives a big impression to... they who want to be near nature to come to visit our islands, which are so green and... and here are birds, you can see life, here together perhaps not many sheep, but you can come and see all the birds here, and that it is high, and... Yeah.

And this here is Havn. Isn't it? Yes.

...Here it says that it is the oystercatcher.

The oystercatcher, yes, well... But it's said... hmm...

The puffin is of course also important.

Yes, because... often one buys stuffed puffins and so on.

Yes, because foreigners love puffins.

So then... This here is just like... tight, the houses are tight, you know... and they are cutting... this isn't a scythe, haha, but a trimmer.

This is... well, Týr. Hahaha. In a boat, and they are once again showing some famous musicians together with the Faroese nature... on a fishing boat. Here in fact you get everything... you get what's really the principal industry of the Faroe Islands, and you get beautiful nature, and you get famous musicians. A good advertisement for multiple things. And Faroese sweaters. Hahaha. G-sweaters. Hahaha.

Yeah. This here is Saksun again, huh? Yeah. Here are sheep and it looks like they have been in the mountains. And this here is, what is... an advertisement for Barbara, who is a fashion designer. And here once again it shows her as a Faroe Islander, and... I don't even know if she uses wool at all, but she is really famous. And she works a lot with lycra. So I don't know if she also uses sheep, but... this is actually the same as Guðrun and Guðrun and Týr, one will show the nature, one will show the designer, or the musician, or whatever.

And so here is the football team at the harbor in Tórshavn. Cozy. Another thing that distinguishes the Faroe Islands are the colours on the houses. It isn't so common to see that in other countries. The houses and the roofs have all possible colors, that's what you see in the Faroes. And... so there is the Faroese national team.

Teitur. Ólavsøka. No, it's not Ólavsøka. This is not Havn. This is in... this is in... Haldarsvík. But here in the picture they show people in the Faroese national dress, together with a church, and an old house with a sod roof, and the Faroese dance, and there's also Teitur Lassen who is well known. So it is only... all the pictures are designed so that... one sees the beautiful coastline, one sees the people that should... for example, Teitur here, as the singer. And you show the national costume, and the Faroese dance which is something special for the Faroes.

Women Interview:

Now I have questions about the topic of women in the Faroes. How do you think women have it in the Faroes, and why do you think young women move abroad?

I think Faroese women have it good. We have all the possibilities to get an education, and... those who want to, can work. And... most Faroese women work. There are some women who don't work, and those are the ones who maybe have a husband who goes sailing and earns a lot of money.

The women in the Faroes who want to work can work. There are some women who perhaps choose not to work when their children are young, and they are most often women who have men who earn a lot of money and so they don't need to work. Otherwise it's almost all the women in the Faroes who work.

We have access to education, so, yeah, so we can take some different kinds of education in the Faroe Islands now, but it hasn't always been that way. And so there are many women who seek to further their education abroad. And it's... it used to almost always be in Denmark, but now they also go to Iceland, Norway... England, Scotland... and... other countries as well. And that's because there are more opportunities now as well in other countries, and Faroese people can be helped like that as well.

So you also asked why they move? Like I said before, I think that of course there are some women who move because they find a husband who lives in another place... otherwise I think it's mostly single mothers who move because of economic trouble. Because they don't see it as possible to live in the Faroe Islands because it is too difficult. It has been difficult for young, single mothers to get apartments... it is not cheap to be able to live here.

But they are doing something about that now. For example the apartments that we built in Leirvík. It's reckoned that people will be able to find accommodations so that they can manage, even as single parents. So, that's changing... the country is planning to build 600 apartments in the next 10 years or so. All around the country... and they are apartments that people can have to live in. So... hopefully they will do it so that women won't move because they can't afford to live in the Faroes.

Do you think young women have enough to do here in the Faroes?

Yes. If they want to.

What do you mean?

Of course if you are going to... go to cafes in Gøta, well, that's not possible. But... most young women who live in the villages, places like Gøta... you have work, and you... come together with... once a week, you have knitting club with other young women, you can go to the gym... you can go to evening school, lessons, every possible place... and... if you want to, you have lots to do.

What do you think are the differences between Denmark and the Faroes?

Concerning?

In daily life and so on.

The Faroes are... peaceful. They are more calm. It is not so stressful to live in the Faroes, and we are fewer people and we know one another and can feel comfortable in each others places because we all know each other. It's a small society. Denmark is more... you sometimes don't know your neighbor at all. You live on the same street but perhaps you don't say hello. We aren't that kind of people. No. In short. One can of course go really far out, and say everything possible, but we are unlike the Danes I think.

Have you ever thought about moving abroad?

No.

Why not?

Because I think I wouldn't be able to stand it.

I have always lived here. Except for two and a half years in Tórshavn.

But you have travelled often?

Yes. I really like to travel out in the world in order to see various things, and also to get some warmth and sun, which we don't get much of in the Faroe Islands. But I can't imagine living anywhere but here. In Gøta. Hahaha.

Do you think any of your children will move abroad?

I hope not. Hahaha. N... yeah. I don't know. But right now, no. Apart from going to get their educations. And that's also fine.

How would you feel if...

Well, that's the thing. It's fine if one... if one or more of my children move abroad, and they feel good about it and are thriving there, then I'll be happy too. If my children are happy, I'm happy, even if they're living somewhere else. But it would be... a little bit difficult to get used to the thought, but... but... yeah.

Better if they are home?

Yes.

How has it changed the Faroes that so many women live abroad? How do you see it?

I don't know. Well, I think it's a little exaggerated that so many women go out of the country. I don't think one notices it so much. I don't think about it... that it changes the Faroes. No.

Is there a type of person who doesn't do well in the Faroes? You already mentioned single mothers, but are there others as well?

I think that people who are sick... perhaps those who are disabled, they have perhaps trouble with getting the help that they should maybe find. I read about a boy who is finished with school, with the folk school. And the father wrote namely that "what now?" There is nowhere the boy can go, who is 17 or 16 years old, and that's a problem for some, because we don't have good options for them. And that's something that the officials need to do something about. Because it is really difficult for them, and for the parents who have such children, to send them away to a foreign country. And that shouldn't be necessary today in the Faroes. They should of course have possibilities to be here as well. And so it is the sick that perhaps lack upbringing if they happen to have something, perhaps they would get a better upbringing down below in Denmark. But I think that that has changed now, because we've gotten a lot more nursing homes and so on in the Faroes, so that's getting better.

What one hears the most about, I think, that's young mothers, young single mothers, who perhaps have to study something, but can't manage to get buy, because the accomodation possibilities are not... or it is too expensive. So they move back in with their mother or... they can't live alone.

What about people who are in some way different than others?

So, you mean... the people who... whether they go down to Denmark if they...

Yes, do you think there are people who move to Denmark because... because in such a small

society they can't find many people like themselves?

Yeah. That could be, yeah. Yes, well. Well. It's that way. There are some who move because there are too few.

Can you tell me a little bit about how life in the Faroes has changed during your lifetime?

Yeah. It has changed so much. I don't know exactly what I should talk about, but everything has changed. There are so many villages everywhere, but we who live... well, I who live in Gøta, there is the same peace, the same calmness, but it has changed a lot now that it is so easy, so much easier to travel, easy to get to Havn. Before if you wanted to go to Havn, you had to drive, and then take a boat, and then you had to... to... often you couldn't drive yourself, but had to ask some car to come get you first. So you had to take taxis or something to get you from the door, so then take the ferry to Havn, and then back home again, and then afterwards get the car to drive you back to Gøta. It took... it took a long time. It took maybe an hour and a half or something. First one drove for half an hour, then sailed for maybe forty-five minutes. And then you had to get around in Havn, by walking or finding some other transportation. There weren't so many cars driving around back then, not in the same way. But it has all changed for the better.

And then... when I was a child, one played outside all of the time. And that I would say has changed even more since my children... for example, Rói, he played so much outside. He came home from school, threw down his bag and then he was outside, he played outside until it was dark, then he finally came in to eat. But now children don't play so much outside, now it's with the computer. But that's in general, everywhere, not just in the Faroes, right?

So it has changed so much in every way. Also with the houses, and the food, and... well, everything has changed. More is being done... everyone did everything themselves before. But I have perhaps been a little bit unusual, because I lived in a merchants home. My father had a ship, so he was a proprietor, and my mother... well, they had the village store, so they were working all the time. And it wasn't common back then... for example, my friends all had their mothers home. But we had a girl in the house, something like a maid, who was home and made food because my mother worked. I had three siblings, and they were all older than me. So we had a shop in the cellar and also another shop, and so my mom was always out working. I thought it was really sad. I can remember that well. Because all of their mothers were home when they came home from school, but my mom wasn't home. But that's just how it was.

But you think everything has changed for the better?

Yes.

Is there anything you miss from the old days?

No. I wouldn't say that. I think it has been positive. The developments that have happened... it is easier to travel, it is easier to... the only thing I think that is negative, that is that the children don't play as much outdoors. Well people, children... the games that we played before, we went out and we played and we ran around and around and had red cheeks and everything, in all of the villages around, and fished, and, you know, that's gone. Because computers, technology has taken over. But that's everywhere. It's not different in the Faroes than in other places. But I think it would be good if in the school the children could learn to play the games that we played as children.

Last question: what do you like about life in the Faroes? What is special about living here?

Life in the Faroes is good. And especially I think that we live so close to one another, and because I have children, who are all so close... not everyone has that, but I am very lucky because I have all of my children – what is that, a car cleaning the streets?

Haha, yeah, from G! Festival I guess...

And I am grateful for that. And I have family here, siblings and, yeah. We meet often and everyone comes in and, you know... it isn't about times, like, "Oh, should we meet next month, at such-and-such a time?" We've never done that. If I think about going to my brother or my sister's, I just go. You see that here as well, everyone just comes in. And that is... fantastic, I think. That one is allowed to... that you can just go in everywhere without feeling like you are disturbing them. So I think that is very good.

And Faroese food... I haven't even talked about that. Aged meat... and all the good stuff that we get, and have.

Well thank you so much!

Haha! I don't know if you can use that for anything.

Heri Olsen, 58 years old, from Klaksvík

Interview conducted in Faroese

Media Interview:

So what have you heard about the Faroe Islanders from foreigners and from foreign media?

I was traveling one time, backpacking in India. And I came into society with some musicians, percussionists, and they had been everywhere, to a lot of different countries. So I told them that I was from the Faroe Islands. And he didn't know it. So then I explained that it was between Iceland and Scotland and so on. "Oh yeah, there's no country here." I didn't have a map. No map of Europe or anything else. So I said, "I will show you guys. I will show you, when we find a map, where the Faroe Islands are." "No, there's no country there." So we finally found a map of Europe... and the Faroe Islands weren't on it! Hahaha.

I was just, "Ummm" and he said, "I told you, I told you, there's no country there." And the Faroe Islands weren't there. They weren't on the map. So I had to keep searching until I found a map with the Faroe Islands. "Here, here it is!"

So what did they say then?

Um, "No, no, I didn't know there was a country there." It was unbelievable for them that I came from a country there. They thought there was no such country.

That was many years ago now, of course. A lot has happened since then. That was in... 82 was it? Something like that. I don't remember exactly. A lot has happened since then. Communication has improved somewhat since then.

So, but, that there is an example that it is extremely common that people don't know where the Faroe Islands are. That the Faroe Islands even exist. And what I see, what I see when I read about the Faroe Islands in other countries, so it is, yeah, the first time it was... Isle of Maybe... Isle of... "Land of Maybe" Hah? That was it, of course. I was introduced to that in Canada, where I sailed when I was young. I was 14 years old, when I first went to sea. And 15 years, I was, when I got injured, I hurt my hand, and came to the hospital. First it was a little hospital, no, a big hospital. But when they found out how young I was, so I went into a children's hospital, because I was "underage," hah? Yeah, yeah yeah. And there were namely many books. That's where I saw, for the first time, "Land of Maybe."

But otherwise what I see in foreign media, it's about a country which, which is extremely different from other ones. Yes, of course also because here one kills whales, that sees one often in pictures as well. Um. Yeah.

So what do you think of the name, Land of Maybe?

Yes. Very well. Hahah. Very well. Yes, I think so.

It is a phrase I hear very often.

Yes, indeed it is. And when, of course, when that book was written, then we really were dependent on the weather, whether it was good enough to go somewhere or not. It's a little bit easier today. But we have that in us. That mentality. I think so. Yes. Maybe. Haha. Yes, I think so.

Yes, maybe. We'll see.

Yes. Hmm. Maybe not. Maybe we'll go. Or maybe not. I don't know. Yeah.

How do you think the Faroe Islands are depicted in foreign media?

The Faroe Islands are, well, my impression is that the Faroe Islands are depicted as a mixture of an ancient society which is hypermodern at the same time. They write very often about, yeah yeah yeah, about the sheep and the grind and that we have lived here and we have this language that one has and so on, but at the same time they often add, from what I have read, that not to make a mistake, it is a hypermodern fishing nation for example. And it is possible to fly, and we have roads, and we have tunnels, and we live in houses, and so it is.

And it's true?

And it's true, yes. I think so. That's my impression. From what I have read, yeah?

But of course one also sees strange depictions of the Faroe Islands, with old houses, and men with Faroese hats, and you know, things that aren't really true. Or you see pictures from Ólavsøka, or... yeah.

And that's not...

No, that's not everyday life. And grind isn't everyday life either.

"Oh yes, I am hungry, I'll just go and hunt some whale..."

Haha yes, namely, just like that. Namely. And some places you get the impression that one is completely and utterly wild, seriously! And is going in search of whales all the time. Hahaha. And that isn't what one does. Haha. But one could easily get that impression by reading sometimes. Or that everyone goes up in the mountains running after sheep, or spend all of their time hanging from the cliffs trying to catch birds. Hahaha.

But, but, of course one does also see that, but for the most part, I think the ones who are writing are on the right track. They're completely on the right track. But there are those who romanticize it.

Do you have an example of something you heard about the Faroe Islands that's not really true?

Like an example? Yes... How it is when it comes to... when it comes to... to this here with... with the Grind, of course. They go back to that all the time. Because there we are often represented as barbaric monsters, worse than animals.

And of course, we aren't that at all. Absolutely not. But... if you want to have meat on the table, whale meat on the table, you have to kill a whale, just like you have to kill a sheep, or a cow, or, for example...

There are very many things which are not true, but are not really directly written, but the pictures can easily, the pictures can give the wrong idea. Because we see so often pictures of the Faroe Islands with sunshine, and clear skies, and that doesn't happen so often actually. Hahaha.

It's the same with Missouri, you know, where I'm from. Several months of the year, it's not pretty. It's grey. But two or three times there is snow. But when you see a calendar or anything, they always show...

The snowy pictures to represent the whole winter. Haha. Yes, it's the same thing you see here. If you look at a Faroese calendar for the year, so you see snow pictures for January and February, and maybe for March too. For April you start to see some green, you see lambs. You start to see flowers, clear skies...

You don't see fog, haha.

No! Haha. You don't see that at all. Hahahaha. No. So it is a little bit of a misrepresentation.

In all places, I guess. So what part of the Faroese culture and modern life do you think are ignored in the foreign media?

Well, if we will talk about culture, it's first and foremost actors, and they are beginning slowly to make some movies. I haven't seen so much about, not at all in the media.

Modern life, yes. We do have, we do have, for example, there are people in Tórshavn, they are city people. There are Faroese people who are city people, or, they live like city people even though they live in a little village. They live as if... my wife and I lived in Copenhagen for five years. So when we moved back to the Faroe Islands, we had no doubt that we should live in Klaksvík. But for my part, if we lived in Tórshavn it would be just like living in Copenhagen. It's another way of life entirely.

The difference – it could well be that one focuses almost exclusively on, when one makes articles about the Faroe Islands, or shall write or shall show the Faroe Islands, that one shows only life in the villages. That is to say, one ignores the modern, big-city people in Tórshavn. I don't think one sees that.

And also a little with Klaksvík.

Yes, namely. In the context of the Faroe Islands, Klaksvík is big. Namely.

There's a hospital, for example.

Yes, exactly. That one also lives a normal life, a big city life in the big cities in the Faroe Islands. But... there is actually still a big difference between living in Tórshavn and Klaksvík, because one-two-three and then I'm up in the mountains, and people go out fishing, and so on.

Is there anything you remember seeing that did an especially good or bad job depicting the Faroe Islands?

Yes, let's talk about the bad first. The documentary about women in the Faroe Islands. It was about some Thai girls, or Thai women...

Do you mean Kvindøflugt fra Færøerne?

Yes, that. That is both a true and extremely misleading documentary. It is true that there is a problem that young women are away. But... haha, generally... generally they are not replaced by Thai women. One can't say that. But the tendency is there, the tendency. But I don't know if the journalists should have said it in that way or set it up that way, I know very well that

they do it, to get the story, so you do that in order to get the truth, or in order to get it recorded.

And that is... that is one which is actually both good and less good. If you understand what I mean. Because... because it isn't lying. It is true that there is a problem. We are more men than women. The young women are abroad. They are abroad while... well actually both young women and men go abroad. But the problem is that fewer women come back than men. Yeah.

So that is an example of both a good and a less good. Because part of it is purely true. But then it is also... not entirely.

So in the first minutes of the documentary for example...

Yeah, you get to know that they are missing, that there are fewer women than men in the Faroe Islands and that they are missing women. That's true. But you get some men who only work with sheep and you get the impression that Faroese men only work with sheep. And that's not the truth. Not at all.

And it doesn't look like something about women.

No, not at all. You have one woman in the documentary and she doesn't even live in the Faroe Islands.

If you didn't hear the words, so you might think the documentary was about sheep.

Haha. Yeah. Namely. Just like that. And... and... so can one also take the young woman there, who does speak, who lives in Denmark... or not in Denmark, I think, but not in the Faroe Islands... That is of course typical. I have been there myself. I thought I wouldn't go back to the Faroe Islands. I thought, "What in heaven's name will I do in the Faroe Islands? I don't feel like living in the Faroe Islands."

And when we moved to the Faroe Islands, I was much more interested in living in Denmark than in the Faroe Islands. It was actually my wife who insisted on it. And, okay, we had children who were five years old and we had to decide if they would be Faroese or if they would be Danish. And we agreed of course that they should be Faroese. And that was that. But I would... it took a few years before I found myself satisfied here, until I said, "Okay, I live here." Because I was halfway between. I had to get used to not living in a big city. Because I lived two – no, five years in Copenhagen.

So I understand her well. I know exactly where she is when she is not interested in the Faroe Islands. Because I've been there myself.

So was it difficult to come home?

Yes. It was. I really had to get used to it. It was wonderful to come back and go out in a boat and go up in the mountains and slaughter sheep and everything. But to be here, forever, permanently.... that was quite hard.

It is connected to when I used to go out fishing, when I left school at 14. I was 24, 25 years old before I was home for longer than three months at a time. I had been in so many places. And I can easily understand that it is great to travel, but to actually be here, to settle down here... Hoohaa.

Do you think the Faroe Islands have changed a lot in recent years?

Yes. Very much. From my – first and foremost, when I was young, when I was fourteen-fifteen, it was not at all uncommon to leave school. That one didn't go to school anymore. I went for about half a year and then I decided I didn't feel like it any more. So I just left. In my class three of us boys signed up on the same ship to go fishing over in Canada. And we were 14 and 15 years old. And that was totally common. And that doesn't happen today. That doesn't happen at all today.

Fourteen years old?

Fourteen. Yes. “Fourteen. Kids.” On a ship. Yeah. To Canada. Out in the world, away, for the first time, right away, four months.

And you never went back to school?

No, later we went to school. But no, not then. Now that is illegal. But back then it was common. It was common.

When was that?

1971. It was common. We were 24 men with that ship, the usual crew on the deck. It was just, there was only... one, no, two who were older than 20.

A ship of children!

Yeah, “we were some youngsters.” And I was... I was 20... I was around 20, and my brother was; I was nineteen and he was 24, he was the skipper, the captain on the boat and I was second mate. And we left with almost only teenagers over to Canada to fish. Yes.

Unbelievable.

Isn't it? I mean, that doesn't happen today. So much has changed even in my time. And we were almost only teenagers on board. And we earned so much money. We were rowing in money. Hahahaha. Yeah. And so when we were home we used a lot of money too. We travelled, we went to Spain, Morocco... One really hurried that month that we were home. Or “home” – we almost weren't at home at all.

So it has really changed a lot. Completely. In my time.

And people go more to school, people know more. A lot more. And there is so much more communication now, with the media, and the internet, and social media, and everything. Yeah.

And the culture? How has the culture changed?

You could say that the culture has come back here. We were away, young men were away in my generation. It was all about going out and earning money. Saving a lot of money. And the manpower on all of these boats... there were so many fishing boats... nowadays it's hard to get on a fishing boat. Because there are so few nowadays. But I also don't think it's as attractive to young people today. For some people the boats are attractive, but not for others. But for young people who want to earn a lot of money, it's not as easy as it was for us. We could choose between going to school and going out to fishing. Now it is school. They can't really – okay, if your parents own a boat or something, so it's easier – but in that way, it's

really changed a lot.

To go to studentaskúlin, what do you call it in English?

It's like high school or junior college.

Back then it wasn't everyone who did that... far from it. But today almost everyone goes. There are very few who don't do it. So in that way it's really changed a lot.

But it's still not mandatory, right?

No. You can. But almost everyone does it. You must go to school for 10 years... no, you must go for 9 years.

So how old are you when you don't have to go?

You are 16. You are 16-17.

In the USA, you can leave when you are 17, but you are finished at 18, so it is stupid to leave. Because it's just one year left.

Yeah. Here until 16 or 17 it is mandatory. Then you can do what you want. But today almost everyone goes.

But some leave school for a year or two and come back, right? That's not common in the USA.

No, it isn't I guess. But it's extremely common here, that one goes... and it was already common when I was in school. And my parents, they also went back to school after many years. I was... I was about 20 when I went back to school. I went to school in Norway, I moved to Norway. I didn't feel like being here. I went to Vardø. I studied the fishing industry in high school/junior college. And I felt myself that now I could go to school. And before I worked a little bit here and went to the folk school in the evenings. Before I went there. And I learned a little bit of arithmetic, etc, before I went back to school.

What do you wish more people knew or understood about the Faroe Islands?

Like I said before, once again that we don't just live off of sheep, birds and fish here. That there is also an information society. And that we also have hospitals and a university. That we have schools. That's what's missing in stories about the Faroe Islands often, very often I think. The main impression is often of a primitive... I don't know... society. There could be a little more of, yes, of the modern life.

What do you think of tourism in the Faroe Islands and what do you think brings tourists here?

I guess that the people who come this way, they have been, they have travelled a lot. They have seen I think very much. They want to try what they haven't tried. A big part of them who come from Europe have been in Iceland, the ones who come here, and they think, oh yeah, I'll spend a few days in the Faroe Islands.

And then there is of course the articles in the press, and the people who come specifically for the Faroe Islands. But otherwise a huge percentage of the tourists in the Faroe Islands come by cruise ship, there are usually a thousand or more, three thousand people on board who

come off the boat and come by and then leave again. They visit more or less incidentally, I think.

The cruise ships that come are enormous. They stop for one day, two days... and they just get off to stretch their legs, walk around the town, see a little bit. It can good be that in this community of 4-5,000 people, when a boat comes with a thousand people on it, you can see that there are more people around.

Last year there was a gigantic ship here. There were a ton of people on board. And the captain came from Vestmanna. It was a woman. So that was pretty special for her, to come to the Faroe Islands. And that was a ship that belonged to Royal Caribbean or something, it was American, huh?

What do you think possible tourists ought to know about the Faroe Islands?

Well, first and foremost, they ought to have a realistic picture of our weather. It's not often that we have clear skies and sun and summer like it looks like we do in the pictures. They should know that it can just as well be grey and foggy or rain for many days. Things like that. An honest picture. I have the impression that one forgets. You have some pictures here, yeah? And also in connection with the flights. You can risk not landing at all. That can happen. When you book your flight tickets, don't book your flights from Copenhagen a few hours after you land from the Faroe Islands, because it could be a few days delayed.

Yes, I tell all of my friends that they need an absolute minimum of a week, preferably two in the Faroe Islands, because you need to spend a day or two in Copenhagen on the way home or else you risk missing the flight back to America.

Yes, exactly. And that can be very expensive. Exactly. So they should also absolutely know about the prices here. When you are here, you can risk using a lot of money. Hahaha. That's really important, I think, that they understand that. Hoohaa. It is expensive. If you eat out and if you stay in a hotel and even just the flights are expensive.

How do you think foreign perceptions of the Faroe Islands have changed in the past and how are they changing now?

I don't know how much foreigners have known about the Faroe Islands at all in the past. There was that one book, Land of Maybe. The picture was very one-sided. Perhaps it is more diverse today. One has perhaps more insight into various things today about the Faroe Islands than one had before. It's a little more... varied, differentiated. It was more one-sided before.

Oh yeah, but the Faroe Islands, that's the land that lies between Scotland and Iceland, and belongs to Norway, and lives off of sheep, and lives off of birds, and lives off of whale... and fish. That is that.

Until today, one has a partly different picture. But until now it has been that way.

And so, now, or let's say in the last twenty years, what is the difference?

I think that they who knew about the Faroe Islands twenty years ago, and those that know about the Faroe Islands today, if we take the same people...

I think that, well, I say that Danish newspapers... I don't believe that the picture has changed very much between today and the last twenty years ago. If you read the articles that were

written twenty years, or thirty years ago, and articles that were written yesterday, by a Danish journalist in a Danish newspaper, I don't believe it has changed very much.

Okay. Even though the Faroe Islands...

Yes, even though they have changed a lot. If one has a preconceived notion of what it is, that is what you're going to keep seeing, when one writes. That's what I think.

I have by the way some old Danish articles that I have never thrown away, and some Swedish ones also, about the Faroe Islands, from the 80's and maybe also from the 90's. You should see them. They wrote about the religion and the decision about whether women should be able to have abortions or not, and that's still what they're writing about today. The fishing industry, they wrote about that, but it is not good, it's about how there are fewer fish now than there used to be. Did you read that? That's what they used to say, that's what they're saying today as well.

When one visits the Faroe Islands as a land, so I think they are often going after such a segment about the society or something. One way or another it will show the position about the country. And I don't believe that they write much differently today than they wrote twenty or thirty years ago. I don't think so.

Media Photo Elicitation:

This is here is a really classic picture of the Faroe Islands. Saksun is, I myself think, as a Faroe Islander... I have been there often, and I still think it is really wonderful. That they use this picture I understand very well. Because it's so lovely. This here is an old farmhouse which is there, there is an old church there. This here is also reality, I think. Or a part of it. And that is here also.

This here is the grindadráp. We have records of every single whale killed at the grindadráp going back to the 1500's. And here you see the old and the new hospitals of Tórshavn. Here we have all the modern technology, scanners, robot operations, and, yeah, whatever. And so, at the same time that one kills grind, like one has done since 1500... or maybe even since 1200. So. This is a good picture, I think. If one sees, you know, I know well that a foreigner sees these pictures here and sees only... but here are also modern boats.

This is Kalsoy. Trøllanes is here. You can walk here. It is a good picture. I am not a photographer but I think it is an extremely good picture. Haha. That's what I think. And this is yes, this is also a part of the Faroe Islands. That is also a part of it. But if you stand in the middle of Tórshavn you have something completely different than if you stand here... so... I think that living Klaksvík, in the Northern Islands, it's peaceful, I think it's good. Have you been here?

Yes, it's my favorite place in the Faroe Islands.

Oh, yes. So you know what I'm talking about.

This is a festival. Here they have managed to create a good festival in a little Faroese village. I think it is completely fantastic. I think it's fantastic. That they have set up a stage on the beach in Gøta. I think that is impressive, it is really impressive, and fun. But it can also be that there is good weather. Or there could be rain and horrible storms and the tents can even fly away. That has happened. That has happened. One shouldn't forget that that is also a risk, when you are... that the tent can disappear. But I think it's amazing that they were able to make this festival in this way. G! Festival.

Yeah. I think this scares a lot of people. And I understand that well. Because... the sea is bloody. Men and children covered with all this blood here. But this is our way of getting meat. If we didn't catch our own meat, so we would be forced to import it, to buy it from for example from Europe... it is after all, it's about seriously a lot of meat, every year. Which we don't pay for. It is a part of our economy. And from my perspective, when I see whales, if there is no grind, there is no meat, no whale meat, no blubber... because I think about food, when I see a whale. But very many don't think about meat, they think about whales. It's the truth. Well, I get this feeling like "Oh! Food! There is some food, and I need to get a hold of it!" – this is what I feel when I have nothing of it at home, but if I have some at home, and see a whale, I don't really feel like going after it and killing it, because I don't need it.

Yeah. This looks... Well, one sees in the picture perhaps how cold it is. There is wind, there is snow. The winter can look like this. But there isn't snow the whole winter. But it can be really cold. Cold. And the weather changes all of the time. You can easily have such weather one day, and then the next day there is freezing rain and no snow. The sheep can go free in some places but not in other places. It depends on where you are. When I was a little boy, the sheep went freely in Klaksvík as well, in the winter time. In the town. But they don't do that anymore. So it was really dirty all over. With sheep poop.

When did they change it?

It's been... hooaaa. It's been since the late 60's, I think. In Klaksvík.

And in Gøta it's only been...

Just a few years. Ten years, I think. Namely. And in Viðareiði... have you been in Viðareiði? It's the first year there. It was this year. So now one can have a garden. Because if you wanted to have a garden before, and the sheep went, if they got in the garden, they ate all the flowers.

When I was in Viðareiði, there were sheep.

Were there, yeah? There aren't now.

This here is a way of catching birds. Yeah? With a fleygastong (pole with a net at the end of it).

This is from an article from last year. After one couldn't catch puffins anymore.

But one can eat puffins, but it's not allowed to catch them. And it's not allowed to catch them because there are too few. Or people think there are too few, that there are too few because they are not getting enough to eat. So, the puffins are there. The old puffins. Last year there were so many young puffins that were found dead. Dead. And they actually died of hunger. Because they can't manage to... the puffins come to their holes, and they lay eggs, but they can't manage to get enough food for their young. That's what's happening.

But if this picture was taken in connection with the fact that it is no longer allowed to catch puffins, so it is quite illustrative still because we don't see a single bird in the picture. We see a man with a net, he stands there and there are no birds.

If I remember correctly, the journalist asked the man if they could...

If they could go out and take the picture. Yes. Fine. Haha. I guessed that much myself. And I

have seen old pictures from eighteen hundred and... ninety nine? Where men also are hanging from the cliffs, where men also are dragging boats, and they are also, you know, set-up pictures. So people also did that back then. One sees men hanging with rope, and it is right there on Kunoy – where birds aren't at all, or weren't. But one has set it up like that. Yeah. So... people also did that back in the 1800's, that one got people up to “photo sessions.”

Tinganes.

I see this picture, or similar pictures, very often.

Yeah. This is after all the capital of the Faroe Islands. Now we have... the Faroese flag here. It used to be the Danish one. So... because... we are, we are actually under Denmark. And all according to what party is in power here. So from my perspective it might as well be Danish. But I don't want it to be Danish. Absolutely not. It should be Faroese. But... we play as a country. As an independent country. But we are not an independent country. Hahaha. That's my opinion.

Oh, he's slaughtering, yeah. This is in connection with the video...

Yeah, we've already talked about that.

Yeah, and here, a picture with Eivør. You see Eivør, and you see Risin and Kellingin, and you see a Faroese boat. “Take a deep breath,” yeah. “That's what I am saying several times a day as well.” Hahah. Yeah.

Gásadalur... Confoundingly beautiful. Yeah... Yes, but, so, this is also a part of it. You can experience this. You can see it like this... But this is arranged this way.

The birds are still there, yeah. But this is Mykines, yeah... But this is really artificial, I think. Once again the clear skies.

And also here and here.

Yeah yeah yeah, everywhere. It isn't actually like this every day.

Sure it is! Hahaha.

Hahaha. No. Absolutely not. Absolutely not.

This is a lovely pamphlet. I mean, very well done, but... how many details look like this? You absolutely don't get to go out and catch a big halibut just like this. You just don't. Hahah.

But can't you get one?

Yes, yes, yes. I don't mean it like that. Of course it can happen. But “can we” is not that which happens most of the time. Absolutely not. You can get it. If you are lucky. But... but if it would be a coalfish or a codfish, then it would be realistic, but a halibut... that is rare to get. Really rare. Hah. But of course you can get... you can just buy lobster and halibut and everything possible. And you can't just catch a lobster like this. You have to buy it. But you can easily go out and get yourself a coalfish or codfish. You get... I don't think it costs anything still, if you know someone, but you can also hire a spot on a boat if you want to fish. This is Týr, isn't it.

Haha, yes.

I don't know what to say, here we see Saksun again. Really pretty.

This is a good picture. I really like this one a lot.

Why?

Because... in little villages... in little villages, the inhabitants often stand under such a wall, and look out to sea, and talk, and chat. And look to see who is in the boats that are coming, and, you know. This here is a really good picture that captures that. Because here they are looking curiously... looking curiously at who is coming and who is going. I saw this also when I was on a Greek Island... a Greek Island called Samos. They had a ferry that came once a day. Every time the ferry came, the locals went and stood under a wall just next to where the boat came in, and when it came in, they looked at who was coming in and who was going out, and they commented also about where they were going now and where they were coming back from. And we do that too.

This is good, but this here is a little tasteless I think. Hahaha.

Fine picture. Fine picture. But what are the football players doing on a boat? Weird.

This is a little, this is can be... this goes with certain impressions. Here is Faroese dance, Teitur, the church is central, of course, and in Faroese society. It is. It is powerful... well, not the church, but religion. The church is possibly the least powerful of all the religious factions that are in the Faroe Islands. But it is seldom one dances around. Teitur is very well known. I don't really know what I should say about this picture.

But here it is once again, the clear skies. It is beautiful when it is clear, but it wrong to give people the impression that we have clear skies all the time, because we don't. Not at all.

So, the last picture, if you want to say anything about it – many people I have talked with in foreign countries have only seen this.

Yes, and that must be a really strange impression of us. It must be a really strange impression of how we are here. And I understand well what they think. Because they haven't seen anything else.

It doesn't say that Faroese people eat the grind. Only that they kill it.

Namely. Yeah yeah. And so... I have read some places that the grindadráp is “a kind of festival” and it is just like young men kill the whales to become men, like some sort of rite of passage. And it has nothing to do with that.

This also says the whale is near extinction. That there's almost no whales left.

Oh yes. In the whole Atlantic Ocean, from Greenland south to the Azores, do you know where those are? There are around 100,000 whales. We kill... around 1,000. Out of 100,000. Every year. Up to 15 hundred sometimes I think. So. Is it dangerous for the population? I don't think so. So that argument doesn't hold water. It's not an argument. The only argument, from my perspective, which can be, that we shouldn't eat grind, it's that... if you eat too much grind, you get poisoned.

Yes, of mercury.

Yes. It is something that we ought to take into consideration. But in terms of the populations.... I don't think that's a problem.

What about the argument that whales are more intelligent?

Yeah. More intelligent than what?

Um... cows?

Yeah. It's that, isn't it? But pigs are also very intelligent if you are going to care about intelligence. Or a cow or a sheep or whatever. That is not an argument, I don't think so. Compared to what... We kill the grind, because the grind is here. We don't have oranges or bananas here. We just use what we get, or what we can get rather.

Well, thank you very much. Is there anything else you want to say, or?

No, I don't think so. But yes, actually. I think that we Faroese pay way too much attention to Sea Shepherd. What we should do is ignore them. I mean it. So, we should completely ignore them and what they do. Because it is... most of all... it is as if it's most of all... it is about the uproar to them. That... "make a lot of noise." Huh? "And we shouldn't help them do it. We should... ignore it."

Elin Hansen, 63 years old, from Glyvrar

Interview conducted in Faroese

Media Interview:

So what have you heard about the Faroe Islanders from foreigners and from foreign media?

Not very much, because I don't know many languages myself. So... but of course about the grindadráp, that it isn't good. Yeah.

And what have you heard about it? Just that it's not good?

Well they think it's not good. But we think it's good, ha? That we can kill grind.

But why do they think it's not good?

They think that we are... .. I don't know how I can express it. They think we are... how do you say it?

I don't know.

Carnivores. That we are really... inhumane.

What do you wish more people knew or understood about the Faroe Islands?

Yeah... I wish they knew about the good things in the Faroes. Huh?

And what do you think is special about the Faroes that people should know about?

So... we are... we really get along well with each other. I don't know really.

What do you think of tourism in the Faroe Islands and what do you think brings tourists here?

It is fine. But... it should not take over, huh? Because we are only 50,000 people.

Do you think it's taking over now?

No. I don't think so. But it shouldn't be so that... there isn't room for us, huh? But, but, otherwise it's fine.

Do you see many tourists here in Runavík?

Yeah. The ones I see they are mostly driving or going shopping. With their RVs and so on.

Why do you think they come here?

Right here?

Yeah. And to the Faroes.

The beautiful nature. Huh?

Just for the nature? Not for the culture?

Yes, yes, both, I think. I think so. We have a special nature. Yeah.

Media Photo Elicitation:

Just look at these photos and tell me what you think when you see them, and maybe try to imagine that if you were a foreigner and saw only this one picture about the Faroe Islands, what you might think about the Faroes.

Yes, okay. I don't know how easy this is when one is Faroese.

Haha, yeah. But you can also say what you think about it as a Faroese person. This is from National Geographic, when they said the Faroes were the best islands in the world.

This one, I think yeah, it's pretty. Very pretty nature.

I reckon there are many birds here. It is hard to know... huh?

But if you saw it, would you think for example that there were also villages in the Faroes, or what kind of place would you think it was? If you only saw this picture.

Yeah. Yeah. It is also quite bare. So if one only saw this, they might think that here is bad weather... lots of wind maybe and... not just good. Huh?

Tórshavn. Tinganes. I think it is really difficult to talk about the Faroes when one knows it personally. Huh?

Haha, yes of course.

Hahaha. Just to imagine not knowing it. Huh?

Haha, yes of course. I'm sorry.

Pleasant. Cozy town.

Have you been abroad?

Yeah. Denmark. Spain. Turkey.

What is the difference between these countries and the Faroes?

Oh, there are just so many differences.

Haha of course. But as an example, what is a big difference?

Well, the Faroes are just so small. And it is naked. And cold. No sun.

No sun?

No, a little sun. Maybe just this year we get a little bit of sun, but some summers we hardly get sun at all. But... this year was good weather. You have been lucky.

Haha, that's what I've heard.

Yes, you have been lucky. Extremely lucky. So there are lots of differences. That there are. Yeah.

Well, one thing that looks a little bit like in other countries is Voxbotn in Tórshavn. To walk there can perhaps remind a little bit of something... something similar in other places. But... otherwise... otherwise I don't think the Faroes resemble other countries at all. I don't know how all the other countries are, but...

This is a typical Faroese old village, huh?

Do you know where it is?

Saksun, ha? Yeah. It used to look like this in a lot of places. But it is cozy with such little villages. And it is here tourists often go, huh? Even though the Faroes are not so... we are more modern now... yeah...

Do you think they understand that? That the Faroes are more modern now?

No. I think many think that it is like this. Yeah. Don't you think so?

Perhaps. It's something I'm wondering about in fact.

Yeah. I think there are many who think it's like this... old houses... and...

Why do you think that? Did you hear something about it?

No. Perhaps because it is often shown like this. In the advertisements and so on. Perhaps one doesn't see the modern... the computers and so on. One sees more pictures like this. I reckon it is more that. And perhaps such things... which look a little bit old.

They think certainly that we all walk everywhere and catch puffins and... when we are hungry, go down to fish by the shore. Or kill a sheep. Hahaha. It is like that.

It looks really cold here. A cold picture, huh? We had no snow the last winter. No. Almost none.

We went so quickly through it, but... should you ask me more about this, or?

It's fine, just say as much as you want to say.

No, I don't want to say anymore about it. But people think perhaps... it is often how it looks in...

The articles? The media?

The media, yes. It is like this and like this. And so there is maybe a sheep, or... not that which is more modern.

But I... I don't see so many, I don't read so many foreign newspapers, so I... am not very good at languages, so I...

That's why I'm showing the pictures, because then you don't have to read the articles, if you can't, but you can see the pictures and say what the pictures are saying.

Yes, namely. Yeah.

Because of course pictures don't really lie, they do show the Faroes, but what are they saying about the Faroes? It's not everything.

No. This here, what this says is that there isn't much traffic, sheep can go in the middle of the road. There aren't many cars, ha? Hahaha. So sheep go in the middle of the road... in places. But it looks cold and bare out, to look at this, huh? Especially for foreigners I reckon.

This is from a documentary from Denmark. It's supposed to be about women in the Faroes and how they have it and how they move from the Faroes to Denmark. But... it is strange to me because I have seen the video and it shows mostly sheep and this man killing sheep. It is just the words that talk about women.

That women flee from the Faroes... but women... don't flee so much, huh? I mean... I don't think I've seen this. But this picture has nothing to do with that, huh? I think it's misleading. I don't think it's like that.

How is it different?

How is it different? Oh, yeah, so... many go down to study. So perhaps they get married, fall in love down there and don't come back... but I don't think they are fleeing the Faroes. I don't think so. I don't think so. Well, that's not my impression, huh? No, I don't think so. I don't think so.

I would never have thought that this picture went together with this title. It looks strange.

That women flee, I don't think so. But we are missing women, that's true. So... what the reason is here... it may be that many go abroad to study, and don't come back. Huh? Their reasons are different, huh? Some perhaps fall in love in another country, or get work perhaps in another place... perhaps many try working, when they are finished studying, and get a good job, so... yeah.

This is G! I can't say much about it, because I have never been there.

Why? Why not?

I don't know why! Just...

You must go with Mildrið next time. She is always there.

Yeah, hahaha. She is always... yeah, yeah, yeah... it's just 20 minutes to drive. But this... I just don't know. I don't go out so much to such things. But wasn't it nice? Really nice, huh?

I love G! I shall try to come back for G! next year.

Yeah, was it really great? Yeah. And you saw Eivør. Was it good?

Yes, I love Eivør. I talked to her too, she was really friendly. It's so special here in the Faroes, it wasn't like an ordinary concert.

Wonderful. It was really great that you got to experience that, huh?

I don't have more to say about this, but I think it's great. A nice event. Good for the village. The talk of the village.

I actually show the same pictures to everyone. It's not like I'm sad that you aren't talking more about G!

Yeah, yeah, it's that I want to talk about G!, but I haven't been there. But I think it is good, and the village is becoming more well known both abroad and here. Yeah?

Now it's grind again.

Yes, I have two pictures of grind.

Two pictures about grind. Yeah. What shall I say about grind, so...

We like grind so much! I think we should just be left alone. We should just be left alone to eat grind. We like grind so much. We don't kill it because... because we are so evil, huh? That is not why we kill grind. We kill grind because we like it so much, to eat it. We have to kill it if we are going to eat it, huh?

And what do you think about Sea Shepherd?

Oh... that I think is about money. That's what I think. He goes... he has his society in order to get money.

Paul Watson, you mean?

Yeah, so that he can live. He can live and eat a lot of meat... live well, eat a lot of meat. Not grind.

He actually doesn't eat meat.

Yeah, yeah, I know. But what does he eat? He eats something good. Hahahah. Yeah. So... he looks like he eats a lot of whale steak. I don't know, but...

And these photos, this is from VisitFaroeIslands, it is the newest thing they have put out this summer about the Faroes for tourists.

I haven't seen this at all.

It looks so cozy! Hahaha. The man is cutting the grass, and she is standing there with coffee in the window.

Oh, that is Týr. Týr is from here. He is from here, and he is from here.

From Runavík?

Yes, just over there. And the last one lives in Lambi. Around the same age as Tummas Eivind.

This looks more different. This one here... it looks a bit special. I don't know whether

it works so well, but good. It possibly shows the modernity. Hahah.

So here is the football team. And Teitur himself. He is one of our musicians.

Yes, I think it does a good job of showing everything about our society, that there is. Huh? Here is the symphony orchestra.

Is that G!? Yeah, that is G! I recognize the mountains.

There weren't as many boats this year.

No, but this year the weather is not as good. The water is not so still. That time it was so incredibly still. Sometimes you get such good weather out here.

I think this does a good job of showing the Faroes... it is just this one that looks a little bit special, and a little bit weird. But... otherwise it looks... and ræst fisk as well! Here.

Do you like Ræstan fisk?

Yeah. Mmmm. It is really tasty.

I think this does a good job of showing the Faroes as they are.

Faroese Life and Women Interview:

Now I have some other questions. What do you do?

I am a health assistant. I work out as an auxiliary nurse. I've been doing that for 27 years.

And you have a son...

And two daughters. I am the mother of Rita... and Barbara... and Tummas Eivind, who is much younger than the other two. And they are really grown up.

How would you feel if any of your children moved abroad?

Five years ago one of my daughters, Rita, she went down to study, and then she had three children, when she left. That was really tiresome. No, best to have them here. Hahahah. But it... it must be how it must be. They must decide.

What do you like the best about the Faroes?

Not too big... and we are so connected to one another. Otherwise... it's lovely here.

Can you tell me a little bit about Faroese food?

Ræst kjøt... ræstan fiskur... grind and spík... that's what's really special in the Faroes. Skerpikjøt, turran fisk... I don't know what else. And lots of seafood which we have, we have good fish.

And rhubarb?

Yes, and rhubarb. Hahaha. It's good to have that, huh? Well, ræstan fisk, I really like that.

And ræst kjøt... yeah.

How does it taste?

Ræst kjøt? It's a little bit strong. Haven't you tried it? Yeah. It is a little strong... a little... it tastes good.

How is it different from normal meat?

No, it has nothing to do with normal meat. It's hung up... to try... before it's dry, huh? So we take it down and cook it. And if it would hang longer, it would have become dry skerpikjøt.

Is there a type of person that doesn't do well in the Faroes?

Yeah... it is because of that that they leave maybe. Unmarried women, maybe, especially with children. Whether they don't do well here... I don't know, but it's hard for them to manage economically. In Denmark you get money from the government when your children are young and so on. And men often have a better salary. It is really often that they have the good jobs.

Why?

Yeah. That's the thing. I don't really know the reason for that.

Can you tell me a little bit about how life in the Faroes has changed during your lifetime?

Yes, it has changed a lot. It has changed a lot. Regarding wages, there was very little money at first, when I was young. Everything was a lot cheaper. But the wages were also not as high. When we got married, it was only men who earned money, and he earned maybe 2-3,000 kroner a month. And we built a house. So... so it has changed a lot. It has really changed a lot. And otherwise... it has also changed a lot in the working world and... really changed a lot. For example, when I go out to the old people, we used to be able to do a lot more than we can do today. We don't get to do what we are possibly capable of doing.

And travelling within the Faroes is much easier. That is not the same. You used to always have to go by boat if you were going anywhere. Just to get to Havn you took a boat.

Has everything improved or are some things worse than before?

No, not everything has improved. Like my job for example, I think it was just as good before. But there are some things that are better, and some things that are not better. We could help them more before. We don't get to today. Now there are others who direct everything and say we should do this and that. Whereas before you just went in and helped people with whatever they had trouble with. It's that way with the management. That people sit up there and direct everything... there are rules and regulations, that you should do this and this and this. Even when we wish we could do something else.

Tell me about your knitting. How much do you knit in a year?

I knit a lot. In a year? I knit a lot. Lots of sweaters, lots of slippers. How many sweaters? Oh, that depends on who wants sweaters. I don't just sit and knit sweaters. But yeah, a lot of slippers.

How many slippers can you knit a year, for example?

How many CAN I knit? Oh, I can knit soooo many.... but I knit about 50 pairs of slippers, I think. But I could easily knit a few hundred, if I only knit slippers. And sweaters... I don't know. This year I knit many. I knit one for myself... and someone... and you... and Uni... ten, perhaps?

What are you planning to knit for Christmas this year?

I don't know. Haha. I haven't decided yet. I always knit slippers. Mildrið often gets them... and all the children... and some people buy slippers from me. So I'm always knitting for someone...

When do you start the Christmas knitting?

It must be soon now, if there will be sweaters. Slippers are quick to knit. I can easily knit a pair in an evening. Two feet, one pair. I can easily do that. If I sit peacefully.

Súsanna Sørensen, Leisure Marketing Manager & Press Officer for **Visit Faroe Islands**

Interview conducted in English

Targeted Interview:

Your office frequently works with foreign journalists and the pieces they publish about the Faroe Islands. What tendencies do you see in how these journalists represent the Faroe Islands?

That's a big question and it sort of supposes that I read all the articles. And I actually don't anymore because there are so many! Haha. Tendencies... I think it's very much the way we describe ourselves, which is like this unspoiled country, or this unknown country in the middle of nowhere. And you know, it's a hidden gem, it's, ah... so, something that is unknown or hidden and unspoiled and authentic and then they describe whatever experiences they have, but generally I would say that that sort of is the introduction to most of the articles. And then depending on what they do in the Faroe Islands, the articles sort of goes on from there. But very much about this country that nobody has heard of and how fantastic it is, so yeah, sort of in broad terms.

How do you think foreign perceptions of the Faroe Islands have changed throughout time and are changing today?

I don't know if it's changed that much. The biggest change is in the number of people who are arriving. That has changed a lot, from 50 two years ago, and 100 last year, and around 150 this year. Not media, people, because sometimes there are two people traveling together, and a few times there might be four, but over 100 media I would say. So the number of people is changing, and I think... I think that will be sort of the biggest change. I'm thinking there was an article in the New York Times, some years ago, that said, "Into the mystical unreal of the Faroe Islands." And basically it's sort of the same, still, and that was in 2007. Do you know Stephen Metcalf?

No, I don't know him personally, but I know the article.

Yes, I've written to him, tried to ask him to come back, but he hasn't made it yet.

So I think the main change is in the numbers and obviously there are more and more things that you can do in the Faroe Islands. If you look, there has been a major development over the last 10 or 15 years, so we do to some degree see people who come for more specific targets, like food only, for example, and music only, for the G! Festival. Whereas I assume that articles previously were more broad, sort of general articles. Now we do see segments, or like a motorbike magazine, hiking magazine, so we do see more like niche media coming as well. So maybe that is a change, compared to previously when it was more sort of general, general media.

Are there new types of tourism that you think are growing right now?

I mean we've been having issues with statistics all the time, but we are trying more and more to target various new types of tourists, or going after certain segments, acknowledging that someone in Germany who is interested in birds might have something more in common with someone in the UK who is interested in birds than with his neighbor for example. So instead of going after countries and everybody in the country, we ought to look at more sort of niche and specific segments. Also because we go out to markets that are further away, in Denmark

everyone in Denmark knows us, so its easier to target more sort of widely, but if we're going to go into Germany or into the US, we need to be much more focused or clever, because we don't have the budget for major, broad marketing. So we see a change in that. We see... because we don't have the numbers, it's difficult to say, but we can see that there are more and more people who do come on these motorbike trips or fishing or these photo-workshops or things like that. But I assume its still small numbers compared to the general tourist.

So are the stereotypical tourists the ones who come on the cruise ships for one day?

No, I wouldn't actually say that. Maybe because we don't work with cruises. It's the local port authorities and local tourist offices, and I think that's common in other countries as well, that cruises is often like the ports and the individual cities. And obviously there are a large number of cruise passengers, but I think that from where we are or where we were, if there is a stereotype of a tourist, it's someone who's interested in nature. And often of a certain age... or past their youth or... Hahaha. Although we are trying to see if we can get younger people to come. And they are coming. And before we probably said they were 60, and now we say they're 45 or something. So it's moving downwards.

What do you think are some common misconceptions or misrepresentations of the Faroe Islands?

Are you thinking of anything in particular that you have seen?

Well of course I have my ideas, but I don't want to sort of influence yours.

Hahaha. Well, one of the things that we notice a lot, especially from media in the UK is their need to say that we're part of Denmark. So Danish rule, or we have helicopters subsidized by the Danish government, or different types of issues in relation to our, how we belong to Denmark. Which are more like factual mistakes that we try to correct mainly because we want to say that we're, we want to distance ourselves from Denmark because they're a completely different type of destination. And also I suppose for sort of personal reasons. Hahaha.

But misconceptions, I guess there's always this stereotype of a people who lives in the middle of the ocean and close to nature and authentic and... which obviously is not the full picture. Although it is true for us more than for a lot of other people if you can say it like that. But I know and I've seen criticism in the Faroe Islands... do you know Kim Simonsen? Because he always talks about how people from abroad saw the Faroese, I don't know, 100 or 200 years ago, and that we are painting that same picture today. Uhhh... with us... and back then, it was people being a bit naïve and more sort of interested from an, I don't know, anthropological point of view or something. Hahaha. I do not of course agree with what he's saying, but I can also see that we to some extent are painting this picture. But we're trying to do it with all the nuances and different layers that people have as well. But I guess in marketing it's often, it's often difficult to get all of that. It has to be very simple, the message that you're giving.

But I don't know... now I'm thinking of sort of articles like travel articles, I'm not thinking about... if you think about the... did you see or hear about um, a tv program that was in Danish television about...

Kvindeflugt fra Færøerne?

Yeah, exactly, yeah, that one. Is that what you were thinking about? Because that wasn't one of our productions, I wasn't there. Yeah, that's pretty common for especially the Danish

media. And also I think the Danes to a very large degree are prejudiced towards what we are, or think that they know how we are, or think they have some ideas about how things are in the Faroe Islands, and they are not as black and white as they may think that they are. And we can see that in their descriptions. They are always sort of cliché, how beautiful it is, and how wild it is, and how the ocean sort of shapes the people and all those things. But it's not something that we really mind, but it's, I mean it's completely cliché and you can see it in almost everything, and I know that a lot of people are very annoyed about it, but I'm not.

So sometimes it's a positive thing, at least for tourism, but it's still a stereotype?

Exactly, exactly, yeah. And you know like, “treeless country” but there are plenty of trees, come on. But those are small details. You can always look at factual errors or over-stressing things, that makes the picture sort of go the wrong way, but... and... did you see those, we have made some inserts for Danish newspapers about the Faroe Islands?

Which ones?

Let's see if I have one. These are two examples... And it's 20 pages about the Faroe Islands that we sent out with Politiken and Jyllands-Posten which are sort of the main Danish national newspapers on a Sunday. And all of the articles we completely controlled, it's our document you could say. And it's, we're trying to show a different picture of the Faroe Islands. That we have a symphony orchestra, that we have a guy who's participating in the Olympics, that we have Guðrun and Guðrun. And we have an article about all the trees in Tórshavn for example, haha. Because the guy who sort of helped us with this, who was the editor, he lives in Denmark, and he's so annoyed by the Danish sort of “Oh, dramatic and beautiful, and waves, and no trees” and he hates that picture which the Danes are painting. And for me – I mean for me it's no big deal. But so we had articles about that. And people in the Faroe Islands reacted saying, “Where are trees, we don't see any trees!” Hahahaha. So it goes both ways. Haha. But the purpose was to give the Danes a broader insight into what we actually are, instead of the clichés that they have and the stereotypes that they have. And they have been very popular, those, so...

But painting that picture of the unspoiled gem in the middle of the ocean is fine for tourism purposes you could say.

When you say it doesn't bother you, do you mean sort of personally or like, as the head of the tourism?

Um... Both, actually. But I mean the one in Danish television bothered me on both levels as well. The Kvindeflugt fra Færøerne. Because I thought it was completely misrepresentational of everything that goes on in the Faroe Islands. But otherwise, I can't... I mean, there might be things, but I can't think of any things at the moment, because normally we are extremely pleased with the articles that we get. And they are fantastic descriptions of this country that everybody should go and visit right away, and that's what we want. So... and if there are some factual errors, as long as it doesn't have anything to do with our situation with Denmark, I don't care. So if they say we have 20 islands instead of 18, I don't care. So most of these factual errors are okay. Or if they say that people live on 15 of the 18 islands, those are just small sort of details, it's the whole picture that's important, I think.

So Kvindeflugt fra Færøerne, what about that one bothered you?

Everything. Umm... it was a picture of, actually, I have to admit I didn't see the whole thing. But it was... it was... a description of a backwards country I think. And yes, obviously, these things take place, because they were able to go out and film them, but it's a very small

fraction of what the Faroe Islands is all about. And it bothered me that they obviously came with an agenda, which was to show that. And I have ten women they could have interviewed who have recently decided to stay in or move to the Faroe Islands, like Guðrun and Guðrun, the designers, and Lilja Weihe who's head of the radio, like the news editor there, she just moved to the Faroe Islands, uh, there is this young researcher... I mean there are plenty, they could have balanced the story, they could have done both, or they could have just shown... I mean obviously it wouldn't be called Kvindeflugt if they showed women who have actually moved back... but they came with that agenda, and it annoyed me. It annoyed me a lot.

And although I could, I could... I mean everybody who was in the show or in the program did a very good job representing, I mean, themselves, and they were, the guys in Klaksvík, I mean everybody was eloquent, and... and they seemed very nice, it was not like they seemed stupid or anything, but it was just the way, it just seemed kind of, sort of Hillbilly country. Hahaha. And you could, they could have done the same on the west coast of Denmark if they wanted to. But it bothers me that they keep on looking for those stereotypes, although I admit that they are here... I mean the pictures that they show is true, but it's not the full picture. And there were a lot of discussions afterwards because they said nobody is interested in the lives we live here in Tórshavn, because it's the same life as people live everywhere else, so therefore it's not good television – this is good television because it's different from, maybe this... I don't know. You should have been here, everyone was completely upset, people were really, really angry. Haha.

It's funny, I think that show had a big influence on my project. Because when I first started thinking, "Oh, I'd like to do some work in the Faroe Islands," I started asking my friends "What's up, what are you thinking?" And they were all sort of upset about this. I don't know, it's clearly like a bigger problem than just that one show, but it's kind of funny that that show came out right about that time, so it kind of influenced the project a little bit.

Yeah. But because when we have a lot of tourists, a lot of media travel out to Dímun for example, and meet the family on Dímun. Because I think they are a great example of a family who lives completely in contact with nature, but still at the same time is dependent on all modern facilities, like helicopter, and internet, and Skype, or their children's music education in Tórshavn and all those things. And I'm sometimes thinking that we should... make... and I send people to the farmer in Kirkjubø who is 17th generation on the same farm. And I'm very conscious of balancing those two up against something that happens in Tórshavn, like (Úti?) doing his TV shows or something so that it's not only this picture of this old country with grass roofs and the old houses.

Which is something that people find fascinating, and therefore very often take pictures of. And it's those pictures that we have as well, because it's those pictures that people want. So it's sort of this circle, and how do we show the modern side as well? But I think that is normally or very often balanced very well. Sometimes it's not, but most of the times I think it is. And if you think about the story that is normally told about Eva, from Dímun, it's not the same one that the Danish tv program did. Because I mean she, she could be, she is actually someone who lived abroad and decided to move back... but the way it was portrayed is sort of terrible.

I remember that the first minute of the program is so strange, you wouldn't even think it's about women at all, there are hardly any women in the program, and then they say that Klaksvík is a small village... I mean maybe I've been in the Faroes too long that I think Klaksvík is a city, but... Hahaha.

Hahaha, that's good.

So, changing gear a bit, I used your recent pamphlet, "The Faroe Islands: Take a Deep Breath" when talking to Faroese people about how the islands are represented. Can you tell me a little bit more about this product and what your goals were in producing it?

Yeah. It's what we call an image brochure. Tourist boards have image brochures, which are brochures with images more than text. So it's something that we hand out to people who are looking for inspiration more than... we have, like the tourist guide as well, the smaller one, do you know that one? Yeah, which is like factual information, texts about fashion and food and history and things like that. The purpose of that one is to arouse interest. And normally it's made, I don't know, every three or four years, so it's supposed to be a bit, I don't know, timeless.

And what we want, the idea with that one was to show place, like typical tourism places that either everybody knows or everybody goes to in the Faroe Islands, like Gásadalur and Mykines and the old part of Tórshavn, and to use 'famous' people from the Faroe Islands, and sort of use them together with these specific spots. And... because we wanted to focus on the people, or on the creative people in the Faroe Islands as well. And yes, we know that they are not famous outside the Faroe Islands, but they are good ambassadors for the Faroe Islands.

Some of them are famous outside.

Yeah, yeah, I know. But there were sort of some people sort of laughing, because we said they were famous, and they said "nobody Faroese is famous." But yeah, some of them are known in some circles. But... it was not because we thought they were so famous that everybody would react when they saw Eivør on the front page, but she's a very good ambassador for the Faroe Islands, like Guðrun and Guðrun and Sunnleif and the other people. And we wanted to balance, like having the national football team was very important for us. It was actually not part of the original... we sent this job out, this offer out to several ad agencies, and they all sent us different ideas. And we liked that one right away. But we insisted on having the national football team in it, because they are so important for everybody... if people know about the Faroe Islands just a little bit, they would know about the football team. So basically that's the idea. And then a little bit of text, where we sort of, basic text, that's sort of the purpose of the brochure.

People really liked it. They really liked also all the small pictures.

Yeah, they are really nice. We spent a lot of time finding the small pictures to sort of balance the full page, and that everything should fit in.

I think it's really well put together. It's interesting, because for me, I think the big pictures are great, but many people looking at them really liked the small pictures so much that they wanted those to be bigger.

Really?

Yeah, and I was talking to Faroese people about it. And I think they were also thinking, "The big pictures are nice, but we've seen those. We want the small ones, those are interesting."

I really like the ones in Saksun... there was this picture of the guys under this, uh... up against this old house.

Yeah, everybody mentioned that picture, how much they loved it.

Yes, it's such a typical village image from the Faroe Islands. And there were woolen clothes, clothes on the clothesline, weren't there? I really liked that page, I thought that page was really nice.

We also had a lot of focus on the balance between males and females. Maybe that's just me, but it was important that there were... because the original suggestion had, I don't know, two women and seven men or something. And we wanted to make sure there was a balance. And it was no problem. I mean obviously Guðrun and Guðrun were supposed to be there. So it was not difficult to find, but it was something that was important for us as well.

So what will you end up doing, is it like a thesis, or?

Yes, there's the thesis part of it, so that's mostly what this interview is for, which is about how the Faroe Islands are represented in the media. And that's all kinds of media. So the main ones of course are the travel media, a little bit of news here and there, and then, of course, the Sea Shepherd stuff and all that.

Because we didn't get into, I was thinking that part of media I didn't even want to get into, but obviously we are, I don't think we... We are very frustrated by all the propaganda that is out there when it comes to Sea Shepherd, but that's a completely... I mean it's not something that... we say it's not our business, or it's not our portfolio. It depends for the Prime Minister or the Minister of Fishery, they're supposed to handle that. Obviously we are unhappy that whaling is so... visible, when people google the Faroe Islands. But at the same time we are happy to see that it does not seem to affect the interest of other serious media to come to the Faroe Islands. So, and we can see that there is a lot of noise on the social media, but it doesn't really get into the established media. So far it's okay I think.

I've seen some people think too that although Sea Shepherd has it's strong bias, they're still putting out images of the Faroe Islands, and some people are thinking, "Wow, that place is beautiful, and I've never heard of it," so it could have some positive effect as well.

It could. Did anybody tell you, the Whale Wars, did you see that? From the Faroe Islands? We had expected to get a lot of emails from angry people. Because we do get emails from people, like in February, they come in like storms. And actually we didn't really get that much. We didn't really get that many emails, and quite a few of them were actually positive. It was saying, "This is such a fantastic country you're living in, and we really want to come," and also kind of saying that now they finally saw how Paul Watson was working, and it made them disagree with him, and sort of take our side, so that was very interesting, because I think we had equally many positive as negative responses, and that was something that we didn't expect at all. So that was very good.

And it seems to me that from my perspective being very far away from the Faroe Islands, if I talk to someone and they've heard something about the Faroe Islands, it's usually whaling, but then those are usually the people who otherwise would hear nothing, and would probably go to the Faroe Islands. Most of them don't have passports, have never left America, so it's not that it doesn't matter, but...

Yeah. It disturbs the picture of it. But we are sort of optimistic and... at least, for now, it doesn't seem to interfere too much. I mean, we have people, when we come to fairs, who come over and are upset. And sometimes we're able to talk to them and they understand, and sometimes we're not. (shrug).

Ed Ou, journalist shooting an autumn 2014 Vice documentary about the grind.

Interview conducted in English

Targeted Interview:

So how did you end up working on this project in the Faroe Islands? I know you have done a lot of work for the New York Times in the Middle East, and you've been working in Greenland, right?

Yeah, in the Canadian arctic. I'm actually going there next. So, it's... that's part of the story, that's why I went to the Faroes in the first place, because I'd been working in Northern Canada. I'm planning a trip to Greenland, and so I'm doing this project in the Arctic specifically. And while the Faroes doesn't exactly fit into it, it kind of fits into it.

I think actually the ways that its similar and the ways that its different are kind of interesting.

Yeah, yeah, exactly. So when I was working in northern Canada, I was working with the indigenous inuit communities. And there it's really legitimate... like all the arguments that the Faroese use are completely true – like the whole, “We have no other source of food”... that's kind of not really true in the Faroes, but it's absolutely true in Northern Canada and Greenland and Alaska and Russia. And so I wanted to kind of contrast like, that same look, that same argument, or those same questions, but look at a hypermodern white society.

And what's interesting is that's what I found – Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd have also been very vocal, Sea Shepherd particularly, about the seal hunt in Canada. Even though it's not exactly touching on indigenous, they're... Sea Shepherd is more focused on the commercial, white seal hunt in Newfoundland, but at the same time, the legislation that they're kind of putting pressure on is exactly the same – it would also affect the inuit as well. Same thing with polar bears, narwhals, beluga... so I think that was why it was interesting to go to the Faroes, because Sea Shepherd can be a lot more vocal about it, it seems, because you know, you're dealing with white people, you're dealing with a non-indigenous, non-marginalized population and so I wanted to see if it was because they were legitimately easier targets, or whether... like... where that fit in. So that's kind of the work I was doing in the arctic. The Faroes is kind of a side-note to that.

Wow, I could talk about these topics with you all day, but I don't want to take up your whole morning.

No, no, it's like, I left the Faroes a week... two weeks ago... and when I first left I was actually really depressed, it was like Ooohhh, it was literally like, legitimately one of the most special places I've ever been in the world. And I mean I've travelled all over the world, and I've never been anywhere like that.

It's... it's strange, and so, yeah... it's... I want to go back in the winter, actually, because I think that's... everyone always says the summer is like a strange time to go, it's like the non-representative time, so I think the winter would be, when it's like truly truly you can get a sense of the culture and stuff like that.

Yeah, the first time I went it was sort of winter, and it was a really good time to go because it was late winter, so I got to see some snow and stuff, but I still had some daylight where I could see things. So I think if you were only going to go once, or the first time, I don't think

it would be that wise to go at midwinter because it's just dark and you wouldn't see that much. But I think Easter was a great time to go... so it was kind of like the very end of the winter, and there was snow, and there were definitely a couple days I think I got the winter vibe.

So how did you first find out about the grindadráp?

So, when I was working in northern Canada, one of my friends is, or a guy... like, I hung out with a few people there, in Nunavut, and there's this one pretty prominent designer, who, she's Faroese, and she lives in Iqaluit, in northern Canada, and she designs sealskin fashion. So she takes sealskin, which is Canada's controversial, equivalent I guess of the whale hunt, and she makes high fashion with sealskin. Her name is Rannvá Simonsen. So her son, Thor, became a really good friend of mine when I was in the arctic.

And I was looking at all these issues, like polar bear hunting, and narwhal hunting, and then Thor, he told me, you know if you think it's bad here, you think it's controversial here, you should go to the Faroes? And I'm like, "What is this?" And he showed me pictures, and it's like – I kind of knew where the Faroes was, but I didn't know that much about it. And I had already been looking to do a bunch of trips about, looking at exactly, like food security and subsistence hunting, and traditions, and you know, all these things. And he recommended that I go there, and that's how I heard about it in the first place.

So did you go before you went for this project?

No, I had never been before. It was my first time in the Faroes.

What did you do to gather information on the topic in preparation?

Well I had friends there. So, because of him, I'd talk to him, and basically, I was able to build this network of friends. And there's another photographer, I'm sure you know about him, Benjamin Rasmussen.

Yes, I haven't met him in person, but we have some mutual friends.

Yeah, basically, so as you know, the journalism world is tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny, and the photojournalism world is even smaller. So it's like everybody knows each other. So basically I reached out to him, I saw his pictures, and then again, I like to think that photojournalists specifically help each other out a lot. And he was really nice about it. I basically cold-called him and told him I was doing this, and he basically hooked me up with like everyone I knew. And I have to say, it was... by the time I had gotten to the Faroes, I had already, without even realizing it, built up a really, really good network. But it's pretty easy to do that, because it's so small there, so it's not that hard to do that. So it was actually really nice, because, yeah, I talked to Ben and Thor, and by that time, by the time I got there, I had a place to live, I had a car and everything, so it was actually really nice.

That's great. Did you do much research, did you read much about the grindadráp before you went?

Yeah, yeah. I mean a lot of historical documents are in Danish or Faroese, so I kind of tried to translate some of that, but like, it was mainly talking to people and just seeing. And I talked to the... the director of... I made a few phone calls and talked to the people who were in charge of the museum, and some of the whalers, or who I thought were whalers, so I sort of just built that up before I went. But a lot of journalism is you just have to go there. For as much research as you can do in advance, you just have to go there.

So it was a combination of like, doing as much... and what I found was that there was such an absence of information, at least in mainstream traditional sources. You would read all of these stories that were single source, just Sea Shepherd or Greenpeace dictating the story to outlets that were too lazy to send someone or do their own research.

So did you read any mainstream media pieces about the Faroes, about the grindadráp or just about the Faroes as a destination or anything like that before you went?

Yeah, I'd say so. Like I think, the only piece I could really, that from mainstream media – the New York Times did the magazine piece, that was like, “The mystical unreal reality of the Faroes” or something like that, which I thought was... it didn't... that was like... one mainstream source that kind of sticks out as far as like a portrait of the country. I'm trying to think about what else. I know that Nat Geo traveller did something about puffins... or... there wasn't that much that I found. And then beyond that, I know that the Daily Mail and all these tabloids basically have these, not anti-whaling, but like, “Look at this, they –” and as funny as it sounds, Vice actually did a story about it 2000, and that... Oh, God.

So this is the thing, the project that I just did was my first time working for Vice. I normally work for the New York Times in the Middle East, doing video, and when I was trying to find funding and someone to pitch this story to, like most traditional media, like The New York Times, or Time, they're like, “Well, let me get this straight. You want to go to the Faroes, for two months, to get this thing that may not even happen while you're there, and you want to go to one of the most expensive countries in Europe... like, what?” And so they... Vice was actually the only publication that I found that was, strangely enough, down to send two people there for a long time. But... it was also weird because by the time we got there, like everyone kept on citing that one article that came out, which, what was it, “The Faroese love to stab whales to death”?

Because, Vice can be like that, which...

Yeah. Yeah. Which... But to be fair, given the tabloid headline and the shitty writing, it wasn't exactly anti-whaling, and it wasn't exactly pro-whaling, it was just like a very Vice way to go about it. So to be fair, a lot of Faroese people actually brought that up when we told them we worked at Vice, but that said... it wasn't... like if you looked beyond the tabloid headline, it wasn't really that anti-whaling, it was just like, “Well, yeah, that's what they do.”

So what did your expectations of the Faroe Islands from what you'd seen in the media or heard from your friends compare to what you experienced when you got there?

Well, I kind of knew that like... as a journalist, I know most journalism about any topic, especially controversial ones, are usually pretty one-sided. So having been working in the Canadian arctic, I kind of knew that it's always like... don't trust everything you read. Or, like, whatever you would read is probably by someone who is not from there, has an agenda, and so on. So I'd like to think I was pretty skeptical of the coverage that had already been there, and openminded about showing the real story.

So I'd like to think that I wasn't exactly that shocked by the time I got to the Faroes, it was like, yeah, it's alright, the world says one thing, but here's another thing, so you know, it's about right. It was definitely a lot prettier than I thought it would be and a lot friendlier than I thought it would be. But I think the key is that you have to go into places with an open mind. That's absolutely necessary. And it does bug me that like... a few journalists sort of reached out to me when I was going to the Faroes, and like a few journalists have come after the fact. And you know, when they frame it as like, you know, people come in and you can

tell that all that they've read is what Sea Shepherd would have said, and that unfortunately sets the tone for a country that is not defined by whale hunting, even though it kind of is, but it's not, so it's interesting.

Did you ever have a hard time working in the Faroes because people associated you with Sea Shepherd?

Yeah, we got that in the beginning, and people would still ask, but the thing is, that's the nature of journalism. And like, for me, I work in the Middle East, so the stakes there are a lot higher. Like when people think you're... like I've been called an Israeli spy, I've been called CIA, all these things in the Middle East, and those are the kind of things that can get your head cut off. So in the Faroes it's like, "Oh, they think I'm an activist." And it's like not that bad. So, compared to what I usually do, I don't really mind being confused with Sea Shepherd. It was actually... it was cute.

But the thing that I've found is that, if you... like for me, I would just point people to my work, and say "Look at what I've done, it kind of speaks for itself, it is what it is." But to be fair, I think I would be very clear about appearing that I'm objective and be very clear about not appearing that I was on one side or the other. And it works both ways, because a lot of times when I was interviewing Sea Shepherd, they would see us interacting with Faroese people, and they'd say, "You know, why are you talking with that guy? He hates Sea Shepherd!" And it was like, "You know, a lot of people do, it's not like..." And so, it... in the beginning, yeah, it's definitely building trust.

But I found that as time goes by... and by the time I left, I had been there for two and a half months or so, and by that time, I think most people had probably figured out, that if you were there long enough, you're probably somehow committed to the story. So it's just like building trust, and if you have certain people vouch for you, it goes a really long way. So when I first got there, I forget where I was, but I went to a party with local people and I just had someone basically say, "Oh yeah, this is so-and-so, he's friends with so-and-so." It doesn't take long for that misconception to be put down.

But that said, it was still tough, because there would be times, that like, I remember I was photographing Sea Shepherd people in front of the Brigitte Bardot, and these photographers came in to photograph Sea Shepherd to put on that website, haha, the Sea Shepherd thing, and I was there, labeled as Sea Shepherd, and I had to call them and say, "Look, I know it probably looks like it, but I'm not. So can you please either take out the picture or put a caption that says I'm not." And most people are pretty friendly about it. And, haha, you can see it on the site, and there's a picture of me with a camera, and the first thing is like "Sea Shepherd in the Faroes" and the second thing is like "This guy's from Vice." But people are not... people are so friendly anyway, that it wasn't really a big deal.

That said, it was definitely a point of anxiety. Because before we got the grind in Suðuroy, like, it was always like, shit, are we going to get a grind, are we not going to get a grind? And if we were sent there specifically to find one... I mean, there were a lot of questions, like, would we get kicked out? Because the police announced that they would have that five-meter cordon, and everything like that. So there were just a lot of questions, like were we going to get painted as Sea Shepherd, and then like, blocked from going to see a grind? So yeah, that definitely was a source of anxiety. So yeah, we made phone calls, and we had multiple meetings with Peter Thaysen, you know, the head of the police there, and there was a lot of convincing people before the fact, that, you know, we're not Sea Shepherd and things like that. So it was a concern, definitely, but I'd like to think that we mitigated that by making contact, building trust, and just getting contacts.

What did you do to try to portray the Faroe Islands accurately and fairly?

Well, I think it's just like showing culture beyond the grind. Because I think the grind is one... for as much talk, for as much space as the grind occupies in the public consciousness, it definitely doesn't happen that much, as you saw. I think it just has to be put in context with other things like hunting, like formal hunting, or fishing, or you know, all the things that happen, just another part of it. So I think part of it was just being there to show, not even just the holidays, but like the traditions, you know, just other things kind of puts it in context. And that alone is all you have to do, you know like...

So right now we are editing the piece, and it's like... you know, the grind... we're thinking it's going to be like 20-25 minutes, and the grind is going to be 6 or 7 minutes of it. And it's like... it's not... but we're also showing other things, like daily life, we're showing grocery stores, just people doing their thing, music, all that stuff... and that will like hopefully put the grind into context, so people don't think that like, "On a daily basis people are like sharpening their knives and on a lookout." because they're not... like, even though they are... but it's like different.

Yeah, that was actually something I heard multiple times when I was interviewing the Faroese about how they thought they were represented, and it was like, "Yeah, whenever we are hungry we just go and sharpen our spear and walk down to kill a whale." Which isn't the case at all.

Right, right. But by the same token, it's go and kill a sheep, or go fishing. That is true. Or, you know, go to the grocery store. So, right, you know... it's interesting. I think the portrayals definitely are sometimes... it's either way too romantic, or way too critical, and... it's a place. And you just cannot generalize a place by one thing.

And that's one thing that really kind of bugged me about what Sea Shepherd was doing. So we were there two months or so, and Sea Shepherd people would continuously by like, "What are you still doing here? You guys saw a grind, it was horrible, quote, and why are you still here?" And we would tell them, "Look, there's more to life... there's more to this place than this singular thing that I know that you're here for."

And that was something that continually I had to explain to activists, like the Sea Shepherd people, and also just people, that "no, there's more, there's other stories to do here." But people look at it so narrowly, they're like, "What could you possibly want to do here? Besides the Grind." I think that's... like, to write off an entire country like that is just insane.

Have you heard any of the Faroe Islands podcast?

No, I haven't actually. No, I did. Yeah... I heard a few of them, but not all of them.

He says the same thing, because he is not that interested in the whaling. He's covered it a little bit because it's something that has affected them a lot with Sea Shepherd there. But he's really gotten annoyed that everyone, even Faroese people, whatever, wants to always make it about the grind.

Yeah, that's the thing, a lot of times we would be out with Faroese people, and we wouldn't bring it up, but the Faroese would bring it up. Which is like... I don't know. But I get it. It makes sense. And plus like, all the tourists are all like retired Norwegian people on cruises. Right? So like, when you see anyone who's not like an old, senior citizen on a cruise... they just assume... like, anyone in our age demographic is either Sea Shepherd, or probably a journalist or something like that.

Yeah, especially when you get outside the absolute peak tourism season.

Yeah, exactly, because what would any tourist do there anyway? Which makes sense. Which is like unfortunate because they sort of perpetuate that same thing. Like, I'm not bringing it up, you are. Which is interesting. But I get it. You just have to like... when you compare it to other issues, other places that are defined by certain things, it's very easy to... forget about everything else about them.

And for me, I think a lot of the work that I do is dispelling preconceived notions about a place. So, to give you... the Middle East is a prime example of that. When I first went to the Middle East, everyone saw the Arab/muslim world in the context of terrorism and extremism. And everyone saw Israel in context of occupation, quote, apartheid and all of that stuff. And it was like every news story would be somehow hooked to the occupation or the conflict. And it was like, "No, It's..." I would actually try to do stories that had nothing to do with that.

And we have to kind of balance... it sucks that in Journalism everything has to be hooked to the lens of something accessible. I wanted to go to the Faroes to show the culture. But of course for any editor in New York, I have to hook it to the whale hunt, because otherwise, why would they send you? It's a battle. I'd rather go there hooking it on something that's pretty done to death, but still go there and do something slightly different than not go there at all.

The nature of journalism, and the nature of just the way people understand the world... in a conflict... you can change it to a certain extent, but you also have to work around that. And if you can change a few different stereotypes, that's also nice.

But in this case I am glad you were covering this because there's basically nothing right now that's from a reasonably reputable source, reasonably well done...

Haha, reasonably reputable.

Yeah, but I mean there's nothing really close. I mean obviously I don't want to sit here and praise your documentary when I haven't seen it but I'm really looking forward to seeing it.

I hope it will be good. As of now I'm still a bit unsure how the final edit is going to be. But from most of the meetings I've had, and phone calls with editors, they seem pretty down-to-earth about it as well.

And something that's interesting I think is that even journalists who do go there, like there was another journalist who came, who's actually a mutual friend of mine, but people would go there for like a week. And then, it's just... you can't do it like that... so I found that kind of, not confusing, or just really strange, that you would even think that you could get something in a week. I just found it really bizarre.

Yeah, but it's sort of understandable in terms of the industry.

Yeah. Which is so unfortunate, you know, because like, it's just the way it is... because these TV companies... or... I don't know. But I'm fortunate that I was able to find a publication that was chill with us being there for two months. But that's pretty unusual.

Matthew Workman, the man behind the Faroese Podcast

Interview conducted in English

Targeted Interview:

So I know the whole famous story about how you first came to know about the existence of the Faroe Islands, but how did it progress from that to you being more interested and eventually deciding to create a podcast about Faroese issues?

To say how I became really interested is still really confusing to me, and all the answers sound really flaky or mystical... I mean, because I've learned about a lot of places before and found them very interesting. You know your Iceland, Bhutans, Singapores, places like that... small, kind of obscure, but this place... for lack of a better term just kind of spoke to me. Like it just... kind of called out, and I was driven... I just wanted to learn more and I didn't know why. Like, now I know why because I know the people and I have concrete reasons, but at the very very start, it was just this compulsion that I couldn't shake. And after writing about it online a bunch, then another Faroese person sent a comment and that was... my descent into madness was made complete.

And that was kind of my entrance to the country in a way, because that, it was that first person who got me onto Facebook and began introducing me to people, and I was still writing every week on my blog, just about the Faroe Islands and it was after a couple of years of that, a couple of years of writing, and about a year on Facebook kind of networking, that there was the moment of, well, what do we have here? And what can we do? And we hit upon a podcast because the barriers to entry were low, and it was what we could do write then. And we didn't need anything other than a hosting account, free editing software, and, you know, other free tools like Skype, and we could do it right then. He would find people for me to interview, and I would send him out to places to record natural sound with a cheap dictation machine, so we would do it that way.

It was just sort of a natural progression from I'm trying to learn everything I can about it, and tell people about it, to then the podcast was just... was simply the only thing that we could do right then with what we had and wouldn't cost us a fortune or require purchasing a lot of expensive equipment.

How has the podcast evolved over the past 200 plus episodes?

I would describe it in the early days as looking at a single object through a lot of different windows. In the early shows, all the topics were really broad. Like this is going to be show about music, and this is going to be show about religion, this will be the show about oil... so who's a person we can talk to about oil? Who's a person we can talk to about politics, or history, or whatever? And the idea was to sort of open up a different window and see how we could see this single object from this different angle and these different views and the different perspectives and slowly it would become more three-dimensional as we looked at it through these different windows, and... and so that was the goal, and then again so putting these pieces together to sort of make it real and give people a sense of what it's like to be there. Which is, now, seems kind of silly because I hadn't been there, but...

And then... I think what... probably the biggest change was once I actually travelled to the Faroe Islands, because the first 20 or 30 episodes I'd never been there, and then I travelled there and recorded tons of material, and... it's changed now to... it's slowly evolved into... it's a little bit more about experiences, because I can go there and have experiences and record

them.

One of the most popular shows was to be a total throwaway at the time... there's this soccer pitch in Eiði. It's really famous among soccer nerds, it's "one of the most beautiful soccer pitches in the world" it's sort of out, it's right on the water, and whenever BuzzFeed puts together "the ten craziest football pitches in the world" or "the most beautiful" or whatever, it's always there. And so I wanted to find it, but considering it's in a small village and it's a soccer field so it's a pretty big thing, it is kind of hard to find. And uh... and it... I mean, if you're on the road it looks like the road doesn't go there, and you know. So eventually I gave up and parked the car because I thought I could see it off in the distance but I couldn't find a road that went there, but there was a trail through a marsh and so I decided that I would walk. And so I just turned on the microphone and got out of the car and walked, and sort of narrated this walk to this soccer pitch. And I did it because I was going to try to put out an episode while I was out there and I thought that would be the easiest thing to do, just sort of release this recording and it wouldn't be much work, because it's hard to release shows while you're over there. And that was one of the most popular shows I've ever done. Just that... that experience.

And I think that's what's popular for people now is to... they're more elaborate now a lot in terms of the audio because I can record a lot of audio and mix it in and try to make it sound like an experience. So it's changed in that it's become more about experiences, but two... it is a little... at times it can be more topical or more, like... I try to use it to as a source for English-language news for people who are interested.

A couple of years ago, maybe three-four years ago now, a member of parliament did a... or... said a bunch of stupid things about the president or prime minister of Iceland, and she was coming over with her wife, and there was going to be a dinner with all the heads of the political parties, and he wouldn't have dinner with her because she was a lesbian. And this made huge news around the world, in the, especially in the gay press all over the world, that oh, here's this homophobic leader in parliament in this tiny country... and... it was sort of working its way through the news cycle, and then someone I knew, one of the first guests on the show, who was a theologian, wrote a sort of open letter to the rest of the world about what was happening and how that... he doesn't really represent all of the Faroes... and I wanted an interview in English with him about... like I wanted that on the record. It was just a period in news where it's like, this needs to be out, and I felt like the show was a forum for that, to get that out, in English, to get shared around, and so... and be part of that conversation.

So it went from sort of gawking and something we didn't know to on one hand experiences, and on the other hand being a sort of voice for the Faroes. And it's the same thing with the whaling stuff, which is a subject that I don't like to do shows about, but sometimes its like, well, we're the only show that's going to do anything about this, so we do a show on the subject. And I wouldn't have felt that at the start, when it wasn't as established.

So what do you think are the main trends with how the Faroes are portrayed in the international media?

Um, I've only been following it for... seven-eight years now... And you know, trends are a little hard to come by because probably the, or one of the two biggest drivers of media attention is any time the national football team plays some other country. It... you know, whatever country it is is like, "Oh wow, did you know there's such a thing as the Faroe Islands? Do you know our team is going over there to some weird field to play a bunch of schoolteachers and auto mechanics?" So I've seen that, that sort of drives it... and then the whale hunt drives it. Those are probably the two biggest drivers. I mean the recent trend, the

trend over the last couple of years, I think there's definitely a lot more whaling coverage. Because you know Sea Shepherd's put a lot of their resources into it, they've put a lot of famous people there, and I think that drives the press more now than it did say a year and a half ago. But outside of that, the trends I see, outside of that, I think would be... I see more food, I see a lot more food. Over the last two or three years, I see a lot more foodie press, looking at, "Oh, let's go eat some lobsters," or, "Oh, here's some farmed salmon that tastes like wild..."

I think those are the trends. I see more food, I see more whales, and I see... I think there's more... I'm starting to see more high end tourist stuff as well, the adventure travel people are starting to find it a bit, but... yeah, more food, more whales are the two big trends I've seen.

And what about the overall tendencies, static tendencies you see?

I see... What are they saying about the Faroes? I mean they say, almost every article says something about "the staggering austere landscapes of this windswept land" and there's always talk of the mountains and the fjords and the... how can you not? It looks like Lord of the Rings over there, so... and there's always... the Faroese are still described as really exotic. And I think there's a tendency in the press to describe them as... a Nordic version of how you would see, say African natives described in National Geographic say 50 years ago, like "Oh we're looking in on this culture untouched by Western civilizations, Western hands... what can we in the modern world learn from these simple people who live closer to the land... these noble savages..."

Completely overlooking the fact that the Faroese are a hypermodern, ultra-connected to the rest of the world thing, but I think the world... a certain segment of the foreign press wants or needs the Faroese to be that noble, simple other... either because of the noble savages thing or, you know, if you're Sea Shepherd, then, "let's bring culture to these others... to the barbarians..." so whether they're... but there's that... it's completely erroneous, but I think in the less... in the lower quality stories I've seen, I've seen a tendency like that's an easy peg for people to do and I... and there's like, "Oh please let them be noble savages, oh please, please, please, that will make my story so easy." And some people who don't look hard enough find that.

What do you think is missing from these representations?

Any degree of nuance, any acknowledgement of like... like if you think that, you've either of have never been there, which is easy to tell those stories, you know, the travel stories or any piece of journalism written by someone who... it does not take long to figure out who's written those. But I don't see how you make any sort of... contact with the Faroese more than just a couple of minutes where you would walk away with that idea. There's just not a lot of homework being done. I... people come in just don't do basic homework about the place. I mean there's a lot going on, and it's... complicated. Like it's... it's a really complicated place. In a fun way, it's a fun kind of complicated, it's not like the Facebook Status "It's Complicated" It's good complicated! Yeah, and I think what's lacking is the acknowledgement of that complexity, and the desire to make it really simple.

Do you think the problem is more often people who don't go to the Faroes at all, but do you think people are going there but still sort of wearing blinders to that complexity?

I would say the second. I think... I mean, obviously, if you don't go there, that kind of goes without saying. But I think it is a common tendency to have your story half written before you show up. Like you know the basics beats of your story and you want to... and you need the... you need your pull quotes now. And you know, you find your characters, and you

know... place them into the story where you want them... and you're writing it on the plane on the way over. Yeah.

So is it just laziness or do you think there are other factors?

Uh... I mean one can never discount laziness. Hahahah.

I mean in terms of the whole process you have to go through to get a story placed in a publication, where you might have to pitch before you go and have a news peg, and all of the different edits that a story has to go through, do you think it's all sort of the laziness of the journalist or do you think these other factors are also playing a big role?

It could. Although I will say the most run-through piece that's ever been done, the most worked over piece that's ever been done about the Faroe Islands is a piece that Stephen Metcalf did for the New York Times in 2007, and that, I think, is the best piece of writing that I've ever read about the Faroe Islands. It was superlative. And I hadn't been there. And after reading that, I felt like I had, I felt like I knew the sense of what it was like, and when I showed up there two years later, it felt exactly like he described it. And some people that were sources on that story told me about the fact-checking process, and the hours and hours they had to spend on the phone with people from New York as they pored over every word and every detail written about this thing. So it was highly gone over. In that particular case all of that work turned out a really, really wonderful story. So, it's... it's possible, if you have the best journalism people in... at least in America.

But I... I don't know, I haven't done a lot of print journalism, so I haven't really needed to sell anything. But that simplicity is easier to describe, it's easier to sell, you know, if I was an editor, I don't know if I'd want to bite for, "Hey, I want to go to this place you've never heard of before, and there's a bunch of subtle and interesting stuff going over there..."

"And I won't know the whole story until you pay me to go over there"?

Yeah, because you won't really know it until you go over and experience it.

So what do you do to accurately and sensitively depict the Faroe Islands as an outsider?

You're presupposing I accurately and sensitively...

Well, this is what I've heard from Faroese people.

Alright, well first off, thanks to them. I'm happy to hear that they recognize their home... that's the highest compliment you can get. I don't know, everyone's had the experience of you go to an event, you go to a concert and then you read the story about it, and that doesn't sound like where they were. And that's the biggest test of how the person is, like, if you were at that event, do you recognize the event from what you've read. So I'm happy and flattered that you've talked to Faroese people who think that.

Gosh, what do I do? Hahaha. I don't know what I do?

Well, what do you do that you think other journalists don't do? Other than spending tons of time and like eight years being obsessed?

Yeah, being obsessed helps... having what is probably an autistic spectrum disorder certainly... can't hurt. But I mean, for now, I mean we talked about how I have hundreds of Facebook friends. And part of why I will friend anybody from the Faroes, is because I want

to see that stuff, even if I can't read it, like I want to see it in my feed.

Like during the Scottish independence thing recently, to see like how into that they were, and how close they were paying attention, and their opinions on that, so having that be the sort of IV drip throughout the day, this is what people are thinking about, here's what they're saying, here's what they're talking about. And over time you can see these trends, here's what people are interested in, and if I see enough of it, I'll go to some people that I trust and say, "Hey, what's going on here, what's this about?"

And I think just having a big network of people whose brains you can have access to on a regular thing, even if its not for a story, even if its not for a thing, but just always looking at... what are people thinking there. And I mean I have the advantage of that's all I do, and I've been doing it for a long time. Like, if you're a general assignment reporter you can't, you can't do that?

So what advice would you maybe have for someone who did have to do a story about the Faroes? Maybe they could spend two weeks on it, to do the best they could do on it?

Oh boy. First of all, if I could spend two weeks on it, I would spend all two weeks in the Faroes. Like... if you could say, do a week of advance work, and then a week in the Faroes... no. Just spend all two weeks there, and spend that first week not writing your story at all. Like spend... like every night at Sirkus... Hahaha. Or like... the Irish pub or whatever they've got going on up in Klaksvík. Just there, just talking to people.

It helps if you have autism, if you don't have autism, at least go to the club every night?

Yeah, no! Hahah. But that's... that's the thing. Because if you just go and hang out, despite... and this is what puzzles me about what a lot of the journalism I see, there's always this reference to "Oh, the Faroese are sort of, you know, these cold... these austere nordics... and they can be a bit standoffish and not very warm at first, and it takes you a while to get in.

That's because they think you're Sea Shepherd.

Haha yeah, it probably is because they think you're Sea Shepherd. But honestly I have never found that to be the case, from the very very first time I showed up there five years ago and no-one knew who I was, right out of the gate, people being really open and really friendly, and it took no time before I'm in the home of strangers. It doesn't take that much. That's why I say, just go to a place where people hang out in public and you're going to probably wind up in a group of people, and by the end of that night, you're probably going to be going from house to house, and you're in. It doesn't take all that long. You don't really have... and to just like go around and just talk to people about nothing in particular. You can take the temperature pretty quickly.

And for that second week, go work on your story. And then figure out, oh, if this is the story I want to do, just from those people whose homes you were at, or who you bought them a beer or whatever... if you... buy a Faroese person a beer, and then get his phone number, and he's your friend for the rest of your life. That's it! And then use that, because there's not even 50,000 people in the country, if you spent a week just meeting people, you are... if you've met a dozen people whose phone numbers you have, you're one degree of separation from the entire country. That's it. You can get to anyone else you need to get to.

But I don't... especially if you're coming in cold, I don't know if I see any substitution for that, just being on the ground. A lot of people who want help meeting people to make a movie, or you want to document or something... they want to build those relationships

online or do what they want, I say, I can introduce you to people, but really, just get on a plane and just go, just get on the ground, because that still really means something. Like showing up and yeah... having some hazy conversation at 2 in the morning... that really means something. And there's just no substitute for that.

Is there anything else you want to say on the topic of how the Faroes are represented, or how you think they should be represented?

How should they be... I mean... I can get really self serving, I think they should be represented as I do, and that's why I do it... if I thought they should be represented in a different way... then that's what I would do! But I don't know if I can give anyone else advice, except like... what I like when I read other people's stuff... and I'll use as an example a very unlikely example... the road... like the tour manager for Twisted Sister, has been writing a blog about their tour. And they went to the Faroe Islands, and they showed up a couple days in advance, because now most of the tours want to get people in early, because of the weather, and we need to be able to get them in, and just sort of let them hang out and show them around the country for a few days. And the tour manager was sort of writing this daily blog about here's what we've done on tour.

And they go to the Faroes and he... wrote really vividly about what was going on. And what... what I liked about it, it kind of gave me chills, is that... this guy allowed himself to be... that sense of wonder. That there is something sort of mysterious and wondrous about the place, and he just allowed himself to get lost in that, and sometimes be awestruck and be sort of moved. And again for a tour manager of an eighties metal band, he was surprisingly eloquent about this. And I would say, how should somebody do... is just to be open to that sense of wonder about this place. Because it is just unusual, there's not... you're not going to find anything like it... and just sort of... let yourself bathe in it... and just sort of soak up what's different. That's going to make for a good story.

And this is sort of out of order, but are there any sort of stereotypes that you think people have about the Faroes, Danish people, all sorts of international people, that you think sort of come up in the media or are separate from the media?

In the media the sort of stereotypes that I hear, is the one that I think is least accurate is the one that I already talked about, that they're these sort of cold, reserved, almost standoffish people until they get to know you. That is a stereotype and I've read it in a lot of pieces, and I think it's totally wrong.

If I'm talking to Danes... the stereotype I hear is that they're... rural and backwards, and not terribly sophisticated, and... there's a great short from Heidrik that talks about all that stuff, its a really interesting window into that, I highly... I don't know if you can get it online but I highly recommend it. It's called "A Hip Story" and I've seen clips from it, and you know, it's about an older sister who goes off to college in Denmark and then her younger sister visits for a weekend and it's about, you know, this older sister trying to "act Danish" and the younger sister not fitting in, and about how the Danes treat this younger sister, and don't care that they're mispronounced her name, and they're all wearing black, and the sister's wearing a sweater, and it's a really... apart from being a well-made movie it was a really interesting window into at least how the Faroese see how the Danish see them, and that, you know, the Faroese experience in Copenhagen. But you know having talked to Danes I think there's a little bit of a "hillbilly, little brother" sort of... you know... "part of the kingdom, that we just... you know... deal with them... hmmm..."

I mean then there's this Sea Shepherd stereotype that I don't think merit examination because, you know, they have such... they're not actually interested in portraying anything

accurately, they're interested in forwarding their specific cause, and they've enlisted the Faroese as unpaid extras in their little morality play. And so any stereotypes they put forward, just aren't... just don't even merit examination... because they're wholly unrelated to the Faroes – I mean they have nothing to do with the Faroese and they have everything to do with the Faroese, and I am not interested in covering Sea Shepherd, I am interested in covering the Faroese, and so those stereotypes, I just don't, I don't care about...

But I think from earnest travel writers, the, you know, “the austere, quiet, standoffish...” and from Danes and a certain class of European the, you know, maybe what we would call a hillbilly in the US, that sort of unsophisticated rural type, that the, those are the two big ones I've seen.