From the sea to the land beyond
To Sherlock of the fuzzy face
Benedict E. Singleton

From the sea to the land beyond
Exploring plural perspectives on whaling
Abstract


A perennial challenge in efforts to deal with environmental issues is the question of how to simplify. As such, where and when one simplifies is often a source of conflict, but perversely also paramount to finding a solution. This thesis focuses on one long-standing environmental issue, the whaling debate. Specifically, it performs a strategically sited micro-ethnography of Faroese whaling, grindadráp, exploring linkages between actions on local and international scales. This thesis aims to contribute to environmental sociological efforts to analyse and resolve complex socio-environmental problems.

The five papers that together constitute this thesis collectively provide a description of grindadráp from the local scale of the bays where pilot whales are killed to the international forums where whaling as a whole remains an issue at the heart of an on-going, deadlocked conflict. Primarily based on three months’ fieldwork in the Faroe Islands, this thesis combines observation, interviews, media and other literature. The theoretical lenses employed are that of the ‘ontological turn’ and the ‘theory of sociocultural viability’ (cultural theory). The former utilised as a tool for ethnographic practice with the latter used to analyse how different perspectives on reality manifest throughout the whaling conflict.

This thesis demonstrates that grindadráp has changed through time as a result of the interactions between actors with different views on the matter at hand. However, in contrast to the global whaling debate, this interaction has been mostly constructive, with appropriate changes in practice ensuring grindadráp’s continued popularity within the Faroe Islands. Furthermore, its continuation will likely depend on grindadráp’s continued ability to balance different perspectives. This thesis thus echoes environmental sociological calls for improved dialogue in the framing and resolution of environmental disputes, suggesting that cultural theory provides a tool that balances relativism and pragmatism in dealing with complex environmental problems.

Keywords: whaling, Faroe Islands, ontological turn, cultural theory, the commons, political ecology, environmental conflict, environmental policy, conservation.

Benedict E. Singleton, School of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences Örebro University, SE-701 82 Örebro, Sweden, ben.singleton@oru.se
## Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................... 9  
PART I ........................................................................................................................................ 13  
PREFACE .................................................................................................................................. 14  
1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 15  
   1.1. Aim of the thesis ............................................................................................................. 19  
   1.2. Outline ............................................................................................................................ 20  
2. A WHALE OF A PROBLEM .................................................................................................. 23  
   2.1. The tale of the whale: Whaling in history and science ............................................... 23  
   2.2. You are what you eat: Introducing Faroese whaling .................................................. 26  
   2.3. How big is a whale? Whaling in natural and social science ........................................ 29  
3. THE CHALLENGE OF COMPLEXITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS. ................................. 33  
   3.1. An environmental sociology perspective ...................................................................... 34  
   3.2. An ontological turn: Reality gets messy ...................................................................... 41  
   3.3. A cultural theory: Institutions get messy? ................................................................... 46  
   3.4. General befuddlement ................................................................................................... 56  
4. METHODS ............................................................................................................................... 61  
   4.1. A strategically situated micro-ethnography .................................................................. 62  
   4.2. Analytical perspectives ................................................................................................. 63  
   4.3. Research focus: Why grindadráp? What in particular? ................................................ 65  
   4.4. Data collection methods and material .......................................................................... 67  
   4.5. Ethics and authority ....................................................................................................... 73  
5. SUMMARY OF PAPERS ........................................................................................................ 77  
   5.1. Mutual aid, environmental policy, and the regulation of Faroese pilot whaling .......... 77  
   5.2. Love-iathan, the meat-whale and hidden people. ......................................................... 79  
   5.3. Inclusive hunting .......................................................................................................... 81  
   5.4. What’s missing from Ostrom? ....................................................................................... 83  
   5.5. Clumsiness and elegance in environmental management ............................................. 85  
6. DISCUSSION .......................................................................................................................... 89  
   6.1. A greater grindadráp ....................................................................................................... 89  
   6.2. The role of conflict ........................................................................................................ 91
6.3. A clash of the commons ................................................................. 95
6.4. Future developments .................................................................... 96
6.5. Theoretical reflections ................................................................. 98
6.6. Future research ............................................................................ 100

7. CONCLUSION ................................................................................. 103

REFERENCES ...................................................................................... 107
Other references .................................................................................... 118

PART II ................................................................................................. 119

PAPER I

PAPER II

PAPER III

PAPER IV
SINGLETON, B.E. What’s missing from Ostrom? Combining design principles with cultural theory.

PAPER V

All submitted papers are reprinted with permission from the copyright holders.
Acknowledgements

I dont think it makes no diffrents where you start the telling of a thing. You never know where it begun realy. No moren you know where you begun your oan self. You myt know the place and day and time of day you ben beartht. You myt even know the place and day and time when you ben got. That dont mean nothing tho. You stil dont know where you begun.

As with all social scientific research, the key players are the respondents, without whom there is nothing at all. I’m grateful to all those who shared their time with me throughout the course of this work and put up with my curious questions. You have been rendered anonymous in the text, but I remember you all fondly. Thank you.

There are ‘three wise men’ who deserve to be thanked in particular for this work (i.e. they’re to blame). All three have become good friends over these past years and I hope I can work again with them in future. The first of these is my main supervisor Rolf Lidskog who has generously shared his time, wisdom and the occasional beer with me throughout my studies at ÖU. Rolle has been encouraging, supportive and extremely helpful from day one and has taken my strange interests and habits in his stride – *tack*! The second is my other supervisor, Michael Thompson, of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), who introduced me to cultural theory and the possibility that academic writing could be entertaining as well as informative – tah very much! Finally, but not least, Bjarni Mikkelsen of the Faroese Natural History Museum was instrumental in bringing me to the Faroes and was wonderfully tolerant of the rogue social scientist that appeared in the midst of a peaceful summer. Many wonderful memories will stay with me from those great three months (and I suspect Bjarni will not let anyone else steer the motorboat again!) – *takk*!

The Faroe Islands was a wonderful place to spend time and I am grateful to all those I met there. At the University of the Faroe Islands I’d like to mention Lau Blaxekjær, Erika Hayfield, Mirjam Joensen, Firouz Gaini, Gestur Hovgaard, Hans Andrias Sólvará, Jens Christian Svabo Justinussen and Hermann Oskarsson. At the Faroese natural history museum: Hógni Arnbjarnarson, Leivur Janus Hansen, Anna Maria Fosaa and Astrid Andreasen. Thanks also to my landlady and landlord Sólví Johannesen and Sørín
Pram Sørensen. Last, but not least, thank you to Anni Djurhuus for your help and friendship.

Örebro University has provided a fantastic environment for PhD studies, I would like to thank my colleagues within and outside sociology: Karin Gustafsson, Ylva Uggla, Jan-Magnus Enelo, Magnus Boström, Lina Sandström, Sebastian Svenberg, Kerstin Lekare, Martin Lind, Christine Roman, Jenny Alsarve, Monica Berg, Anita Cvetkovic, Natalia Krzyzanowska, Erik Löfmarck, Hamdija Begovic, Hanna Samzelius, David Cardell, David Machin and Michal Krzyzanowski. Also, thanks to former colleagues: David Redmalm, Anders Ramsay, Monica Johansson, Mats Pelbring, Marco Eimermann, Susanna Nordström, Anneli Öljjarstrand and Jan Mewes. It is also important to recognise the important work of DokSek in fighting for PhD students’ rights and ensuring that I received a very welcome increase to my salary, which made life a great deal easier.

Away from ÖU, I have enjoyed talking academic toot with numerous people at various courses and events. I’d like to send particular shout outs to Peder Roberts (KTH), Andrew Mitchell, Thomas Sommer-Houdeville (both Stockholm University) and Frank Sejersen (University of Copenhagen). Also thanks to the opponent at my slutseminarium Mikael Klintman (Lund University) – hopefully we’ve reached Mt. Fuji now! The seed of this project was planted during my undergraduate studies at Queen’s University Belfast – thanks go to John Knight for first telling me about Faroese whaling. Two of the texts that comprise this thesis are co-authored pieces, thanks to Russell Fielding (University of the South, Sewanee) and John E. Davis, Jr. (Metropolitan State University of Denver). Hopefully we’ll work together again soon.

I was fortunate enough to travel on numerous occasions during my PhD and was able to collect data at both the European Cetacean Society and North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission. I extend my thanks to the members and staff of both organisations. I was also able to spend the summer of 2015 at IIASA, in Austria, receiving a scholarship as part of the Young Scientists Summer Program. I’m grateful to the scholars and fellow students of the Risk, Policy and Vulnerability programme, Wei Liu and Brian Fath in particular.

Throughout these last few years it’s been good to have something outside of academia – I thank the members of Karlstads Rugbyklubb for keeping me ‘sane’ (if bruised and battered).
Finally, *tenk yu bigwan wantok blong mi* – Jenni (x), the puffin, mum, dad, Leah, Craig and all the rest of them. Your patience with my wittering will no doubt continue to be tested – thbbbbbbth!

Fieldwork was funded in part through two stipends: a Vega Fond grant from *Svenska Sällskapet för Antropologi och Geografi* and a *Fróðskaparse-tur Føroya* travel scholarship.

“From the sea to the land beyond” is taken from a line of the British Sea Power song ‘The Land Beyond’. Credit to Hamilton Wilkinson/British Sea Power and EMI Music. It can be heard on their album Open Season. I recommend their music to all and sundry.

The young woman on the front cover was a summer tour guide at the National Gallery of the Faroe Islands (*Listasavn Føroya*). The picture she is posing in front of is by the famous Faroese artist Samuel Joensen-Mikines who produced a series of paintings depicting *grindadráp*. The tour guide explained that although the paintings portray the violent death of whales their overarching theme is that of survival and the continuation of life.

The ultimate thesis conclusion: the best pub in Örebro is Stallyktan.

Benedict E. Singleton, Örebro, October 2016
PART I
Preface

People think that stories are shaped by people. In fact, it’s the other way round. Stories exist independently of their players. If you know that the knowledge is power. Stories, great flapping ribbons of shaped space-time, have been blowing and uncoiling around the universe since the beginning of time. And they have evolved. The weakest have died and the strongest have survived and they have grown fat on the retelling...stories, twisting and blowing through the darkness. And their very existence overlays a faint but insistent pattern on the chaos that is history. Stories etch grooves deep enough for people to follow in the same way that water follows certain paths down a mountainside. And every time fresh actors tread the path of the story, the groove runs deeper. This is called the theory of narrative causality and it means that a story, once started, takes a shape. It picks up all the vibrations of all the other workings of that story that have ever been. That is why history keeps on repeating all the time.


At its heart, much social science is about stories: the stories of people’s lives and the stories people themselves tell about the world. Through stories narratives, actions and struggles to co-author a vision of the world, and with that the world itself, come into focus. Plots, characters, story arcs and twists all coalesce around an object, in this case whaling. In this project, historians, scientists, whalers and activists tell stories about whales and whaling, and with it reveal their worldviews. By doing this a common story may be constructed or it may be lost in translation. This research examines how different stories about whales and whaling are produced and contested at different times, scales and places – from the sea to the land beyond.
1. Introduction

Do you believe that there is something unknown out there/That miraculously remains undiscovered/Something that hides in the deep/Biding its time/Dreaming of petroleum and crystals/Dreaming of fossils and dead coral/Dreaming of nuclear-damaged islands/Overnight.

Environmental issues are seldom simple; despite the apparent desirability of a simple story around a particular situation social science has time and again shown that the reality is messy, proving difficult to nail down decisively. Furthermore there is a power dimension to this, whose stories are influential? Indeed, the way that any given situation is constructed has implications for who/what wins or loses and indeed what winning or losing are as well. Many environmental problems can be considered global: climate change, for example is often understood as a process affecting the entire world’s inhabitants, however it is also understood and felt differently in many parts of the world. This is a first challenge, how can environmental problems be understood at different social scales and what scales are deemed ‘relevant’ and by whom? Further complicating the picture, at each of these social scales there are often plural perspectives of any given issue. What thus exists is a multitude of voices competing to articulate a story and act on a world that changes and is changed through the actions of humans and other animals. Paradoxically, a second challenge then necessarily emerges: how to

---

1 Do you believe that there is something unknown out there/That miraculously remains undiscovered/Something that hides in the deep/Biding its time/Dreaming of petroleum and crystals/Dreaming of fossils and dead coral/Dreaming of nuclear-damaged islands/Overnight.

2 Indeed, it has become increasingly popular to speak of the contemporary era as ‘the Anthropocene’, where the natural and the social are interwoven as never before (cf. Lövbrand et al. 2015). Likewise, arguably as part of the same process, ‘the Animal Turn’ has entailed increased interest in and focus upon the agency and social role of animals in many different contexts (Ritvo 2007). Whilst not the topic of
simplify? Humans struggle with reality’s infinite nature and must construct limits in order to act – a boundless universe is chaos. These concerns have been central to environmental sociology throughout the discipline’s history.

In debates around many environmental issues, there has been a tendency for actors to become deadlocked between opposing groups occupying strongly value-laden positions (Thompson 2002). As such, those involved struggle to find purchase in slippery political struggles where the matter under discussion is constantly changing. In such circumstances scientific expertise may be employed as an arbiter. However, it may then turn out that supposedly objective science forms a central plank in political attempts to enact a particular understanding of a given situation (Mol and Law 2002). If there are a multiplicity of perspectives it follows that there are also a multiplicity of logics relating to how an issue can be resolved. In such circumstances, identifying and enacting a solution to an environmental issue becomes a challenge. It is thus the intention that this thesis will contribute constructively to on-going social scientific discussions on how to handle seemingly intractable conflicts rooted in different understandings of the world – the overall aim is to show how complexity can be incorporated without becoming overly chaotic. The ambition is thus to offer analytical tools offering a way forward that avoid oversimplification.

In this PhD thesis I focus upon one particular complex environmental issue, the case of whaling. Indeed, whaling is a classic example of an environmental issue where yawning chasms of understanding separate the different actors involved (Blok 2011; Epstein 2008; Kalland 2009). ‘Whaling’ constitutes a diverse series of practices performed in different parts of the world by different people on different animals for different reasons. What is consistent is that large marine mammals are deliberately and directly killed by humans for their use, in the present era, usually for food. Whaling is thus emblematic of numerous other environmental issues – it can be understood at different scales, from different perspectives and the stories that bind disparate practices together are integrally political. As one of the ‘original’ environmental issues, it also has symbolic weight as an example. Furthermore, as whales by their nature move around the world they intersect with different human practices at different times (Blok 2007). Whaling thus constitutes an ideal case for social scientists interested in how plural views on an environmental issue interact at different scales and the awareness of greater systems it entails (Marcus 1995:111).
The diversity of and distance between different ‘whalings’ at multiple scales presents logistical challenges to the researcher and indeed, the researcher’s drawing of boundaries around a particular object inevitably involves trade-offs. This thesis can be understood as a strategically situated micro-ethnography (see Chapter 4. Methods, below; [Marcus 1995:110-39]). At a local level, focus is upon Faroese pilot whaling, utilising data collected during three months fieldwork during 2014. Faroese practice does not take place in isolation however and this thesis thus follows the flows of knowledge linking Faroese practices to the global whaling debate generally. What thus emerges is a picture of interconnected, interdependent struggles to define and act in the world with one node extending from the Faroese bays where pilot whales are killed. The intention is to shed light on how different understandings and stories about the world interact at different social scales, with conclusions about and beyond the case of Faroese whaling.

In examining actor behaviour around environmental issues one school of social science, the common pool resource theorists, has notably sought to employ models based around individuals as self-interested, rational actors in order to explain what is observed (e.g. Ostrom 1990; see Saunders 2010 for discussion). Whilst there are pragmatic advantages to this type of approach, in many situations this represents an oversimplification of actor behaviour (cf. Nightingale 2011) and also reveals narrowly normative assumptions about the nature of the world (cf. Bresnihan 2016). This thesis instead draws on two different bodies of theory to try to understand the different worldviews (and different conceptions of ‘rationality’) that are present in conflicts around whaling: the ‘ontological turn’ and the theory of sociocultural viability (usually ‘cultural theory’, for short). Both approaches focus upon how plural understandings of any given situation exist, although from different epistemological (and indeed ontological) starting points.

The ‘ontological turn’ argues that actors, both human and nonhuman are engaged in practices of world making. Rather than the ‘social’ mapped onto the ‘natural’, proponents of the ontological turn assert that people continuously construct hybrid ‘socionatures’ (or ‘naturecultures’). Environmental conflicts can thus be seen as competitions to enact particular forms of reality, ontologies. From this perspective knowledge of the world is always partial and co-constructed with actors’ engagement with it. In dealing with environmental conflict proponents of the ontological turn tend to argue for the inclusion of the ontologies of actors excluded from power. Similarly, there are often calls for broader understandings of democracy and creativity in giving voice to those silenced, human or non-human (e.g. Blok 2011;
Callon, Lascoumes and Barthe 2011). My use of this perspective is primarily methodological, and I lean most heavily upon the perspectivist branch of the ontological turn (Viveiros de Castro 2004).

Cultural theory asserts that the diversity of human perspectives can be placed within five ‘social solidarities’\(^3\), in reference to the forms of social relations that are associated with them. Cultural theorists assert that each of these perspectives (individualism, egalitarianism, hierarchy, fatalistic and ‘autonomous’) possess only partial knowledge of the world, which is irreducible to that of other perspectives. It then follows that constructive solutions to problems are more likely to be found when two or ideally more of the social solidarities are given voice within a decision making process. Cultural theorists thus also call for greater democracy, understood as measures to include each of the various voices present around a situation (Thompson 2008a). In this thesis, I draw most upon the work of Michael Thompson, who has been integral in placing dynamism at the heart of cultural theory analysis. Cultural theory has been selected as a way to go beyond simply criticising the simplifications that inevitably occur within environmental conflicts.

This thesis thus draws insights from two main bodies of theory, allowing different ‘multiplicities’ of perspective to be incorporated and discussed. The ontological turn is employed as a way to home on the detailed practices that are employed around whaling. Cultural theory then provides an analytical tool, which whilst still relativistic, retains the pragmatic possibility of prediction and constructive suggestion. The extent that these two theories complement and conflict with one another thus will remain an important subtheme.

Finally, at the beginning of each chapter are quotes drawn from works of literature or popular music. Many of these lines have echoed in my head at various stages during fieldwork and while there is no single point they make they each, in their own way, resonate with the focus of this thesis – the diversity of outlooks. Quotes are made in four different languages, the contrast underlining the highly personal, partial nature of the description any thesis makes. Rather than analyse and comment on each quote in turn I have chosen to let them stand as they are and allow the reader interpret them as they wish. My hope is that they will break up the text, drawing attention to the fragmented nature of any social scientific endeavour.

---

\(^3\) As the following literature discussion will show, this is an acknowledged oversimplification: people exist within continuums and move between different social solidarities.
1.1. Aim of the thesis

As stated above, this thesis builds upon sociological literature exploring different understandings of the world, and the different rationalities that go with these understandings that manifest around environmental issues. Thus the first aim is to contribute to sociological efforts to analyse and resolve complex ‘socio-environmental’ problems (cf. White, Rudy and Gareau 2016). With this in mind, the second aim is to apply the theories of the ontological turn and cultural theory, critically discussing their value in making sense of complex environmental problems. The particular wider environmental issue explored is the whaling debate, the complexity of which is discussed from local to global levels. This then allows discussion of the implications of clashes between different worldviews. As such, the final aim of this thesis is to contribute analytically and descriptively to the global whaling debate by investigating the particular case of pilot whaling in the Faroe Islands (grindadráp). Whaling in its totality would be an impractical focus—such a large number of disparate practices are beyond the reach of the lone researcher. The focus is thus upon grindadráp and its connections to the global whaling policy landscape. Following these research aims leads to guiding research questions that this compilation thesis seeks to answer, augmented by sub-questions (cf. Creswell 2014). These questions are presented in Table 1 and can be understood at different analytical levels: empirical and theoretical.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical level</th>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Sub-questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empirical</td>
<td>Why and how are whales and whaling understood differently in local and global whaling conflicts?</td>
<td>Where and when are different understandings of whales and whaling manifest around grindadráp? What issues appear most likely to alter/affect the practice of grindadráp in future?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical</td>
<td>What are the advantages and disadvantages of different theoretical simplifications as applied to complex environmental problems?</td>
<td>How can cultural theory contribute to sociological understandings of complex environmental issues?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In making analysis, the bulk of data is drawn from fieldwork in the Faroe Islands. This is combined with literature on whaling at both the local and the global level and supplemented by data from smaller-scale fieldwork at various international forums, collected as part of a second, separate empirical study. Similarly, this thesis limits itself primarily to discussing two different bodies of sociological theory, which examine the multiplicity of understandings of the world, although other literature is included as required. These bodies are the theory of sociocultural viability (cultural theory) and the ‘ontological turn’. This thesis’ theoretical discussion is thus informed by the studies upon which it is based, having emerged in abductive fashion (see Chapter 4. Methods) during and following data collection. In selecting this particular theory and methodology it is not my intention to suggest that these were the only possible choices. As Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* can be interpreted as about far more than Nantucket whaling, so the global whaling debate can be analysed from a multiplicity of angles. Chapter 3 situates these two theories within the sociological tradition. My decision to employ two primary theories is made partly out of a desire for theory novelty in examining whaling but also to allow for analytical clarity, although at times other theoretical lenses make an appearance in supporting fashion. Too many cooks spoil the broth and perhaps too many theories spoil the thesis.

The Faroe Islands were selected for several reasons. Firstly, the size of the islands and the scale of practice at the community level make it a practical study site for a single researcher. Secondly, global attention is largely upon the whaling practices of larger whaling nations, notably Japan, Norway and Iceland. This presents an opportunity to see how the global whaling conflict is played out differently within one of the smaller branches of the conflict, providing information relevant to smaller scale environmental conflicts (see Chapter 4. Methods for more information).

### 1.2. Outline

This is a compilation thesis, built on research published elsewhere. It is comprised of two parts, the first providing empirical, theoretical and methodological background as well as producing a combined narrative based upon the studies presented in the second part. In the second part, five articles are

---

4 For example, Meyer and Staggenborg’s (1996) take on social movement theory has been applied to Japanese whaling (Blok 2008).
presented, which each relate to the thesis’ research aims, collectively comprising a multilevel exploration of plural perspectives on whaling. These papers are ordered by scale and by level of theoretical abstraction. Papers I to IV focus upon the Faroe Islands. Paper I focuses upon the practice of contemporary grindadráp, discussing its organisation and governance. Its role in the thesis is to provide a thorough empirical description of modern Faroese whaling practice. Paper II focuses upon an environmental campaign waged by the controversial environmental organisation Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS). This paper utilises the tools of the ontological turn to describe how SSCS and Faroese pro-whaling advocates seek to enact very different realities of grindadráp. Paper III also looks at different perspectives; the focus is once more within the institution of grindadráp, which is assessed using cultural theory. This thread is then continued in Paper IV, which compares the cultural theory analysis of grindadráp with another theory based around a notion of self-interested, individual rational choice. It critically discusses what is gained by utilising theoretical models predicated on the acknowledgement of plural standpoints. In this case, Ostrom’s design principles for common pool resource institutions stand in for a body of work that privileges pragmatism and analytical elegance over more complicated depictions of reality. Its function is thus to allow for explication of the fruitfulness and relevance of the ontological turn and cultural theory. Finally, Paper V rounds out the discussion by applying cultural theory to the history of whaling at an international level. This paper, alongside Paper II, thus links grindadráp to the international conflict around whaling that has continued in the three decades following the moratorium on whaling for the 1985/6 commercial whaling season.

The following sections of part one of this thesis provide an introduction to the topic at hand. In the next section whaling is described and introduced. This is presented from macro to micro level. Literature on the global situation is followed by information on Faroese pilot whaling specifically. This chapter serves to provide readers unfamiliar with the topic a broad overview of what is being discussed. This is followed by a brief overview of the problem that multiple perspectives on a situation pose for the sociologist. Discussion then turns to the ontological turn and cultural theory, which are described using examples drawn from the relevant literature. In this section, the two theories are also then related to the traditions of (environmental) sociology. This is followed by a description of methods and methodology used in each of the studies, with particular reference to specific challenges that grindadráp poses as an empirical focus. The five papers of part two are
then summarised briefly, followed by a discussion section based around the thesis’ stated aims and research question. The final section concludes by summarising and drawing out key points from the discussion.
2. A whale of a problem

Out to graze, they look so sweet,
We hate the blood, we want the meat,
Buy me a beer, I'll take my knife,
Cut you a slice of country life


*En sak i taget, allt har sin plats,*
*En sak i taget, allt har sin tid*<sup>5</sup>


In this chapter, I attempt to provide sufficient background information to render my argument intelligible and (hopefully) convincing. I begin by presenting an overview of the history of ‘modern’ whaling, from the late nineteenth century until the present. A more thorough telling of the tale may be seen in Paper V, where a particular reconstruction of the history of whaling draws on several accounts. Paper V leans particularly heavily upon Epstein’s *The Power of Words* (2008), a Foucauldian account. This is then followed by a description of Faroese whaling, which Papers I-III present in greater depth, with historical information largely drawn from Joensen (2009) and Wylie (1987). The discussion encompasses not only the action on the high seas but the various management bodies that were created to regulate hunting. It also involves the growth of the environmental movement and the role that natural and social scientists have played in an on-going conflict. Through this discussion the diversity of perspectives at play will become readily apparent with considerable dissonance extant over what indeed it is about. The challenges that plural perspectives present in examining a given environmental problem are then the subject of Chapter 3.

2.1. The tale of the whale: Whaling in history and science.

It’s a story familiar to many, at least in the Western world: from the nineteenth century onwards, companies from oil-thirsty industrialised nations scoured the world’s oceans, hunting many whale species to the brink of extinction. However, in the nick of time, the nascent environmental movement

---

<sup>5</sup> One thing at a time, everything has its place/One thing at a time, everything has its time.
brought people’s attention to the whales’ plight, stopping their total disappearance as the world’s nations agreed to end whale hunting. Since then, whaling has been considered a thing of the past in many parts of the world, emblematic of the dangers of unshackled capitalist resource destruction and those people that continue to hunt whales are met with considerable anger and condemnation.

This popular narrative, whilst appealing in its simplicity, does not do the complicated stories of whaling much justice – the growth, decline and fragmentation of whaling practices alongside the growth of environmentalism is a complex and interesting story. ‘Modern whaling’ is generally taken to have begun in the 1860s with the invention of the explosive harpoon. Alongside other technological advances, this meant that many larger, faster-swimming and geographically remote whale species became catchable for the first time. Industrialising nations around the world also created a market with an insatiable demand for oil, a demand that remains to this day. The result was that whaling became one of the first truly globalised industries, with operations appearing all over the world (Tønnessen and Johnsen 1982). Oil, as a strategic resource, became an object of international competition, with different country’s supporting whaling companies. In turn, as whaling companies built facilities in ever more remote locations, they were at the forefront of expanding governance networks. The expansion of whaling thus went hand-in-hand with the expansion of modern nation-states (Epstein 2008; Roberts 2011).

The growth of the whaling industry had catastrophic impacts upon many whale populations and a pattern emerged of whalers exhausting local stocks before moving on to pastures new. As the decline in whale numbers became increasingly difficult to ignore there were several attempts by nation states and within the whaling industry to reign in and manage whaling practices. These were repeatedly defeated, the rivalries of jockeying imperial powers and a lack of political and scientific tools condemning several attempts to failure. The conclusion of World War II, with the defeat of two major whaling nations, Germany and Japan, and the dominance of a victorious USA finally provided the conditions for the creation of an international management body for the whaling industry. The body that came into existence was the International Whaling Commission (IWC). The IWC developed consid-
erably during the post-war period, notably acquiring a Scientific Committee, which began (eventually) to set quotas\(^6\) for different whale species. Considerable conflict continued however, with some IWC members resisting any attempts to constrain whaling, to the extent of presenting falsified catch numbers and their scientists deliberately sabotaging regulation efforts (Heazle 2006, see below). As such, the whaling industry, for most of the post-war period was constrained more by the declining numbers of whales than by quotas. Indeed, the inability of the industry to meet the quotas that eventually were set formed part of the conditions for a sea change in the way whales were managed and treated.

There have been people opposing whale hunting, generally at a local level, throughout the era of modern whaling (e.g. Barthelmess 2006; Ringstad 2006; Watanabe 2009). However, in the post-war period, a larger environmental movement began to emerge with a global scope, becoming increasingly active in protesting against whaling. They announced their presence on the international scene at the 1972 United Nations conference on the Human Environment, where endangered species protection proved a rare area of consensus (Epstein 2008:107). The ensuing clamour provided the opportunity for the IWC Scientific Committee to become its most influential and, despite the continued tendency by some nations to falsify catch records, the so-called New Management Procedure was developed and implemented (Heazle 2006). During the period immediately prior to the 1972 conference, whaling operations were in deep decline in many countries, with several countries becoming ‘anti-whaling nations’ in the following years (Epstein 2008). The switch by the USA from the pro-whaling to the anti-whaling bloc was decisive in changing the nature of discussions around whale hunting (Nagtzaam 2013). The influence of anti-whaling nations and groups only continued to grow, post-1972. Towards the end of the 1970s, it was clear that a new mood had entered proceedings and there were increasingly calls for a moratorium on all whaling, over the objections of many of the IWC Scientific Committee. Emboldened by their new-found power, anti-whaling nations voted for a moratorium in 1982, to begin during the 1985-6 whaling season. The moratorium remains in place until this day, over the vociferous objections of representatives of whaling nations.

Despite the moratorium, several whaling nations continue to hunt whales, either because they fall between one of three categories accepted

---

\(^6\) One historical account relates that the initial catch quotas were largely arbitrary (Tønnessen and Johnsen 1982:492).
within the IWC\(^7\) (Japan), registered an objection to the moratorium (Norway and Iceland), or because their activities fall outside of the IWC (because they have left or have never been members of the IWC or because they hunt species outside of the IWC’s purview, this is the case for the Faroe Islands). IWC General Meetings and Scientific Committee meetings continue to be sites of considerable conflict, with both sides largely intransigent – one long-term participant I spoke to described it as ‘trench warfare’. Both sides stand accused of buying support (by paying for nations to join the IWC and vote as desired) in a complex deadlock, where NGOs, governments and scientists expend considerable resources each year (Epstein 2008). An ‘anti-whaling’ stance has become an integral part of several nations’ identities, in opposition to ‘pro-whaling’ identities of many whaling nations (Epstein 2008). Whaling thus retains considerable symbolic weight, despite the limited nature of on-going hunting activities. Indeed, in several parts of the world, anti-whaling campaigns have been seen to encourage support for whaling, turning what is for many an irrelevant issue to one of national pride (Brydon 1990; van Ginkel 2004; Kalland and Sejersen 2005; Mathisen 1996; Sanderson 1990). Furthermore, it is suggested that the conflict is inhibiting action against other matters pertaining to whale conservation (Blok 2008, Burns and Baker 2000)\(^8\). While it has been suggested that the current situation represents the best possible compromise (whalers get to whale, protesters get to protest) (Victor 2001) other writers have tended to focus on the IWC’s dysfunctionality (Friedheim 2001; Kalland 2009).

### 2.2. You are what you eat: Introducing Faroese whaling

Faroese pilot whaling – *grindadráp*\(^9\) – is a spectacular sight: a flotilla of small boats drives a pod of long-finned pilot whales (*Globicephala melas*), which may number in hundreds, into officially designated whaling bays. The whales\(^10\) are then beached and killed by shore-based whalers by hand

---

\(^7\) The IWC recognises three categories of whaling: ‘Commercial Whaling’, ‘Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling’ and ‘Special Permit Whaling’ (commonly known as ‘scientific whaling’). See [https://iwc.int/whaling](https://iwc.int/whaling) for more details.

\(^8\) For example, by preventing funding greater research on the impacts and amelioration of climate change regarding cetaceans (Burns and Baker 2000).

\(^9\) Literally ‘pilot whale-slaughter’.

\(^10\) Periodically, white-sided, bottlenose and Risso’s dolphins are also driven. It should be noted that it is illegal to hunt Risso’s dolphins and in the event of this
with the sea turning red with their blood (see Figure 1). The catch is then assessed by designated authorities and distributed to the hunters and within the local community. Participation is ad hoc and voluntary; anyone over sixteen who wishes to participate may do so. Likewise, bar the official in charge, nobody is paid in money for their involvement in grindadráp. Hunting is also spontaneous, dependent on whales being sighted from shore or sea in suitable conditions with people willing to participate.

Grindadráp’s story is a long one, intersecting with the story of global whaling on several different occasions. It is generally believed that the hunting of the long-finned pilot whale is a practice coterminous with Norse settlement in the 9th century (Joensen 2009:61). However, it isn’t until the seventeenth century that practices clearly resembling modern grindadráp are attested (Sanderson 1992). At this period it formed part of a two-tiered economy: one tier based around wool export; the second based on domestic occurring the carcasses are confiscated. Bottlenose whales may not be actively hunted but may be killed and eaten if they strand of their own accord.
subsistence (Wylie 1987). This second tier comprised a range of practices, many of which were seasonal or opportunistic as part of eking out a living in harsh North Atlantic conditions. *Grindadráp* has continued to change throughout history, a dearth of whales in the late eighteenth century led to a decline in the practice, placing it’s continuation in jeopardy, with reports of considerable conflict over shares of the catch (Joensen 2009; Wylie and Margolin 1981). The decline was diverted through the intervention of progressive-minded governments who saw it as an important and distinctive local resource. Ever since, following the creation of the first Pilot Whaling Regulations (*Kunngerð um Grind*), *grindadráp* has come within the purview of the Faroese state with practice and catch distribution clearly defined. Modern *grindadráp* “is held up, supported by community devotion to the relevant cultural mores and traditions, but also subject to the regulatory limitations imposed by government and government-sanctioned authority” (Fielding, Davis and Singleton. 2015:38). Since the nineteenth century, *grindadráp* has been identified by both Faroese and outsiders as an emblematically Faroese practice, symbolic of the nation and a particular lifestyle (Joensen 2009; Nauerby 1996).

Support for *grindadráp*, whilst difficult to gauge precisely, remains high within the Faroese population: one random, weighted survey of 528 people (approximately 1% of the population) conducted before SSCS arrived in the islands determined 77% of those sampled felt that it was right to continue driving whales, with 12% stating it should cease (Gallup Føroyar 2014). *Grindadráp* forms one of a series of local subsistence practices, which collectively remain popular. These are recorded in the most recent Faroese census as “supplemental food” (fish, lamb, pilot whale, potatoes or other [e.g. fowl or hare] [Hagstova Føroya 2014]) received by households. In 2014 12,780 out of 17,441 Faroese households responded that they accessed supplemental food sources. As mentioned above and in Paper I, the decision to drive pilot whales is largely spontaneous, dependant on a local desire to carry it out and on the pervading weather and sea conditions (Fielding et al. 2015). As such there is at present no cap on the number of whales that may be killed in a given year, and the annual total catch varies greatly: in 2013, 1,104 pilot whales were killed whereas in 2014, 48 (Hagstova Føroya 2015). On average, under 900 pilot whales are killed each year (Fielding 2013b).

One important thing to note is that *grindadráp* has always been conducted primarily to provide meat and blubber for the community. Historically other parts of the pilot whale were utilised, for example stomachs were
used as material for the manufacture of buoys (Joensen 2009). Likewise, oil from pilot whales was used for lamps and, in the mid nineteenth century, its collection threatened to transform pilot whaling into a commercial industry. However, a decline in the number of whales at that time stymied efforts (Joensen 2009; Wylie 1993). Other forms of whaling have also existed in the Faroe Islands: between 1894 and 1987 blue, fin, sperm, humpback and sei whales were hunted commercially, using so-called ‘Norwegian-style shore whaling’\(^{11}\) (Reeves and Smith 2007). Initially, this was a Norwegian concern, but in 1933 was taken over by Faroese interests (Joensen 2009:224). The last commercial whaling station, on Stremoy, is now a museum. In contemporary Faroese society the sale of pilot whale meat and blubber is controlled and available in limited quantities at a couple of restaurants and shops.

The world at large became aware of *grindadráp* in the 1980s, with several conservation and animal rights activists protesting against the practice. Numerous organisations have launched campaigns based around advertising, letter writing, lobbying in the IWC, economic boycotts of Faroese products (notably fish) and, periodically, through attempts to sabotage whale drives (Kerins 2010:19-30). These protests engendered several responses within the Faroe Islands: new technologies were devised and practice altered with the intention of reducing the suffering of whales. Also, the Pilot Whalers Association (*Grindamannafelagið*) was formed in order to provide a counter-discourse to protestors, cooperating with other representatives of other whaling communities\(^{12}\). Likewise, several biological research projects were initiated (below). Most recently, in 2015, for the first time, it was made a requirement that all those who actually kill whales within *grindadráp* must have attended a training course and bear a certificate demonstrating this.

**2.3. How big is a whale? Whaling in natural and social science**

Whaling has had a long relationship with science both natural and social. Marine biology, specifically the sub discipline of cetology (the study of

\(^{11}\) Norwegian-style shore whaling is “mechanized whaling, using harpoons with explosive heads fired from cannons mounted in the bows of steam-powered catcher boats” (Reeves and Smith 2007:91). Caught whales were then processed at shore stations.

\(^{12}\) Notable pro-whaling non-governmental organisations are the High North Alliance and the World Council of Whalers. At the time of writing, both these organisations seem to be inactive.
whales, dolphins and porpoises) in the past has been deeply intertwined with the whaling industry. Indeed, many of the first pioneers of the discipline were dependent on whalers for specimens. These “hip-booted cetologists” were drawn into complicity with the whaling industry and were “very much acculturated to the ways of modern whalers” (Burnett 2013:29). These biologists were increasingly challenged in the post-World War II period, both in the IWC and elsewhere, by those with a very different view of whales and whaling. To this day, meetings of the IWC Scientific Committee present the sight of biologists from different nations clashing over essentially different views of whales and disagreements over what valid biological research is (Heazle 2006; Kalland 2009). Social scientific interest in whaling has burgeoned in the wake of the increasingly confrontational atmosphere of the IWC. Representatives of various social scientific disciplines have become involved and acquired their own focus. As one scholar pithily puts it:

According to disciplinary matrixes, different aspects are singled out: anthropologists have their defence of ‘whaling culture’[14]..., jurists their international law disputes ..., political scientists their ‘whaling regime’ of governance ..., and economists their ‘tragedy of the commons’ (Blok 2007:66).

In sum, both natural and social science have become involved in most aspects of the global whaling debate.

Research on whales and whaling in the Faroe Islands has been heavily linked to trends in social and natural science elsewhere. Within natural science, awareness began to emerge in the late 1970s about the possibility of transmission of environmental contaminants into the Faroese population because of the consumption of whale meat. This led to a series of research projects, which continue to this day. As the evidence mounted, a series of guidance messages were produced, culminating in a 2008 bulletin by Chief

---

13 To get a flavour of the discussion within cetology, one may browse these articles: (Clapham et al. 2003; Clapham et al. 2007; Cooke, Leaper and Papastavrou 2009; Corkeron 2009; Fukui, Ishikawa and Ohsumi 2005; Gales et al. 2005; Hatanaka 2005; Kasuya 2007; Morishita 2006).

14 It is perhaps worth noting that there have also been scholars conscious of the essentialisation that occurs in describing and denoting ‘whaling cultures’ e.g. (Brydon 1990). This tendency has continued to be described and critically discussed by researchers (cf. Gaard 2001; van Ginkel 2004).
Physician Pál Weihe and Chief Medical Officer Høgni Debes Joensen recommending the discontinuation of pilot whale meat and blubber from human consumption (Weihe and Joensen 2008; English translation in Joensen 2009:283-288). However, it should be noted that the Faroese Food and Veterinary Authority differs at present, stating that adults may continue to eat a maximum of one meal of pilot whale meat and blubber every month (Heilsufróðiliga starvstovan 2011).

Alongside this research looking at the impact of environmental pollutants on the human population, there are two other bodies of research being conducted in the Faroe Islands regarding pilot whales, which both collect data at grindadráp. One samples pilot whales as one of a series of animals that are used as indicators for the levels of pollutants in the marine environment. This research feeds into various international research bodies that are tasked with monitoring North Atlantic and Arctic environments. Also collecting data at most grindadráp is a group of biologists employed by the Faroese Natural History Museum (Náttúrugripasavnið). This group are the research descendants of a large study that was carried out between 1986-8 and produced the compilation volume Biology of Northern Hemisphere pilot whales (Donovan, Lockyer and Martin 1993). This research project explored many different aspects of pilot whale biology, including sampling almost every whale caught during the study period and conducting sighting surveys that gave the first population estimate regarding pilot whale numbers.15 The current team of biologists continues this research, sampling whales and being involved in sighting surveys. In the latter role they cooperate with biologists from Greenland, Iceland and Norway, notably within the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO), a body that was founded as one way to produce scientific and management advice circumventing the on-going deadlock in the IWC (Hoel 1993).

Social scientists have also become involved with research on Faroese whaling. Early (anthropological) research tended to highlight it as part of

---

15 The initial estimate was 778,000 for the whole North Atlantic area (Buckland et al. 1993). Subsequent surveys have never covered the same large area, the most recent estimate being 128,093 pilot whales in Icelandic and Faroese waters (North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission 2012). The most recent survey took place in 2015, with results pending. These numbers form the basis of Faroese claims that their practices are not affecting pilot whale numbers: the low number of animals caught is compared with the population estimates.
numerous traditional folk practices. Of particular note was the social element that it entailed; early research drew attention to grindadráp as an opportunity for socialisation (Blehr 1974) and also saw it as emblematic of Faroese values regarding the need for cooperation to ensure survival:

[Pilot whales] show up unpredictably, and a successful hunt provides vast amounts of food. Thus, if a [pod of pilot whales] is to be taken at all, men must act quickly and in concert; and the distribution of the spoils requires elaborate consideration in order to be equitable. A grindadráp thus involves, at heart, the recreation of Faroese norms of collective enterprise (Wylie and Margolin 1981:102).

More recent accounts of grindadráp reflect the increased attention given to whaling practices more generally. Whereas earlier work examined grindadráp as one part of a wider culture, recent writing has tended to focus upon whale drives as a separate phenomenon. The upshot of this is that there is considerable detail regarding grindadráp’s origins and practice by both Faroese and foreign researchers from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (cf. Fielding 2013a; Kerins 2010; Joensen 2009; Sanderson 1994). This does however come at the price of a fuller description of grindadráp both within contemporary Faroese society (alongside other ‘traditional’ practices) and in international context. Likewise, the ‘modern’ practices that are integral to grindadráp (such as the continued biological research) have a tendency to be bracketed off. My intention in writing this thesis is to at least partially ameliorate this issue (although the limitations of the study necessitate it to a certain extent). I do this by connecting Faroese practice both to the international whaling debate and to scientific practice. I also to try to ensure that my account draws attention to the small-scale nature of the issue of grindadráp for many Faroese people as well as to acknowledge that some Faroese people do see whaling practices in a negative light.
3. The challenge of complexity in environmental problems.

We tend to think of human knowledge as progressive; because we know more and more, our parents and grandparents are back numbers. But a contrary theory is possible - that we simply recognize different things at different times and in different ways.


Se ei tuu muutuu,
Se ei tuu muutuu (ei),
Itsepäinen snadisti kukkuu,
Eikä se nyt tuu mikskäään muutuu.\(^{16}\)


My hope is that, if nothing else, the preceding section has highlighted the complicated nature of whaling conflicts around the world. Different local practices, such as *grindadráp*, form parts of a greater global battle. Within these conflicts the practices of social and natural science are implicated. In this section, I briefly present the challenges that many environmental issues pose to modern social and natural science\(^{17}\) before presenting various (environmental) sociological attempts to theorise these issues. I then present two bodies of theory, the ontological turn and the theory of sociocultural viability. These are taken as two alternative approaches to mitigating some of the problems of environmental problems, notably their complexity and

\(^{16}\) It will never change/It will never change (no)/Stubborn, a little crazy/Nor is it ever going to change.

\(^{17}\) I mean ‘modern’ in the sense suggested by Bruno Latour (1993). In essence, for the past three to four hundred years, science has been seeking to identify and demarcate the ‘natural’ and the ‘social’, with various disciplines emerging specialising in understanding one or the other (Latour 1993). According to Latour, this quest was mistaken, the natural and social are integral to one another and attempting to unravel them is a fool’s errand. Rather than a separate ‘natural’ and ‘social’ (sometimes ‘cultural’) what exists are in fact ‘socionatures’. It should be noted that Latour utilised the term ‘hybrid’ for ‘socionatures’ (1993). I have chosen not to follow his example, preferring to use ‘hybrid’ in the manner of Escobar (1999) – see below.
the diversity of different perspectives on what an environmental issue may actually be. The intention is that this combination of theory will allow for a more nuanced and multidimensional analysis of grindadráp. The extent the two bodies of theory complement one another within environmental sociology is developed in 3.4.

While there are multiple ways of understanding the term ‘theory’ it is fair to say that to greater or lesser extents theory in all branches of science entails certain generalised assumptions about the world, including assumptions about the ‘social’ (cf. Jasanoff 2005; Wynne 1996:68; 2005). This is particularly obvious in disciplines where knowledge regarding the world is tested through laboratory experiment. In essence, a model of the world is built in the laboratory based on knowledge of the ‘outside world’. Thus, if particular phenomena are observed within the laboratory it may be inferred that if conditions are similar in the ‘outside world’ then similar phenomena will be observed (cf. Callon, Lascoumes and Barthe 2011). It is therefore key that a laboratory model (or any other model used to make predictions) does actually match the ‘real world’ sufficiently well, i.e. if a situation becomes ‘abnormal’ then any predictions may be wrong (Anderson 2004:143). However, if a theoretical model becomes more complicated the amount of information required to be included in the model increases and the clarity of knowledge that it generates is reduced. There is thus a tension within theory: there is a desire for theory to explain everything18 yet also a pragmatic need for theory to be simple enough to be useable. This tension has been identified as at the heart of ‘sustainability science’, with calls to avoid too narrow, ‘fixed’ theoretical framings of (socio)environmental issues (Antrop 2006). However this inevitably brings with it a challenge: “[the more complex a situation, the larger the number of plausible perspectives upon it—because the harder it is to prove any one of them wrong” (Dryzek 2013:9).

### 3.1. An environmental sociology perspective

The field of environmental sociology has burgeoned immensely over the past 30 years (cf. Lidskog, Mol and Oosterveer 2015). This is in marked contrast to the early years of sociology, where environmental issues were deliberately conceptualised as ‘out of bounds’ by several of the discipline’s founding fathers (Irwin 2001:6; Lidskog 2001:114; Lidskog, Mol and

---

18 Such a theory would presumably actually be 1:1 reproduction of the whole universe.
Environmental sociology has differentiated itself from the earlier ‘sociology of the environment’ by rethinking and problematising the concepts of ‘nature’ and ‘society’ previously held to be binary (Irwin 2001; White, Rudy and Gareau 2016). Contemporary environmental sociology is thus unified by the assumption that these two concepts are in fact interwoven, although in true academic fashion, there has been disagreement over the best way to proceed from this starting point\(^\text{19}\). The disagreement, as it were, is over the extent that people are able to see the world directly (i.e. without social lenses). In this thesis, I seek to escape a well-worn and unproductive discussion for the most part, bar occasionally referring to ‘realist’ and ‘constructivist’ accounts where it brings clarity to discussion. I take it as read that this realist-constructivist distinction is somewhat artificial: everyone agrees there is a world out there and that a certain amount of social construction occurs (Irwin 2001).

One thing that is shared by all environmental sociological standpoints is a need to render complex environmental issues visible within simplifying theoretical viewpoints. This is because, to quote one eminent environmental social scientist, “[e]nvironmental issues are typically complex” (Dryzek 2013:75). As such, a recurrent theme in sociological accounts of environmental issues and conflicts relates to the process of simplification. Time and again, a failure to understand or adequately deal with a problem has been traced to oversimplifications within the theory employed in a given situation. Furthermore, a belief in the applicability and inherent superiority of the model employed (i.e. a fundamentalism around a particular epistemological viewpoint) has been cited as factor in the growth of conflict, with alternative understandings shut out (cf. Latour 2004). A classic example is Brian Wynne’s account of the effects of the radioactive fallout following the

\(^{19}\) Irwin (2001) argues that there is an extant continuum within the discipline between realism and constructivism. In Irwin’s depiction, these two categories share a belief that a world does exist separate to human perception of it, but also that people employ inherently social categories in making sense of the world. What varies, therefore, is the relative weight researchers give to each of these observations. (Critical) realists thus tend to focus upon how ‘natural’ processes impact upon the ways humans communicate around the environment, while (social) constructivists examine how people assign meaning in their world (Irwin 2001:18-24). There is merit in the theoretical tools developed within both traditions (cf. Lidskog 2001). See Lidskog, Mol and Oosterveer (2015) for discussion of the different emphases in this regard within different branches of environmental sociology.
1986 Chernobyl nuclear reactor meltdown (Wynne 1996). In this case, scientific models of the retention of radiocaesium in soil failed to take into account the physical realities of the Cumbrian landscape, something local sheep farmers were acutely aware of. For example, different types of soil along with the behaviour and needs of grazing sheep were insufficiently understood by scientists assessing the risks of radioactive contamination.

Many of the conflicts between lay farmers and scientists centred on the standardisation built into routine structures of scientific knowledge. The quantitative units involved often encompassed several farms and even valleys with one measurement or value, when the farmers knew and could articulate various significant differences in environment, climate factors, management practices, etc., between neighbouring farms, indeed even on a single farm (Wynne 1996:66)

The result of this was that sheep farmers lost confidence in the expertise of the scientists involved and felt that their own relevant knowledge was denigrated. A considerable breakdown in the two groups’ relationship was the result.

The case of Chernobyl and the Cumbrian sheep is not an isolated example of an environmental conflict revolving around the feeling that some forms of knowledge are shut out from an environmental discussion. This is perhaps a feature of ‘modern’ societies where complex, standardised policy systems are instituted to deal with societal issues. In such circumstances, some viewpoints may well end up excluded. As Irwin suggests, “the adoption of standardized systems raises questions not so much of whether social and cultural assumptions are incorporated but rather of what form these assumptions should take” (Irwin 2001:128). As Marxist theorists have long pointed out, “the history of enclosures and “improvements” is not just a history of material dispossession. It is also a history of the exclusion of certain ways of knowing and relating to the land, forests, rivers and animals” (Bresnihan 2016:12-3).

As such, the shutting out of particular forms of knowledge has been cited as a factor in environmental conflicts. For example, different understandings of reality have been shown to be a source of conflict between Maine lobster fishermen and federal scientists, with disagreement over the state of lobster stocks and over the proper way to manage lobster fishing. The failure of scientists’ models to predict changes in catches and the imposition of
management policies based on these models have been described as damaging the credibility of government scientists (Acheson 2003).

Similarly, conflicts over large predators in Norway are depicted as conflicts between “dominant and subordinate cultural forms and bodies of knowledge” (Skogen 2003). In this case, the dominant knowledge of managers and scientists conflicted with the perspective of those strongly anticanivore in a conflict that was about more than the physical ‘matter-at-hand’. Skogen argues for a broader understanding of ‘participation’, describing an apparently successful case of increased cooperation and respect between scientists and anticanivore groups. This generated a shared understanding among different actors even as decision-making structures were left largely unchanged (2003). Finally, lay people’s capacity for involvement in the construction of environmental problems has been highlighted in an examination of efforts to deal with a moth outbreak in Gotland, Sweden (Gustafsson 2011; Gustafsson and Lidskog 2012). This active role in knowledge production and narrative construction is an at-times overlooked factor in understanding how environmental problems emerge and develop.

This is not to suggest that the push for pragmatic simplicity is limited to natural science. As noted earlier, all theory entails simplification in order to make sense of the world. A further example of scientific theory opting for pragmatic simplicity is that of rational choice theory. Rational choice theory, in essence, suggests that self-interested individuals will seek to ‘maximise their gain’ in any given situation. A broad body of work, it tends to conceive of individuals in simplistic terms, but does provide the ability to make predictions in a variety of contexts, based on its theoretical assumptions. Thus, in one famous case pertinent to discussions of whaling, biologist Garrett Hardin outlined his influential thesis of the ‘tragedy of the commons’ (Hardin 1968). Within this text, Hardin utilises an example of a hypothetical ‘commons’ – a communal pasture used by a community of herdsmen – where he argues that it is ‘rational’ for the self-interested herdsmen to overgraze the pasture. In a situation with limited resources, it is depicted as inevitable that the commons will be exhausted20. This line of argumentation

---

20 Hardin has been regularly cited since his famous paper came out, particularly with regard to ‘the commons’ or ‘common pool resources’. However, it is notable that Hardin’s paper is actually an argument about global overpopulation and, in his discussion, he does suggest that society needs to agree mechanisms to prevent exhaus-
has then been advanced with regard to the management of numerous natural resources, alongside arguments that the commons either need to be privatised or placed under state control.

Such generalised prescriptions have often been criticised (Ostrom 1990). Dissatisfaction with the limited conceptualisation of the ‘rational individual’ and ‘self-interest’ has led to considerable academic effort to create theory based on a more nuanced approach, what have been called “second-generation models of rationality” (Ostrom 1998:9). Such approaches have developed into a considerable research programme, its theoretical insights and pragmatic approach producing several research and policy tools. Notably, the insight that individuals are ‘bounded’ by their context and this affects what they consciously or unconsciously identify as rational. Despite these innovations, most rational choice-based approaches still involve an acknowledged simplification of human behaviour – only so much can be explained in terms of individual rational self-interest (cf. Acheson 2003:40; Edling and Rydgren 2014). As a consequence, criticisms remain (e.g. Peterson and Isenhour 2014, see 5.4. for more detail). As such, whilst approaches drawing on rational choice theory certainly have their advantages, there are times when its pragmatic simplicity leads to incorrect or unhelpful conclusions.

Within the body of environmental sociology literature there have been numerous attempts to apply various theoretical lenses to different environmental issues. Several of these have been also been applied to whaling debates in different parts of the world. One influential stream of sociological research on environmental problems has been that of discourse analysis. ‘Discourses’ are shared ways of apprehending the world, which “construct meanings and relationships, helping define common sense and legitimate knowledge” (Dryzek 2013:9). Discourses are integrally political and also bound up in material reality. It is thus a tool that has been employed by sociologists on different parts of the realist-constructivist continuum. In essence the language that we use to “construct, discuss, and analyze environmental problems has all kinds of consequences” (Dryzek 2013:11).

Discourse analysis has previously been applied to the whaling debate by two authors utilising slightly different approaches. The first, looking across whaling conflicts in different parts of the world, examines both anti- and
pro-whaling arguments. In this depiction, arguments against whaling draw upon four sometimes conflicting discourses: on conservation, preservation, animal rights and animal welfare (Kalland 2009:5). From these discourses a homogenising narrative – a “supermantra” (cf. Singleton 2016c) – generalising the plight of all whales globally is created. This ‘superwhale’ is thus considered to be physically huge (e.g. like the blue whale), communicative (e.g. like the humpback whale), social and big-brained (a sign of intelligence, e.g. bottle-nosed dolphins and sperm whales), friendly (e.g. like the grey whale) and to be endangered (e.g. several species such as the bowhead whale) (Kalland 1993). In opposition to this, pro-whaling narratives draw upon ecological discourses (whales as a local food; whales compete with fisheries); anti-imperialistic discourses relating to local cultural and economic diversity and independence; ethics discourses (whales are not ‘special’ animals in food production terms; whaling is not especially cruel); and legal discourses on global and local resource rights (Kalland 2009). In this depiction, rather than “deliberative democracy” between actors committed to a collective, inclusive perspective (Dryzek 2013:236) what has occurred is “schismogenesis” (cf. Brox 2000) with two sides fighting to impose their viewpoint on the other, where common ground is under-communicated and indeed its existence is denied (Kalland 2009). In such circumstances, the only end to a conflict is the crushing defeat of one side or the other.

Epstein also takes a discourse perspective (2008), however, contrasting with Kalland’s approach, she utilises a Foucauldian inspired analysis. A key feature of Foucauldian discourse analysis is that discourses may be hegemonic with one discourse typically dominant at a particular time and place (Dryzek 2013:22). Within these discourses power is conceived not as a ‘thing’ wielded by actors but is rather an integral aspect of particular relationships, i.e. the focus is on power relations (Epstein 2008:3). “[S]ocial relations are both simultaneously the locus of power and the site of the production of meaning” (Epstein 2008:4). In Epstein’s historical account, different ‘whaling’, ‘anti-whaling’ and, latterly ‘anti-anti-whaling’ discourses have arisen, with the anti-whaling discourse becoming dominant in the post-World War II period. It is these discursive changes that have led to the marked changes in the perception of both whales and whaling around the world; with whaling quickly becoming and remaining a taboo subject in

21 Of course, in some circumstances, such schismogenesis may be an integral part of changing the normative terms of a debate and thus effecting societal change (cf. Humphrey and Stears 2006)
many countries, even in places that have no material interest in whales\textsuperscript{22}. Within discourses whales and whaling become meaningful – norms and values and the terms of the debate are set. Epstein explores how different actors (individuals, NGOs and states) take different discursively oriented ‘subject-positions’ highlighting the performative, identity aspects of the debate. Thus the on-going whaling debate (and any other battle over norms and practices) is more than simply a battle between actors with material interests, there are complex social and symbolic aspects of the process of meaning-making, relating to the defining of ‘self’ and ‘other’ – anti-whaling and anti-anti-whaling subject positions need one another. The actors in the whaling debate are thus involved in a conflict over the power to define themselves and others (Epstein 2008).

The accounts by Kalland and Epstein both describe the actions of social movements, another area of environmental sociological theory/interest. Whilst an integrally variable and contested concept, a social movement has been defined as “an association or set of associations organized around a common interest that seeks to influence collective outcomes without obtaining authoritative offices of government” (Dryzek et al. 2003:2). Social movement theory has been specifically applied to the debate around whaling in Japan where, echoing Epstein, identity and morality-based claims are also extant (Blok 2008). In this depiction, Japanese pro-whaling activism is identified as an “elite-driven countermovement” – pro-whaling framing (see 3.2, below) has been steered by central bureaucratic actors with direct access to political resources (Blok 2008:45; cf. Pichardo 1995). The Japanese pro-whaling movement thus wages a reactive fight, led by domestic elites (inside and outside the state), against Western imperialism, utilising a relatively ‘safe’ or minor issue (whaling). In this case “neither anti- nor pro-whalers are seriously responding to very real concerns raised by other actors in the debate, whether ecological, socio-economic, democratic, or cultural in character” (Blok 2008:49). This is a situation of moral diseconomy, where the competing groups seek to frame whales, whaling and society in mutually exclusive fashion, with interests deeply interpellated with identity claims. What occurs is thus an on-going trial of strength.

\textsuperscript{22} In this account, the dominance of the anti-whaling discourse was produced at the juncture of “two preexisting powerful discourses, an individualistic Cold War Discourse on capitalism and democracy, and a nascent global environmental discourse” (Epstein 2008:248).
In examining grindadráp this thesis roots itself solidly in the sociological tradition. Two different approaches are utilised as part of an attempt to address the complexity of reality. The following section presents ‘the ontological turn’, which is followed by another describing ‘the theory of sociocultural viability’. This theory chapter then concludes with a brief discussion of the scope that each theory complements the other, how differences can be mitigated and how the theories can be situated within the traditions of environmental sociology.

3.2. An ontological turn: Reality gets messy

The ‘ontological turn’ comprises a broad multidisciplinary body of research united by an interest in ‘ontology’ – the form of reality. While a diverse group of scholars have contributed to it, one of the main constants in many of its sub-branches is the contribution of Bruno Latour who, along with John Law, Steve Woolgar and Sheila Jasanoff can be seen as one of the ‘founders’ of the approach. This thesis draws upon the branch of the ontological turn that is sometimes labelled ‘perspectivist’ (see below) (cf. Viveiros de Castro 2004). This approach has been influential within ‘political ecology’. Political ecology is itself an interdisciplinary academic community examining “the condition and change of social/environmental systems, with explicit consideration of relations of power” (Robbins 2011:20). The branch of political ecology influenced by the ontological turn can perhaps, after Blaser, be called “political ontology” (2009). This theory choice is appropriate; Chapter 2 has shown the diverse political and ecological impacts of whaling practices and the conflicts that exist around them.

The ontological turn, political ontology included, is typically called constructivist. This is to distinguish it from social constructivist approaches. Basically, humans are unable to grasp the infinite complexity of reality and thus are forced to engage with the world through ‘systems of ordering,’ which inherently involve active processes of categorisation. However, rather than simply layering social categories upon a fixed, external reality proponents of the ontological turn argue that the process of ordering is constitutive – social and natural are intertwined and interpellated with one another. Above all, ordering is an active practice; within the ontological turn orderings are considered to be ‘performed’ or ‘enacted’. Ontology is built on the

---

23 Other significant names that are periodically categorised as part of the ontological turn include Donna Haraway and Tim Ingold, who have bodies of ‘ontological work’.
constant activities of actors to enact systems of ordering (Kendall and Wickham 2001). This is not to deny that objects in reality can have representations distinct from themselves; representations form part of systems of ordering as ‘stories’ and may have material effects. Orderings are thus “simultaneously semioticised and real” (Roepstorff and Bubandt 2003:26). In making analysis, representations are considered to be objects integral to systems of ordering (Kendall and Wickham 2001:161).

In this conception, many environmental conflicts are understood not as battles over the ‘correct’ representation of a given situation – ‘multiculturalism’ – but rather are battles to decisively enact or perform one of several different realities – ‘multinaturalism’ (Blaser 2009). This has been called ‘cosmopolitics’ – struggles to bring a particular order or orders to the universe (Latour 2004).

The researcher who wishes to examine any given environmental conflict thus needs to aware of how different actors assert systems of ordering and the impact of ‘ontological dissonance’ or ‘equivocacy’ between those involved (cf. Blaser 2009; Blok 2011; de la Cadena 2010; Escobar 1999; Viveiros de Castro 2004). All systems of ordering are partial and are performed in particular times and places. Indeed, different, apparently conflicting systems of ordering may be employed by the same actor so as to be mutually supportive. For example, Mol has described how anaemia takes separate clinical, statistical and pathophysiological forms within biomedicine. Anaemia is thus ordered differently at different times within the treatment process and medical practitioners actively work to avoid equivocacy by keeping them separate (Mol 1999). In many situations, the collision between different systems of ordering requires translation – the emergence of a ‘hybrid’ is the result. Hybrids are integrally political; with some actors’ orderings performed at the expense of others (Escobar 1999).

This theoretical approach is best rendered comprehensible through the use of a couple of explanatory examples. For instance, Nustad has examined how the land that now comprises South Africa’s iSamangaliso Wetland Park...
has been ordered quite differently at different points in history and by different actor groups. The area has transformed from hunting grounds to game reserve to farmland to conservation and tourism landscape (Nustad 2011). In contemporary South Africa conflict continues between those who utilise the landscape for subsistence purposes and those who seek to remove trace of human environmental interactions from the area. This brief narrative appears like what occurs are contests over representations, but Nustad argues that:

[Environments in the St Lucia area were much more than the raw material of people’s social constructions. Colonial and post-colonial enactments of nature led to the near extinction of some animals; later, in attempts to save the ‘game’, colonial enactments together with tsetse flies and animals (both domestic and wild) formed relations that threatened the survival of African communities. The subsequent industrialisation of the area then created a whole new set of relationships with new species being introduced – sugar cane, eucalyptus, pines – and again environments were formed to sustain these new relationships. (Nustad 2011).

There is thus a clear material element to how this story has played out, with an integral power component. Nustad argues that at least two fundamentally different systems of ordering are in conflict within one physical space. Asymmetries in power are revealed in the disparate abilities of actors to perform exactly how the land is. Reality is diffuse, complex and messy and it is the researcher’s role to sift through the mess and describe how the particular systems of ordering that bring clarity came to be and thus how it could be different (Law 2004). Indeed, researchers themselves are integrated in and constructive of systems of ordering.

A second example links directly into Chapter 2’s discussion on the history of whaling. Looking specifically at Japanese pro-whaling activities, Blok highlights a situation where science has been unable to decisively define the ‘matters-of-facts’ that the conflict revolves around (2011). Rather than a shared ordering of whales and the threats they face a situation of “antagonistic cosmopolitics” is extant: “issues of science, ethics, law, politics, economics, and culture are constantly mixed up in conglomerate ‘moral universes’ around human-whale entanglements” (Blok 2011:57). Actors on both sides of the whaling debate struggle to decisively enact their ordering
of the global whaling situation and each employs ‘their’ scientists in producing ‘universal’ knowledge in these attempts. However, in the absence of agreement over baseline principles, ‘science’ remains indecisive and bodies of ‘universal knowledge’ are extant (cf. Tsing 2005). Among anti-whalers, Blok identifies enactments of ‘the endangered whale’ and ‘the rights bearing whale’ (2011:65). These are opposed in Japan by ‘the abundant whale’, ‘the Japanese whale’ and the ‘fish-predator whale’ (Blok 2011:68-70). These different, clashing whales are each born of the diverse material and social practices of the actors involved in the whaling conflict (including that of the whales [cf. Blok 2007]). The confrontation is direct, with the current hybrid of the whaling conflict supporting the performances of both sides. In this case, the relationship between the two sides is dysfunctional and antagonistic: “human-whale associations form in rounds of often mutually blind semiotic-material ‘enactments,’ producing multiple and messily interacting ontological versions of whales” (Blok 2011:63).

As with any academic movement, the ontological turn has attracted its share of critics. For example, one of the sticking points within discussions of the ontological turn is the extent that nonhumans (e.g. the ‘whales’ or the ‘tsetse flies’ in the examples mentioned above) are more than just ‘objects’ and may in fact be considered ‘actors’ themselves. Indeed, one critic has highlighted that there is disagreement on this point within the ontological turn itself (Hornborg 2015). This ‘ecologisation’ of social science has generated a certain amount of debate among researchers. For example, Elam has highlighted the impossibility of a researcher separating themselves from extant systems of ordering (e.g. race, gender or class) (1999). As such, the would-be ontological theorist needs to be conscious of their own role performing the systems of ordering they appear to simply record (cf. Gad, Jensen and Winthereik 2015:81).

Also focusing on the distinction between subject and object, Hornborg has questioned the need to abandon what is, after all, a useful analytical distinction (2015:43).

---

25 Where whales “have gradually come to symbolize the historical-religious continuity of an allegedly unique Japanese ‘whaling culture,’ now in need of active preservation” (Blok 2011).

26 Where apparently overabundant minke whales deprive Japanese fisheries of their ecological livelihood.
Beyond human perceptions, there are objectively biotic versus abiotic entities, and any attribution of agency or personhood to abiotic objects—whether by Amazonians or by Science-and-Technology scholars—should be understood as a statement about fetishized social relations. (Hornborg 2015:46)

Hornborg argues that a more useful research project involves critical examinations of ‘fetishes’ (and the social relations they conceal). By focusing on the political economic conditions within which particular social relations are embedded, the capitalist forces driving environmental destruction come into focus and can, hopefully, be confronted.

Other critics have also been sceptical of the use of the term ‘ontology’, suggesting that it is simply another name for ‘culture’ with comparable risks of essentialism in its use (cf. Carrithers et al. 2010). There is a risk that the researcher creates an ‘us’ and ‘them’ by ascribing homogeneity to those embroiled in systems of ordering. Care must be taken to ensure that differences between systems of ordering are understood as analytical products rather than an essential quality of homogenous, bounded and unchanging groups.

I have considerable sympathy for many of these criticisms. I concede the risks of essentialism as well as the problems of the researcher’s limited ability to perceive the world objectively. My issue is that there is a risk of being overly reductionist. Reducing the differences between ways of perceiving the world to social relations between humans precludes the possibility that some of the ‘objects’ that appear as ‘subjects’ in accounts by ontological theorists (e.g. a sacred mountain), do in fact exist as such (cf. de la Cadena 2010). Put differently, after Searle (1995) we researchers may be able to separate ‘brute facts’ from ‘institutional facts’ but that may be at odds with what respondents are trying to tell us (cf. Viveiros de Castro 2004:13)\(^{27}\).

For the researcher to do so is an inherently political act. A criticism of much of the extant literature on the whaling debate is a tendency to ‘pick a side’ and to thus from the outset effectively determine one group or the other as ‘irrational’ or ‘wrong’ (Brydon 1996). I thus see the ontological turn as an attempt to avoid claiming from the outset a particular normative stance

\(^{27}\) Put yet another way, whilst the ontological turn runs the risk of the researcher entering a relativistic quagmire, the turn’s critics at times seem to be unwilling to reflect upon their own theoretical presuppositions and their political consequence (Pedersen 2012)
about the nature of the world and as an acceptance of the limits of human knowledge (cf. Graeber 2015:21-22). As one account puts it:

the ontological turn … is a technology of description … designed in the optimist (non-skeptical) hope of making the otherwise visible by experimenting with the conceptual affordances … present in a given body of ethnographic materials. We stress that such material can be drawn from anywhere, anytime, and anyone; there is no limit to what practices, discourses, and artefacts are amenable to ontological analysis. Indeed, articulating “what could be” in this way implies a peculiarly non- or anti-normative stance, which has profoundly political implications in several senses. (Holbraad, Pedersen and Viveiros de Castro 2014)

As such, my take on the ontological turn is largely as a methodological guide, reflective of the sub-branch of the movement known as ‘perspectivism’ (cf. Viveiros de Castro [2004], cf. Chapter 4.). The researcher proceeds as if alternative systems of ordering are manifest and pays close attention to the practices (particularly the embodied practices) that perform them. Taking this approach behoves the researcher to remain conscious of themselves and their own influence on the data – they must be reflexive as they ‘translate’ what they observe into systems of ordering (Viveiros de Castro 2004). The thesis explores how different perspectives are manifest around grindadráp. As such, the relativistic viewpoint of the ontological turn makes examining systems of orderings and ordering practices a sensible starting point for looking at such a complex issue. In taking such an approach, I see no reason why other theories with different philosophical foundations may not also be employed, indeed this may be obligatory if the researcher seeks to go beyond using description of ordering processes (cf. Kendall and Wickham 2001). Indeed, to do so, the researcher may be required to take a particularly epistemological (or ontological) stand-point (cf. Graeber 2015). As such I now turn to this second body of theory, the theory of sociocultural viability.

3.3. A cultural theory: Institutions get messy?
Hailing from the sociological tradition of approaching conflict through the lens of institutional understandings of environmental problems (Irwin 2001:115), the theory of sociocultural viability (commonly called ‘cultural
theory for short [cf. Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky 1990]) is a body of work thus has its origins in a heuristic aid created by Mary Douglas. Douglas had noticed certain patterns in the ways groups of people bound themselves to one another and their environment. In cultural theory these are commonly called ‘grid’ and ‘group’:

**Group** refers to the extent to which an individual is incorporated into bounded units. The greater the incorporation, the more individual choice is subject to group determination. **Grid** denotes the degree to which an individual’s life is circumscribed by externally imposed prescriptions. The more binding and extensive the scope of the prescriptions, the less of life that is open to individual negotiation. (Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky 1990:5, emphasis in original).

Group strength is high when people spend a large amount of time interacting with other members of their social unit, and low when people operate largely as individuals. Grid refers to constraints on social interaction – it is high when there are numerous explicit social classifications such as rank or gender. From grid and group come five ‘ideal type’ ways of organising social relations: egalitarianism (low grid, high group), hierarchical (high grid,

---

28 A perennial difficulty for the would-be user of cultural theory is the name to employ. ‘Cultural theory’ has become common, but is unfortunately rather vague. In some places it has been called ‘Neo-Durkheimian Theory’, ‘the Institutional Theory of Culture’ (6 and Mars 2008:xv) or ‘Cultural Institutional Theory’ (Stoker 2004). Michael Thompson currently favours ‘Theory of Plural Rationality’ (Pers. Comm.). Adding further confusion to the mix is the possibly erroneous coining of ‘theory of sociocultural variability’ (Ney and Verweij 2015).

29 Many classic institutional theories have utilised a dualistic typology (for example ‘markets’ and ‘hierarchies’). Michael Thompson has written extensively regarding the similarities and differences between cultural theory and these, arguing that not only do they tend to miss the knowledge embodied by the solidarities they do not include but they also are often static. “Where conventional theory has assumed that social systems are simple (linear, deterministic, insensitive to initial conditions, equilibrium-seeking and predictable), cultural theory treats them as complex (non-linear, indeterministic, sensitive to initial conditions, far from equilibrium, and unpredictable)” (Thompson 2008b:92). A full discussion of these arguments is beyond the scope of this thesis, however both (Thompson, Ellis and
high group), individualism (low grid, low group), fatalism (high grid, low group) and autonomy (whose members withdraw from social coercion or manipulation altogether [Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky 1990:7])\textsuperscript{30}.

The Grid-Group typology, whilst a key intervention in the development of cultural theory has however attracted criticism, for example one reviewer asserts that the egalitarian definition, whilst logically compelling, fails to match empirical reality (Schwartz 1991:766). Similarly, Milton has criticised how change is manifested in early accounts of cultural theory. In earlier versions of cultural theory, social relations cause culture (and the ways of understanding the world within). This is problematic because it is deterministic, denying the possibility of choice and change. Continuing, Milton also states, however, that Douglas did not preclude the possibility of change. Thus the logic of cultural theory was compromised because the natural and cultural intrude upon and affect the form of social relations (Milton 1996). Cultural theorists have thus moved away from Grid-Group typologies and developed a more dynamic model (see below). They stress that the typology is simply a heuristic device and explicitly not a theory of personality types (Tansey and Rayner 2009:76). Rather, contemporary cultural theory posits that individuals are inherently inclined to be attracted to one of the five social solidarities as a way of making ‘transactional sense’ of wherever they happen to be:

\begin{quote}
    in the process of doing this, we will simultaneously establish our social relations and discover our preferences. And if we establish our relationships and pursue our preferences then we will have become social beings, and our various solidarities
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{30} Eagle-eyed readers who skip ahead will note that the articles that comprise the second part of this thesis only refer to four social solidarities. It is a common feature of cultural theory analysis to focus primarily upon individualism, egalitarianism, hierarchy and fatalism (cf. Thompson, Grendstad and Selle 1999). The autonomous social solidarity also differs slightly from the others, with its members resisting being ‘grouped’. See Thompson (2008b:34-6) for more detail. Several writers are beginning to try to greater integrate the autonomous solidarity into their work (e.g. Ney and Verweij 2015).
will have self-organised in the way cultural theory predicts. (Thompson 2008b:147)

According to CT, the five forms of social solidarity are present at every single level of social organisation from ‘dividual’ to village to nation state to the globe (Thompson 1998:200). Furthermore, each solidarity is underpinned by a particular “cultural bias” with narratives31 on ‘nature’, ‘humanity’, time, material and political distribution of capital within society and the role of management (see Table 2), and a concomitant “behavioural strategy” (Thompson, Grendstad and Selle 1999:1,8). Cultural bias acts in combination with particular patterns of interpersonal relations – “social relations” – as a “way of life” (Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky 1990:1) or (in later writings) “social solidarity”, constraining and enabling rather than determining particular behaviour (Tansey and Rayner 2009)32. The viability of each way of life is dependent on a mutually supportive, particular relationship between cultural bias and a pattern of social relations. This is the “compatibility condition. A change in the way an individual perceives physical or human nature, for instance, changes the range of behavior an individual can justify engaging in and hence the type of social relations an individual can justify living in. Shared values and beliefs are thus not free to come together in any which way; they are always closely tuned to the social relations they help legitimate” (Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky 1990:2)

There are thus five social solidarities that individuals will aggregate to. According to cultural theory, these five social solidarities are present everywhere, in varying strengths and often in pairwise alliances (Verweij et al. 2011) and in any given situation there will be five narratives generated.

31 This is a narrative in a sense resembling that employed by Emery Roe: narratives as ‘stories’ – “Each has a beginning, middle, and end (or premises and conclusions, when cast in the form of an argument) and revolves around a sequence of events or positions in which something happens or from which something follows” (Roe 1991:288).

32 Indeed, the theory “makes no claim to represent the nature of individual free will” (Tansey and Rayner 2009)
Table 2. The social solidarities (adapted from Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky 1990; Thompson 1998; Thompson 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th>Egalitarianism</th>
<th>Hierarchy</th>
<th>Fatalism</th>
<th>Autonomous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grid-Group</strong></td>
<td>Low grid, low group.</td>
<td>Low grid, high group.</td>
<td>High grid, high group.</td>
<td>High grid, low group.</td>
<td>Withdrawn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humanity</strong></td>
<td>Self-seeking and atomistic.</td>
<td>Essentially caring and sharing.</td>
<td>Malleable: deeply flawed but redeemable.</td>
<td>Fickle and untrustworthy.</td>
<td>Integrated with nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope of knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Sufficient and timely.</td>
<td>Incomplete but holistic.</td>
<td>Almost complete and divided up.</td>
<td>Irrelevant.</td>
<td>The here and now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management</strong></td>
<td>Management institutions should work with the market.</td>
<td>Voluntary management based on simplicity and the precautionary principle.</td>
<td>Management by experts and regulation.</td>
<td>Management is pointless.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution</strong></td>
<td>It is fair that those who put most in get most out.</td>
<td>Equality of result is key.</td>
<td>Distribution should be by need (based on rank or station).</td>
<td>Fairness is impossible.</td>
<td>Self-sufficiency is key.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Several points need to be clarified here. Firstly, cultural theorists argue that each social solidarity is able to grasp only a part of the complexity of reality. Each solidarity generates its own narrative (and rationality) around a particular issue related to the beliefs and lifestyles of its members contradictory and irreducible to that of the other solidarities (Thompson 2013:427). According to cultural theory, none of the solidarities is simply correct rather each solidarity will generate important knowledge of a situation, distilling “certain elements of experience and wisdom missed by the others” (Thompson 2003:5108). Furthermore, the different solidarities require one another: cultural theory argues that each solidarity is only viable in an environment that contains the others. To restate a pithy summary of the situation as envisaged by cultural theory:

... each way of life, unchecked, undermines itself. Individualism would mean chaos without hierarchical authority to enforce contracts and repel enemies. To get work done and settle disputes the egalitarian order needs hierarchy too. Hierarchies, in turn, would be stagnant without the creative energy of individualism, incohesive without the binding force of equality, unstable without the passivity and acquiescence of fatalism. Dominant and subordinate ways of life thus exist in alliance. Yet this relationship is fragile, constantly shifting, constantly generating a societal environment conducive to change. (Schwartz 1991)

Secondly, a key feature of cultural theory is that it is predicated upon dynamism. The world continues to turn and situations change, people with it. Thus, a particular combination of social solidarities will only ever be a temporary. Thirdly, there is still space for individual freedom, people’s views and behaviour are not purely ‘fixed’ by their social relations: individuals can be aware of the different solidarities and their narratives. They can thus assess different situations and gravitate to whichever of the five solidarities (and concomitant justifying narrative) appeals at a given historical moment (Tansay and Rayner 2009:58; Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky 1990:13). Thus the solidarities should not be considered to be psychological types (6 and Mars 2008:xxiii-iv). Individuality is however relational, people are ‘dividuals’ rather than separate, bounded units (Thompson, Grendstad and Selle 1999:11). Rather than structure preceding individual agency, they
are interwoven with one another (Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky 1990). Finally, cultural theory’s social solidarities are understood to be extant at all social scales, from the household to the international level (Thompson 1998). This needs to be borne in mind in the following discussion.

With social solidarities as the object of analysis, cultural theory has regularly been employed in the analysis and assessment of institutions. ‘Institutions’ are defined rather broadly within cultural theory as “any non-randomness in behaviour (or … in the beliefs and values that are used to justify that behaviour)” (Thompson 2008b:51). In making an analysis, the cultural theorist examines how different social solidarities manifest at different times and at different social scales. As, according to cultural theory, each of the social solidarities has privileged access to a greater ‘truth’ the institutions that are most adaptable to changing situations will be those that are able to incorporate multiple social solidarities. Conversely, the failure of any particular institution may well be rooted in an over-simplistic view of reality, with one or more solidarity omitted.

Cultural theory analyses describe how within policy conflicts representatives of particular social solidarities attempt to apply elegant solutions to problems. ‘Elegant’ because contradictory voices are omitted. A situation of elegance will only remain viable as long as the dominant framing of a particular situation remains unchallenged by information that contradicts the ‘truth’ of a dominant social solidarity. Within cultural theory, power is understood as an emergent property of actions asserting the viewpoint of a particular social solidarity (see 5.4.). Thus extremely elegant situations are often typified by the dominance of a group promoting the perspective of one social solidarity (Thompson 2008b:142-5).

Paper V provides an example of this: dominant individualistic notions of whale stocks – as largely unaffected by the actions of humanity – were rendered untenable by the increasingly obvious decline in whale numbers, shifting people into the hierarchical and egalitarian solidarities (Singleton 2016a). Similarly, egalitarian social movements have a tendency either to split into multiple groups or to develop a hierarchy as they increase in size – the difficulties of cohesion becoming too great (Douglas and Mars 2003). The outcome of an ever-growing discrepancy between what is expected and what is actual is known as a surprise. Surprise is often pivotal in dislodging

---

33 I consider this similar to the inseparability of structure and agency in Gidden’s famous structuration theory (Giddens 1984).
people from their current form of social solidarity (Thompson 2008b:80-1).

According to cultural theory, institutions that are likely to prove longest-lasting are those that are able to access the uncomfortable knowledge that each of the different solidarities bring. This then opens up the possibility of engendering clumsy solutions from the interactions of representatives of different solidarity types (Thompson 2008a:207-8). Such a possibility requires representing as many solidarities as possible within “noisy and argumentative institutional arrangements” (Thompson 2008a:205). A key feature of this is responsiveness; representatives of each solidarity have to be able to access alternative viewpoints but also be able to respond. Deliberative quality is thus often a key concern within cultural theory analyses. Bringing alternative viewpoints into the discussion, it is argued, increases the likelihood of creative, longer-lasting and mutually amenable resolutions to disputes. “A clumsy solution … is not a compromise; still less a consensus but the situation is preferable to all four voices than if one of them had been able to achieve elegant dominance” (Thompson 2013:429). An institution that is able to identify clumsy solutions is a practical learning system, in a state of flux. In practice, few institutions are either purely elegant or clumsy in their responses to challenges and may be located on a continuum: the clumsier an institution the better, for the most part, as far as cultural theory is concerned. Likewise, many institutions involve combinations of different solidarities, varying at different social scales (cf. 6 and Mars 2008:xviii-iv). Institutions that are better able to generate clumsy solutions are called, in the language of cultural theory, messy institutions:

Messy institutions are those procedures for engaging the extended peer community that creatively and flexibly combine all four ways of generating clumsy solutions that can be derived from cultural theory. Procedures that do not comprise elements of all ways of enabling clumsy solutions will be less successful than those that do. (Ney and Verweij 2015:1685, emphasis removed).

There is a further element to this: cultural theory is predicated on the assumption that democracy and deliberative quality are valued (Thompson 2008a:214). As such, marginalising one or another solidarity is to be avoided. Each solidarity is, after all, an “expression of the way in which a significant portion of the populace feels we should live with one another
and with nature, it is [therefore] important that all be taken some sort of account of in the policy process” (Thompson 2003:518). In practice, however, a ‘perfect’ situation where all voices are respected seldom exists. Indeed, the natures of both the fatalistic and autonomous solidarities mean they are difficult to integrate within the policy landscape (see above).

As with the ontological turn discussed above, there have been various criticisms raised at cultural theory. Some, like Milton’s earlier, relate to the processes by which change occurs, others focus upon the perceived determinism of the theory. Likewise, several writers have criticised the misapplication of cultural theory, notably the (mis)use of its typology (Tansey and O’Riordan 1999:84; Tansey and Rayner 2009:66). 6 and Mars have compiled a list of these criticisms, which they then attempt to address (2008:xxiii). Rather than simply restate their argumentation, I think it is useful to focus on what I perceive to be the advantages of cultural theory in analysing grindadráp, relating them to some of the criticisms.

In my eyes, cultural theory successfully walks a fine line between relativism and pragmatism, drawing attention to the “heterogeneity and dynamism of … social relations” (Irwin 2001:120). In order to fully assess the nature of an institution such as grindadráp and its place in Faroese and global society requires the taking a particular standpoint. This standpoint also allows for the making of predictions, another appeal of cultural theory, in comparison to approaches that argue that description is the limit of sociological endeavours. At the same time, because cultural theory is predicated on the existence of different, valid epistemologies it reduces the problem of the researcher declaring particular practices as ‘wrong’ or having to bracket off large amounts of social behaviour as outside of predetermined models. It should be noted however that it ‘reduces’ but does not eliminate these issues and, sometimes, in my opinion there is a tendency to essentialise the social solidarities (cf. Tansay and Rayner 2009). There is an inherent risk, in my view, of homogenising different groups that are considered to be in the same solidarity. With this, there is a risk that authors appear to value particular social solidarities as ‘better’ than others. For example, Douglas and Ney devote considerable attention towards the likelihood of egalitarian groups becoming increasingly elegant in outlook, but do not do the same
for the other solidarities (1998)\textsuperscript{34}. This is surprising to me, because in my interpretation, no particular solidarity is inherently clumsier or more open than others. To reiterate, cultural theory’s typology is not an ontology – it is a heuristic tool rather than a straight depiction of reality (Tansey and O’Riordan 1999).

Utilising cultural theory in this way entails a necessary amount of simplification. As such, to a qualified extent, I agree with critics who point to the risks inherent to reducing empirical accuracy (6 and Mars 2008:xxvi; cf. Wilkinson 2001:10). Cultural theory does not present a portrait of the totality of individual behaviour and neither is it the ‘best’ tool for every sociological problem. There are also risks of the researcher producing an overall too static picture of social solidarities, of people as irrevocably ‘fixed’ in certain ways and risk of tautology in explanation. Static approaches are to be avoided as anathema to contemporary usage of cultural theory, which is predicated upon dynamism and continuous existence of all social solidarities in any given situation (cf. Tansey and O’Riordan 1999). Returning to \textit{grindadráp}, such error can be avoided through reflexivity, paying attention to the methodological maxims of cultural theory (see 4.2.) and, above all, looking at Faroese practices through time and space.

Finally, a word of caution should be made regarding predictions and the nature of surprise. As stated earlier, cultural theory analysis allows one to suggest what types of information (surprise) are likely to disturb the position of a dominant social solidarity. However, it is not able to assert definitively when surprise will occur (cf Boholm 2015:70) – indeed this is partly a political question. Thus predictions are narrow, constrained and may quickly be rendered moot within a changing situation.

Having (hopefully) clarified my position the next section discusses how I seek to utilise cultural theory alongside the ontological turn to provide alternative (but complementary) depictions of how different perspectives manifest within \textit{grindadráp}. This is then situated within broader environmental sociological theory.

\textsuperscript{34} A criticism that can also be made of Douglas and Wildavsky’s earlier book \textit{Risk and Culture} (Douglas and Wildavsky 1983) – although in that case the authors do highlight that this is because they are specifically focusing upon the history of the (egalitarian) environmental movement and are thus aware that the other solidarities have received less critical scrutiny.
3.4. General befuddlement

The cultural theorist Michael Thompson tells an anecdote that, in my mind, illustrates the confusion and tendency to speak at cross-purposes that occur when one attempts to compare the ontological turn and cultural theory. In the story Mary Douglas (the founding mother of cultural theory) is speaking to Sheila Jasanoff (prominent STS researcher, influential within the ontological turn). Jasanoff is apparently holding forth about how so much is ‘constructed’ and Douglas responds “You keep on saying ‘Gee, wow, it's all socially constructed’. But Sheila we've known that for 30 or 40 years now, all the way back to the ethnomethodologists and to Berger and Luckman. When are you going to catch up?” (Pers. Comm.). I am often reminded of this tale as I move between the two bodies of theory. Cultural theorists sometimes seem to be almost hostile to the power of simply revealing the processes that systems of ordering are built upon. For me, among the most inspiring of the texts by ontological theorists are those that show how the practices of scientists build the ‘factishes’ that are so powerful in many situations (e.g. Latour and Woolgar 1986; cf. Latour 1987). I do also however feel that ontological theorists are too convinced of the novelty of their insights. Many branches of science, sociology included, do not and have possibly never respected Latour’s ‘modern constitution’ with its clearly demarcated separation between the ‘natural’ and the ‘social’ (cf. Graeber 2015:17). In my mind, the fact that the world ‘out there’ is independent of human agency heavily permeates human knowledge is something integral to both the ontological turn and cultural theory. Likewise, within both theoretical perspectives, the changing nature of a situation is integrally linked to conflict between those with different worldviews (6 and Mars 2008; Latour 2004). Because of this, the policy prescriptions of the two approaches are also often similar, with both arguing for open and creative methods for bringing different perspectives on the world into political processes (cf. Callon, Lascoumes and Barthe 2011; Thompson 2008a).

There are however important distinctions between the two bodies of theory, which need to considered before they can be used side by side (below). One important thing to be borne in mind when discussing the ontological turn and cultural theory is not to conflate systems of ordering (or ‘ontologies’) with the social solidarities. It is tempting to try map the social solidarities upon different ordering systems – particularly when one considers Descola’s fourfold ‘typology of ontologies’ (2005) – however this inevitably leads to frustration and confusion. This is due to the fundamentally different epistemological (or ontological) outlooks integral to the two theories.
Within the ontological turn ‘nature’ emerges out of the ordering practices of diverse actors – it is interpellated with practice. Within cultural theory each of the five solidarities is only able to grasp part of nature’s totality, leading to partial knowledge. Nature upsets closed hegemonic situations by ‘surprising’ dominant solidarities. This occurs when dominant knowledge of a situation becomes at odds with people’s experiences, pushing people into alternative solidarities. A better way to view the two theories is to suggest that all the social solidarities of cultural theory (and the narratives they produce) will be possible within all systems of ordering, but the theoretical language of the two theories remains largely incommensurable.

Another way to look at the two theories is to consider how each looks ‘in the other’s eyes’, as it were. To ontological turn theorists, cultural theory is a particular system of ordering, where different socio-material institutions are ordered based on the fivefold typology. They would no doubt also draw attention to the implicit way ‘nature’ enters into cultural theory analysis through the concept of ‘surprise’. This is indicative of cultural theory’s social constructivist perspective, with the natural as conceptually separate. Ontological turn theorists thus might be leery of cultural theory’s ability to integrate non-human agency into its analysis. In contrast, cultural theorists perhaps consider much of the work of the ontological turn as incomplete – the role of sociology is more than simply description. The ethnographically-inspired accounts the ontological turn presents are material, to varying extents, from which a cultural theory assessment of institutions may begin.

My intention in this thesis is to elide the differences between the two bodies of theory and utilise them in complementary fashion. I see the two theories working at different levels of abstraction from the empirical material, with different scopes. The ontological turn is employed methodologically as a part of the practice of ethnography (see Chap. 4.). This allows for a better ‘emic’ (from the perspective of the subject) focus on the performance of ‘subjectivities’ (such as gender, kinship or work role) that are extant (Nightingale 2011), something that cultural theory analyses may struggle with (Boholm 2015:65; Verweij et al. 2006). I then move on from examining systems of ordering among respondents to exploring how processes of organising and disorganising are playing out in contemporary grindadráp, both locally and internationally, taking a more ‘etic’ (the researcher’s, outside) perspective. Utilising theory in this way allows me to combine the ‘thick’ description of the ontological turn with the strengths of cultural theory: its value as a framework for description and analysis as well as the ability to make predictions regarding future developments.
Both the ontological turn and cultural theory share several features with environmental sociological theory (3.1.). This includes shared interest in the interwoven nature of the social and the natural (‘socionatures’), an interest in the complexities that emerge around environmental problems and the assumption that their will likely be plural perspectives on any given situation. Furthermore, in dealing with environmental issues power asymmetries may lead to some perspectives being subordinated or repressed by others. Thus, within all three traditions, a shared, recurrent theme is that environmental issues often represent a failure to fulfil democratic ideals. Summarising greatly, in cases of conflict, the process of simplifying an environmental issue may have been taken at the ‘wrong’ stage and/or with particular voices shut out, either initially or as part of a continually developing situation (cf. above). Put another way, there are many cases of insufficient or inadequate involvement of particular stakeholder groups or great power inequalities between different groups engaged around an issue (White, Rudy and Gareau 2016). As such, across the discipline there is a certain consensus around the need to open up technological and political processes to wider groups within society. Several writers have thus called for various efforts to increase the quality of democracy on-going around environmental issues (e.g. Callon, Lascoumes and Barthes 2011; Dryzek 2013). Much of the literature discussed in section 3.1 can be seen as part of this, taking two overlapping forms. Firstly, environmental sociologists argue that by focusing upon the detail of how particular issues and conflicts came to be framed, defined and understood it is possible to see where different perspectives were either incorporated or rejected (Irwin 2001; Hannigan 2014; Wynne 2005). It is within this tradition that much work of the ontological turn finds itself. This then allows the possibility of change. Secondly, in suggesting particular forms of participation and negotiation, environmental sociologists (alongside other social scientists) have contributed to efforts to design tools that better allow different perspectives to interact. Ostrom’s ‘design principles for common property resource institutions’ (1990), Dryzek’s ‘deliberative democracy’ (2013) and Callon, Lascoumes and Barthe’s ‘hybrid forums’ are all examples of this (2011). Cultural theorists’ efforts to encourage clumsiness in decision-making largely sit within this tradition. The intention is that this combination of theory allows for a thorough analysis of grindadrap within the greater whaling conflict, generating new insights to complement the extant literature. In particular, by utilising cultural theory this research argues for a ‘constrained relativistic’ approach to whaling and environmental problems generally. Finally, this theory choice minimises the problem of
the researcher seeming to ‘pick a side’ from the beginning when examining conflict (cf. 4.3.).

Having placed the ontological turn and cultural theory within the corpus of environmental sociological theory, the next chapter outlines how this theory was operationalised during research.
4. Methods

The Ph.D. thesis isn’t expected to be a thunderbolt from heaven, you know.

Robertson Davies, *The rebel angels* (1983:36)

*Omaneftir og niðaneftir,*  
*Omaneftir vallaratúni,*  
*Har för hestur min tann brúni,*  
*Omaneftir vallaratúni*35  

*Det finns ingenting här som kan få dig att förstå,*  
*Låt det förflutna vara glömt*36  

This thesis focuses upon the way that different perspectives affect the practice of *grindadráp*. This then begs the question as to how a sociologist is to gather data on such a tricky concept as ‘understandings’, particularly as it is already acknowledged that they are apparently multiple. A simple response to this is perhaps ‘ask people’. This is intuitive and partially correct – almost all sociology involves communicating with respondents in some form, even if it may be through the medium of a questionnaire. However, as the forgoing theoretical discussion has shown, there is also a need to be able to record the *practices* of respondents beyond the *representations of practices* that they will produce in conversation. Furthermore, the research aims show an awareness that *grindadráp* is not separate from the global whaling debate.

As such, this thesis’ research approach needs to be able move between scales and places, with regard to the on-going passage of time. I have named this thesis’ guiding research approach ‘a strategically situated micro-ethnography’. This chapter is ordered as follows. The next section introduces the ethnographic method. This is followed by presenting the analytical perspectives of the ontological turn and cultural theory. The selection of *grindadráp*

35 Back and forth/Down the wanderer’s courtyard/There went my brown horse/Down the wanderer’s courtyard.  
36 There’s nothing here that can make you understand/Let the past be forgotten.
as the object of investigation is then discussed. The final two sections describe the exact different data collection methods employed and provide a discussion of ethical considerations.

4.1. A strategically situated micro-ethnography

As the aim of this thesis is to examine how whales and whaling are understood in conflicts locally and globally, the intentions can be considered ‘ethnographic’ (see below). Both the ontological turn and cultural theory call for creativity in methods and methodology, building up a picture of any given situation from a wide range of sources. Also, distinctive to both approaches, is a desire to avoid a single, clearly-defined view on the research object prior to beginning research (Law 2004; Verweij, Thompson and Engel 2011). This obviously presents a challenge to the researcher, after all, how can one begin conducting research without a starting point? In practice, of course, the researcher is never ‘empty’ and is inevitably moving along a particular personal historical trajectory (cf. Agar 2008:21). Likewise, the reality of research is that one seldom starts from scratch, there are few research frontiers where no social scientific theory or work has touched. For example, I was aware of grindadráp before commencing PhD studies and knew that the whaling conflict was of interest to me. Another way to think of these theories is that, in comparison to an ‘ordinary’ case study, they require an interpretivist research stance; the would-be ethnographer tries to avoid clearly defining the object of research beforehand as much as possible. This is in contrast to an approach which would draw clear boundaries around the ‘matter-at-hand’, for example defining grindadráp solely as the ‘traditional’ practices behind it, rather than the governmental and scientific practices that are integral to it (cf. Joensen 2009; see Chapter 6.).

‘Strategically situated micro-ethnography’ is clearly quite a mouthful and bears some reflection. ‘Ethnography’ is a research approach most well-known from social anthropology, where the image of the white, European anthropologist spending a lengthy period of time learning and then describing ‘their culture’, remains prominent. However, ‘ethnographic’ research also been employed within multiple social scientific disciplines (including sociology) and some of the simplistic assumptions behind the traditional picture have begun to be problematised (Agar 2008). Important trends have been an increasing awareness of the interconnectedness of human communities and cultures throughout the world (cf. Wolf 1982); the role of the presence of social scientists themselves in the communities they visit; and an
awareness of the power dimensions inherent to an observer representing ‘us’ definitively describing ‘them’ (Agar 2008; see 4.5., below).

“[E]thnography isn’t just about shared knowledge; rather, it’s about the practices of everyday life, the way those practices are built out of shared knowledge, plus all the other things that are relevant at the moment.” (Agar 2008:9, emphasis in original). The ethnographer seeks to account for the patterns of practices that they perceive through their research. What is emphasised is “immersion in the practical world, being caught up in the incessant flow of everyday life” (Pálsson 1994:901). This requires creative, flexible and mixed-methods approaches, with ethnographers utilising a variety of data sources in constructing descriptions and arguments rooted on a situation that remains in flux.

‘Strategically situated’ refers to the multi-sited ambitions of this research project. Classically, ethnography’s focus has been local, however the local cannot exist without the ‘non-local’. There has thus been increased recognition that the object of study emerges as a product of diverse relationships across time and space. This is reflected in this thesis’ ambition to move beyond narrow depictions of grindadráp. Integral to this research is grindadráp’s connections to other whaling conflicts, the distribution of power around the globe (cf. Agar 2008:13) and various international movements and practices, not least the movement of pilot whales (cf. Blok 2007). “The strategically situated ethnography attempts to understand something broadly about the system in ethnographic terms as much as it does its local subjects: It is only local circumstantially, thus situating itself in a context or field quite differently than does other single-site ethnography” (Marcus 1995:111).

The final element, ‘micro-ethnography’, refers to the limitations in fieldwork time. The main difference is that a micro-ethnography focuses upon a particular aspect of the topic. In this case, focus is upon three aspects of grindadráp (described in 4.4., below) (cf. Bryman 2004:293; Hammersley 2006:6). How future research could build an even greater picture of Faroese practice forms a subsection of Chapter 6.

4.2. Analytical perspectives
The preceding section dovetails nicely with the ontological turn’s “methods assemblages”, which are deemed to be productive of systems of ordering (Law 2004). Born of a desire to “stop asking people questions framed in terms of the way you already see things” (Agar 2008:38), ethnography is here intended to generate new knowledge around grindadráp. This requires
a relatively open analytical stance. Ethnography has been defined by an abductive standpoint. This is in contrast to deductive and inductive approaches. In the former, the researcher moves from concepts to hypotheses, which are then tested by empirical material. Within inductive approaches empirical material is first collected and then concepts generated. Abduction entails a dynamic process where the research moves in a constant dialogue between concept and material (Agar 2008). In my eyes, this is reminiscent of the hermeneutic stance of Gadamer; the researcher generates meaning moving between theory and observation, with both affecting the other (Gadamer [1989]2004). Ethnography is thus constantly being configured (Agar 2008:39). In sum, “Knowledge is neither enlightening eternal truth nor pure social construction” (Agar 2008:36).

This analytical approach chimes nicely with the body of theory within which this thesis is rooted. Referring specifically to the ontological turn, the methods I employ are integral to the systems of ordering I identify (cf. Law 2004). Agar’s description of abductive ethnography (2008:34-5) matches Kendall and Wickham’s three methodological protocols for the studying of systems of ordering. The protocols are: 1) “describe appearances”, 2) “describe the appearances of systems of thinking and knowledge” and 3) “describe the uses of appearances” (Kendall and Wickham 2001:79). As such, data collection and concept generation was characterised by an openness and changed as time progressed.

This analytical approach also largely gels with cultural theory. In this sense, this thesis contributes to the ongoing abductive process from which cultural theory has been formulated. Furthermore, an open approach to methodology is also a priority of cultural theory, where elegance (the use of data based on the assumptions of a single social solidarity) in analysis is to be heavily avoided. One cannot be guided by a single set of normative concerns, with interdisciplinarity the aim (Verweij, Thompson and Engel 2011). In this conceptualisation, the abductive process generates information on the possible institutions in the area of study, these are considered in light of cultural theory’s social solidarities, which then feeds back into the definition and understanding of the institutions uncovered. There is thus a slightly more deductive emphasis at play when cultural theory endeavours to move beyond the case in hand (cf. Agar 2008:44).

Cultural theory’s use of structural and functional explanations also requires the would-be theorist to be mindful of several methodological ‘rules’ for making sociological explanations (Thompson, Verweij and Ellis 2006:322-4). These are: 1) culture should not be utilised as an ‘uncaused
cause – grindadráp may not be explained as simply a product of ‘Faroese values’. The researcher needs to explain how the institution of grindadráp has come about. 2) Culture should not be used simply as an explanation of last resort, i.e. when economic, demographic, ecological or political explanations founder. “Such approaches, since they take no account of cognition – seeing and knowing – are hopelessly reductionist, and treat people as essentially no different from cattle” (Thompson et al. 2006:323). 3) Culture should not be invoked as a veto on comparison. This latter rule is a reaction to the argument that cultures are unique and may only be understood on their own terms (see Dutton 2009 for a discussion of this). Whilst I have some sympathy with such approaches, as noted in the theory section, I do also desire to move beyond simple description. Furthermore, as noted above, the idea of discrete bounded cultures has itself been undermined. Regarding grindadráp, cultural theory is thus arguing that Faroese practices can be compared with others elsewhere, whaling, subsistence or otherwise. All three of these rules have the effect of maintaining cultural theory’s dynamic focus; no institution is static, rather going through a process of organisating or disorganising.

4.3. Research focus: Why grindadráp? What in particular?

If this is a strategically situated research project examining the way different perspectives interact around the topic of whaling it is relevant to consider the reasons for selecting this particular part of the international whaling conflict. The selection of grindadráp was the result of a combination of factors relating to literature and practical concerns. In terms of theory, whaling is a good example of an environmental issue which defies a ‘neat’ solution. Faroese whaling is particularly of interest in this regard, as these papers and discussion describe, the arguments of proponents of grindadráp have been largely accepted within Faroese society but are heavily criticised by outsiders. It thus presents a good case to apply and consider the relative uses and merits of both ontological turn theories and cultural theory.

The Faroe Islands are also of interest if one considers specific gaps in the literature on whaling; if one examines the review in chapter 2, it is clear that social scientific literature has moved in waves. Simplifying, a considerable body of research on ‘whaling cultures’ emerged in the late 1980s-early

---

37 This is in order to avoid what has been called ‘ugly sister syndrome’ (after Cinderella – “see the shoe fits!”): the tendency to definitively allocate individuals or groups to a single ‘type’ (6 and Mars 2008:27).
1990s, often within social anthropology. In recent years, this tendency has been examined and problematised, with other scholars questioning the essentialising nature of these accounts. In doing so, these researchers highlight the politics that have been involved in framing practice in a particular way (Blok 2008; Brydon 2006; Watanabe 2009). This research has focused most heavily upon Iceland and Japan, two of the larger nations conducting what is widely perceived to be ‘commercial whaling’. As noted above, in the case of Iceland, this is explicit, whereas Japanese whaling is controversially conducted under the label ‘scientific whaling’. These two countries and Norway are prominent within the global whaling debate as the three largest pro-whaling actors. It thus leaves open the question of how smaller whaling communities and players are embroiled in the whaling conflict; how they are influenced by and influence the global situation.

The Faroe Islands also has practical advantages to the would-be micro-ethnographer, high levels of English knowledge facilitate communication with foreigners and the small-scale nature of the community makes it relatively easy to contact and encounter key respondents. Furthermore, the Faroese I met were generally very open and reflective about grindadráp. There was thus no air of secrecy around their activities. This made it eminently possible to follow the maxims of multi-sited ethnography (“Follow the People … Follow the Thing” [Marcus 1995:106]). It is through these maxims that I visited events outside of the Faroe Islands (see below). Likewise, an efficient transport infrastructure made it easy to move between parts of the country as required.

The state of social scientific knowledge on grindadráp also rendered the case appealing. There has been a body of work that has emerged over the past forty years, making it feasible to track the changing nature of practice. There are also however certain knowledge gaps and these formed the basis of my investigation. The first of these related to the scientific practices that go on around grindadráp. Whilst Kerins (2010) does discuss Faroese involvement in international organisations such as the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission, the practices of biologists remain in the background. The second thrust focused on changes in practice, notably homing in on the development of the ‘spinal lance’ and certification scheme for pilot whalers (see Papers I and III for details). The intention behind this thrust was to learn how these changes came to be and to update the sociological literature.

38 In fairness, it should be noted that Brydon has been making this point since the 1990s (1990; 1996).
as recorded in Joensen (2009) and Kerins (2010). Finally, I was interested in opposition to grindadráp. In this, not only was I interested in international opposition, manifested during fieldwork by the presence of Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, but also in local opposition. The latter being of particular interest as the impression given from the literature on grindadráp is of a practice of near-universal popular support. The appearance of a branch of Earthrace Conservation39 in the Faroes over the last couple of years is thus obviously an interesting development.

There are however challenges in investigating grindadráp. Many of these relate to the nature of the practice, it is random and can occur any time that conditions are good for spotting pilot whales and the whales are there. This is highly variable and in some years no drives occur whereas in other years there are many. They can also happen in all parts of the Faroe Islands, requiring swift reaction. During the fieldwork period, only one grindadráp took place and I was unfortunately unable to witness it. Whilst this was disappointing, it was not crippling; as noted earlier, academic accounts have focused heavily on the drives themselves, rather than the practices around them. This means that the drives are the most studied element of the grindadráp institution, with several academic descriptions extant. Furthermore, from one perspective it reflected the lived experience of many Faroese people, who neither witness nor participate in the practice. However, in an effort to alleviate this lack, Papers I and III are collaborations with other researchers with primary data on grindadráp. It is hoped that this, combined with secondary material ensures that any shortfall is compensated for.

4.4. Data collection methods and material

Having described the analytical perspective of this thesis it is important to go into detail regarding the actual make up of this particular methods assemblage. This thesis is primarily built around three month’s fieldwork in the Faroe Islands, June-August 2014. During that time, I lived in the Faroese capital, Torshavn, whilst travelling around many of the other islands and participating in a variety of different activities. My status within the local community is discussed in section 4.5. I also have observed various events, connected to grindadráp, which feed into this thesis’ purpose of examining Faroese whaling as a part of the global whaling debate. These events were

39 Earthrace Conservation was founded by a former member of Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. More information can be found here: http://www.earthraceconservation.org/.
the 2015 Annual Meeting of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission in Reykjavik, Iceland; a special hearing of the Faroese Committee of the Danish parliament, on grindadráp in November 2015, in Copenhagen; and attendance of the 2014 and 2015 European Cetacean Society conferences, where scientific information on pilot whales is periodically presented.\(^\text{40}\)

This fieldwork drew upon four data collection methods, although there was clearly some overlap at various times. These sources of data were participant observation, interviews, media and official documents and additional data collected by others in previous years.

‘Participant observation’ is the method that is in many ways definitive of ethnography. The logic behind it is simply that by inhabiting the same social spaces as respondents the patterns that underlie social life become increasingly clear. There are two dimensions to the method: ‘participation’ and ‘observation’. There is some debate about the relative importance of these two dimensions and, indeed, there are different research stances that can be taken. Gobo, for example, sees observation as the primary source of information (2008). I think this perhaps is a little old-fashioned – actual involvement in practices brings an embodied element to research (cf. Agar 2008). For example, I found spending time within the community, travelling with respondents often gave important insight into the world as they experienced it (cf. Kusenbach 2003). Learning was a dialogic exercise as I and my respondents went about our daily lives (Pálsson 1994).

Such an approach may seem surprising for those who have just glanced at the articles in the second part of this thesis, where quotes drawn from interviews and documents abound. It thus seems strange to stress the importance of participant observations. In my opinion, however, the implicit knowledge that living in the Faroe Islands, even for such a short period, gave me an ability to assess the data greater than would have been the case if I had stayed in Sweden and phoned respondents.\(^\text{41}\) During my time in the

---

\(^{40}\) These events were also attended as an opportunity to interview marine biologists for another project on the ethics of lethal research on marine mammals. This information, whilst not directly relevant to this thesis has been useful in building up an understanding of the at-times politically-charged scientific discipline of cetology.

\(^{41}\) Indeed, regarding the respondent recruitment methods described below, there is no way I would have encountered many of the respondents I eventually did interview.
field, I actively sought to involve myself in local life as much as possible, building up a picture of grindadráp’s place in daily life.

The value of participant observation is best illustrated through several brief examples. Firstly, as Article II makes clear, Faroese pro-whaling arguments are in part based on the idea that Faroese land is poor and that it is natural and politically important to utilise resources of the sea. If I had stayed in Sweden, this argument might have been made and I might have noted mentions in history books (e.g. Wylie 1987) to the poor quality of agriculture, dependence on grain imports and the eventual general abandonment of much farming as soon as fishing technology improved sufficiently. However, because I was there, and went hiking regularly, the particular features of the Faroese landscape were brought home to me with acute regularity. For example, one regularly had to take care that one’s foot didn’t simply go through the thin topsoil, losing one’s boot in the process. The constant intermittent rain showers during this process brought home how the soil has been so degraded by over a thousand years of sheep farming that very little can grow and even fewer things can flourish – immediate waterfalls form as water flows off the basalt bedrock. As a foreigner, largely separate from subsistence food exchange networks, buying food in shops also brought home how little fresh produce is local and how expensive imported goods are.

Involving myself in local subsistence practices was also illuminating. Fishing and hunting fulmars on the sea highlighted both the changeable nature of Faroese conditions but also gave me insight into the attitudes towards nature that grindadráp formed a part of. It also gave me access to some of the social networks within which pilot whale products are exchanged. A

---

42 Potatoes, rhubarb and angelica are basically the only crops that are produced within the Faroe Islands.

43 The northern fulmar (fulmarus glacialis) is a large and abundant sea bird. Young fulmars, when they fledge, are unable to fly (they’re “too fat”, as one respondent put it) and instead leap into the sea, where they are washed out by the current. Out at sea they feed and exercise, eventually taking off. Before this, they are vulnerable and many Faroese take the opportunity to pluck them from the water. The technique is to utilise an engine-powered boat to approach the birds and to capture them using a net. The bird’s neck is then broken with an expert twist. This has to be done in a particular way so as to avoid the fulmar’s defensive habit of throwing up over a would-be hunter. To give an example of the fulmar’s abundance, during a two-hour stint on the water, even with my incompetent hands at the tiller, my friend was able to capture thirty birds. Whilst many are preserved, it is popular to eat a fresh bird roasted, the meat is succulent and very oily.
significant moment for me was when I was able to give my landlady two cod that I had caught. This was repaid in kind, later on, when I was kindly treated to a meal of pilot whale meat and blubber. This was very important because, as noted earlier, I was unable to witness the drive part of grindadráp, a shortfall that was in part covered by immersing myself as much as possible in the practices that the drives connect to.\(^{44}\)

Regarding grindadráp’s connections to global whaling debates, spending time with Faroese biologists was illuminating. Informal discussions and witnessing of scientific practices (for example, I aided one respondent in the dissection of several bottlenose whales) gave me a greater understanding of how knowledge is created and then transferred within various international management organisations.

As a final example, participant observation was an important part of understanding and analysing the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society campaign described in Paper II. Looking at all those involved, there was only so much that could be gleaned from media and interviews. Being there and experiencing the unfolding events gave a much clearer picture of the excitement and tension of the situation as one noted the Danish warship passing by again or saw the SSCS volunteers in their lonely vigils by the roadside. It allowed me to understand how many Faroese could feel as if they were being invaded. Interacting with Faroese people, many of whom assumed I was a member of SSCS initially, also provided a way of seeing the varied perceptions of the SSCS campaign, beyond the official line and increasingly harsh views expressed in the local media. Likewise, standing by the roadside with SSCS volunteers also gave me an insight how they could see the Faroese landscape: foreboding, harsh and inhabited by a population who were by turns mocking or hostile towards SSCS’ presence.

Whilst participant observation was important, I have also carried out interviews, with questions based around the three central thrusts listed in section 4.3. In each case, questions were adapted to better match the respondent’s specific knowledge but also the time limitations the respondent outlined. Reflecting the interpretive stance of this thesis, questioning involved several open ended questions with particular themes developed dependant on interviewee responses (Bryman 2004). In total I carried out 18 semi-

\(^{44}\) Even if I had witnessed a grindadráp my participation would likely have been limited – not just anyone is allowed to kill a whale (see Paper III) – although I might have been able to contribute in some fashion, if I had so wished.
structured interviews with people engaged to varying degrees with *grindadráp*. These included scientists performing various research linked to *grindadráp* (7), senior members of the Pilot Whalers Association (2), bureaucrats (2), a ‘sheriff’ (see above), ‘pilot whalers’ (2), Faroese individuals publicly opposed to *grindadráp* (3) and a senior member of SSCS. Where conditions permitted, these interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. On two occasions I was able to arrange to speak to SSCS volunteers at their viewing points, one group of two and another of three. These latter conversations took place outdoors where recording was rendered impossible. The vast majority of interviews (and other communication) was carried out in English, readily spoken by most Faroese and shared first or second language of many SSCS volunteers. It was discovered, in a few cases, that Swedish was mutually intelligible with *Gotudanska* 48, which was employed on a couple of occasions.

Respondents were initially selected purposively. With such a short amount of fieldwork time available it was impractical to utilise a more organic approach. Subsequently, new respondents were identified using a ‘snowball’ method – earlier respondents would often identify other people to speak to (Bryman 2004). There are limitations to this approach: many of

---

45 This included biologists of different stripes, medical staff and veterinarians.

46 Two things should be noted. Firstly, several individuals in other categories may also become involved in a *grindadráp*. Secondly: “Owing to the opportunistic, community-based nature of the *grindadráp* it is difficult demarcate the limits of the practice, as meat is shared within various exchange networks and numerous different roles are performed. ‘Whaler’ is an inadequate English language word which conjures up an image of a professional who hunts whales out at sea, whereas no one involved in a *grindadráp* is paid money to participate, bar the *súlumaður* who manages it” (Singleton 2016b:29).

47 In one case, this was not strictly true. The two volunteers were willing to speak to me but unwilling to get out of their car (or let me in, for that matter). The weather at the time was quite wet and blustery. The interview thus entailed the undignifying spectacle of me craning my head through their car window trying to hear what they were saying over the wind, all the while presenting my backside to the cars coming by on the main road in and out of Torshavn.

48 The primary language of most Faroese people is, naturally, Faroese. However, as a part of Denmark all are also fluent in Danish. Historically, many Faroese learnt Danish from books, resulting in a particular pronunciation, known as *Gotudanska*. Most young Faroese have learnt Danish using modern methods and thus speak more like those of mainland Denmark. This is to the frustration of would-be users of Swedish in the Faroe Islands.
the prominent people involved with *grindadráp* have been active in local and global whaling debates for over twenty years. They are thus accustomed to researchers and have often been involved in several earlier studies. This meant they were often ‘good’ respondents, able to reproduce their knowledge in a form easy for the researcher to assimilate. However, on the other hand, their responses were often ‘polished’ from repetition and I got the impression that they were in control of the information they gave me\(^{49}\). As a counter to this I expended considerable effort to try and identify ‘ordinary people’ whose responses were not coloured by 25 years of debate. It also entailed a body of respondents that were predominantly male (13), although among SSCS respondents all bar one were women. This is perhaps reflective of the historically different gendered spheres within traditional Faroese domestic practices (Vestergaard 1989). Section 6.4. highlights possible future research that explores gender questions relating to the changing place of *grindadráp* in Faroese society.

The third body of information comprises a variety of secondary data. Spending time in Torshavn gave me access to probably the largest body of information on *grindadráp* and general social scientific literature on Faroese society in the world. This information was spread out between the National Library of the Faroe Islands (*Føroya Landsbókasavn*), the library of the Department of History and Social Science (*Søgu- og samfelagsdeildin*), University of the Faroe Islands (*Fróðskaparsetur Føroya*) and the marine mammal section of the Faroese Natural History Museum (*Náttúrugripasavn*). I also collected a considerable body of other information on *grindadráp*, notably the official ‘pilot whaling regulations’ (*Kunngerð um Grind*) as well as the official Faroese response to the arrival of SSCS. I also collected much material on the SSCS campaign, ‘Operation Grindstop 2014’. This consisted of Faroese media outputs in both English and Faroese, including newspaper articles, online articles and television media. I also collected SSCS media outputs during the campaign, including numerous videos and articles. In total a body of approximately 100 documents was collected. Faroese material was translated, utilising a dictionary and my knowledge of Swedish, with contacts checking my efforts\(^{50}\). English language videos were transcribed verbatim.

---

\(^{49}\) This is certainly not suggest that I ever felt I was being lied to, more that respondents presented a less messy picture than I suspected may actually be the case.

\(^{50}\) I am most grateful to Bjarni Mikkelsen, Mirjam Joensen, Erika Hayfield and Anni Djurhuus for their assistance in this regard.
Information beyond the Faroes (most prominent in Paper V) has mostly been gleaned from secondary accounts, with Epstein’s *The Power of Words* particularly prominent. A Foucauldian account, it chimes well with the theoretical approaches utilised in this thesis. As noted above, this was supplemented by a certain amount of observation at events linked to *grindadráp*.

This diverse body of information (observations, interviews and secondary material) presented a considerable challenge for analysis. For ease of manipulation, the material was entered into the qualitative analysis programme Nvivo 10. This allowed for the easy manipulation of multiple data types, which formed the basis for coding (Bryman 2004) according to the principles outlined in section 4.1. This consisted in categorising fragments of data, a repeatedly reviewed process that began during fieldwork itself. In keeping with this thesis’ analytical stance, these categories were generated in abductive fashion.

### 4.5. Ethics and authority

A key part of sociological research is an awareness and concern for the effects of research practice itself upon respondents. Likewise, there is a need for readers to be able to evaluate this thesis’ argument (Agar 2008:15,17). To alleviate both these concerns the researcher is required to be ‘reflexive’. There is a need to be aware that researchers themselves are key part of this as the instrument of both data collection and analysis. Furthermore, with so much dependent on the individual researcher, readers of research outputs need a certain guarantee that analysis reflects the data collected. Thus, in this section, I endeavour to be reflexive on these two different ethical levels: towards respondents’ safety and in the treatment of the data. “The ethnographic job is a privilege, and it carries a responsibility to get it right and an authority that allows the professional to make that claim.” (Agar 2008:15, emphasis in original).

Firstly, throughout this research, respect for the safety and rights of respondents is paramount. The European Sociological Association Ethical Guidelines assert “Sociologists should normally take active steps to avoid harm to research participants and others affected by their work” (European

---

51 Other writers have also noted some apparent similarities between cultural theory and Foucauldian theory, notably in conceptualisations of power (Tansey and Rayner 2009:56). To my knowledge, this apparent complementarity has not been fully explored.
Sociological Association 2015). In my mind, during fieldwork, this extends the researcher’s obligations to the community within which they work. I thus strove to conduct myself in a respectful manner, abiding by local laws and aware that in my questioning I was imposing myself upon the local community.

The rights of individual respondents were also protected, I was aware that I was often imposing on the working days of interviewees and respected their requests regarding the length of interviews. Periodically, respondents would request that certain information was kept ‘off the public record’ and I have respected that. I have also done my best to ensure that respondents are rendered anonymous in the texts. The Faroe Islands are a small place and I was conscious that I did not want to cause undue problems for respondents in the community. Similarly, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) have been accused of being ‘terrorists’ by whaling countries. As such, whilst it is unlikely, I have done my best to ensure that nothing written in this thesis could negatively affect any of those I spoke to. Respondents also have the right to access to final research outputs and I have been active emailing electronic copies of all articles to all those respondents who indicated they would like to see them. Copies of this thesis will also be sent to the Faroese National Library and the University of the Faroe Islands as a belated attempt to give something back to the Faroese community as a whole.

The forgoing discussion has highlighted two issues with these data, not having witnessed grindadráp and potential linguistic problems. My hope is that concerns regarding these are mollified by the methodology employed. As with all ethnography, it is worth considering the effect of the researcher’s presence and actions upon the data collected (Agar 2008). This is in order to try and provide sufficient transparency in research (Bryman 2004:285). The bulk of my time was spent in the company of Faroese people, many of whom were in favour of the continuation of grindadráp. As such, I strove to take an objective standpoint as much as possible, seeking to remain critical as I examined respondents’ claims. I strove to remain aware that my respondents’ views were not to be generalised as Faroese views per se (cf. Agar 2008:5; Bryman 2004:284-5). Furthermore, during Operation Grindstop 2014, as outlined in Paper II, there was a hardening of attitudes to SSCS. This brought two concerns: a need to differentiate myself from SSCS but also to treat SSCS fairly. The former was fortunately easy, it was common, upon meeting new people that I would be asked straight out if I was
with SSCS. The second consideration was more challenging. As Paper II illustrates, SSCS were often physically separated from the Faroese community at large and me with it. I attempted to ameliorate this issue in two ways: by actively seeking out SSCS volunteers and by utilising the theoretical lens of the ontological turn as a way of ensuring greater objectivity.
5. Summary of papers

It is hard to understand nothing, but the multiverse is full of it. Nothing travels everywhere, always ahead of something, and in the great cloud of unknowing nothing yearns to become something, to break out, to move, to feel, to change, to dance and to experience - in short, to be something.

And now it found its chance as it drifted in the ether. Nothing of course, knew about something, but this something was different, oh yes, and so nothing slid silently into something and floated down with everything in mind and, fortunately, landed on the back of a turtle, a very large one, and hurried to become something even faster. It was elemental and nothing was better than that and suddenly the elemental was captured! The bait had worked.

Terry Pratchett, Raising steam (2013:11)

This chapter presents a summary of this thesis’ five papers. As noted earlier, they are presented in such an order that discussion moves from empirical description towards theoretical abstraction, with Paper V examining the international whaling conflict at a global level. This does not reflect either the order that the texts were written or published.

5.1. Mutual aid, environmental policy, and the regulation of Faroese pilot whaling

This co-authored article draws on observations and interview data, analysing Faroese pilot whaling using anarchist geography theory. It describes the practices of pilot whaling, from the sighting of whales, to the drive, to the distribution of the catch. This involves discussing the roles of various participants, changes to the practice through history (notably the institution of a certification scheme for whalers) and opposition within the Faroes to pilot whaling. This paper’s primary contribution to this thesis is empirical. It provides a thorough description of contemporary grindadráp, for the first time highlighting many of the integral bureaucratic and scientific practices. It also provides information on how an anti-whaling movement has emerged within Faroese society. In the description, the reader becomes aware of the layered structure of grindadráp with the institution maintained through a certain amount of ‘top-down’ official authority matched with ‘bottom-up’
participant adherence to community norms. My own contributions to this article extended to providing data and text on contemporary grindadráp, notably with regard to scientific involvement and on-going changes to practice.

Anarchy is not a word often associated with modern Nordic societies. This however perhaps reflects popular misconceptions of the concept. More correctly “[a]narchy is a form of governance characterized by a lack of hierarchical organization, and self-organizing and governing communities, where the means of subsistence is shared by all citizens” (Fielding, Davis and Singleton 2015:39). These citizens are joined together by “mutual need and common interests” (Berkman 2006). Faroese pilot whaling can be seen as characteristic of Kropotkin’s concept of “Mutual Aid” applied to resource management (2006). Whilst nested within a broader state hierarchy, the Faroe Islands are semi-autonomous within the Kingdom of Denmark. Regarding pilot whaling, each village largely self-organises, with neighbouring communities coordinating and cooperating throughout the archipelago to ensure success in each drive.

The Faroese embrace a communal hunt and condemn the sale of pilot whale meat for profit. They thus take a ‘holistic’, or cooperative approach rather than an ‘atomistic’, or competitive, approach. It is not a fixed or unchanging institution however and these changes reflect attempts “to balance the concerns driving global pressure to end the whale hunt, and local desire to both improve and protect a traditional activity that benefits and sustains the community” (Fielding, Davis and Singleton 2015:46). Linked to this balance is a desire to preserve Faroese self-sufficiency in food production (another characteristic indicative of an anarchist society). Indeed, compared to hierarchical, industrial agricultural practices, the relationship to food and nature embodied by Faroese pilot whaling is more in line with holistic anarchist thought.

The dependence on this food source and the close Faroese connection to it, combined with communal governance and attempts to ensure the long-term viability of the species and reduce the suffering of individual pilot whales provides an example of one successful type of anarchist governance of a resource outside the capitalist system by a society asserting itself and attempting to preserve its identity against the overwhelming pressure of global economic forces (Fielding, Davis and Singleton 2015:46-7).
As noted above, this paper differs from the others that comprise this thesis in that it is incorporated as a source of empirical material, rather than making a distinct theoretical contribution. This decision has largely been taken in order to avoid the risk of ‘theoretical overload’ upon the part of the reader – a thesis that tries to tell everything says nothing. The discussion that this paper contributes to theoretically (around the benefits of the concept of anarchism as a tool for understanding society) remains at a tangent to this thesis’ main thrust. That is not to say that it is not an interesting discussion, indeed a possible next step following on from Paper I would be to utilise data drawn from different whaling communities to compare anarchist evolutionary explanations of cooperative behaviour to Trivers’ work on the ‘evolution of reciprocal altruism’ (Trivers 1971)\(^5\).

5.2. Love-iathan, the meat-whale and hidden people.

This study examines Operation Grindstop 2014, a campaign by the animal rights organisation Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) that took place over three months during 2014. The campaign sought to end grindadráp and, failing that, draw attention to the practice. To this end several hundred SSCS volunteers came to the islands, monitoring the various bays where whales are driven for slaughter and attempting to intervene when grindadráp occurred.

Utilising a constructivist approach inspired by the ontological turn, this study presents the events of Grindstop 2014 as a clash between two groups seeking to enact alternative systems of orderings around pilot whales, Faroese whalers and SSCS. In one, that of SSCS, pilot whales are viewed positively (the titular ‘love-iathans’) and are accorded rights equivalent to that of humans, with the corollary that their deaths during grindadráp are murder. Thus, it follows, that those involved with grindadráp are mass murderers – barbarous, often dangerous fanatics who need to be stopped. This requires a group of brave, motivated individuals prepared to stand up for what is right (SSCS) and intervene to bring grindadráp to an end. Many of SSCS’ activities could be understood according to this logic, which in turn created particularly embodied experiences of the Faroese landscape and culture: volunteers were often isolated from the bulk of the Faroese population.

\(^5\) I am grateful to Mikael Klintman (Lund University) for first pointing this out. Faroese whaling could perhaps be compared with the meat distribution practices of Indonesian Lamaleran whalers (cf. Alvard 2002; Alvard and Nolin 2002). Next time.
by SSCS volunteers’ physical locations and through language barriers. Likewise, in intervening in grindadráp SSCS volunteers found themselves in extremely emotionally charged situations and in some cases were physically restrained by police.

The SSCS ordering was met by a Faroese pro-whaling ordering, which constitutes pilot whales as food, not so different from other animals that are eaten (the ‘meat whale’). Furthermore, in contrast to SSCS’ more global take on the environment – where pilot whales are symbolic of the damage that humanity does to the ocean environment it ultimately depends upon – pilot whales are conceived in doggedly local terms. This in turn links in to the importance of food independence to the Faroe Islands economically and politically. Pilot whalers thus conceived themselves as responsible users of a local resource, abiding by laws and schemes designed to ensure that grindadráp does not endanger pilot whale numbers. Pilot whale meat is situated alongside a number of different subsistence activities and form part of a particularly Faroese modernity. The actions of SSCS are interpreted as that of an occupying force, seeking to imperialistically cow the Faroese into surrender. Within this ordering, it was acceptable to object to grindadráp as long as the law was respected. As such, SSCS’ presence was tolerated (although members were occasionally harassed), but was met with the full force of authority if the law was broken (for example by attempting to interfere with a grindadráp).

This article makes several further points, it highlights that over the course of the summer there was a feeling of entrenchment to the two sets of ordering. Furthermore, it was clear that in competing to enact systems of orderings the two sides were reacting to one another. Thus, what emerged was a ‘hybrid’ ordering of grindadráp (Escobar 1999). There were consequences to this entrenchment, notably the suppression of an alternative Faroese ordering of grindadráp. This ordering, dubbed the Faroese anti-whaling ordering, was performed by various local people publicly voicing their opposition to grindadráp. Whilst their arguments varied, and in some cases resembled the SSCS ordering, most prominent were arguments about the unsuitability of pilot whale meat for human consumption. They argued that the Faroese population was exposing itself unnecessarily to a variety of public health problems due to contaminated food. During Operation Grindstop 2014, however, this voice was largely muted and the vast majority of those enacting the Faroese anti-whaling ordering were hostile towards SSCS, suggesting that SSCS’ actions were in fact increasing support for grindadráp serving to further entrench the practice as part of Faroese national identity.
This article references the ‘hidden people’ (buldfólk) of Faroese legend. Hidden people were believed to inhabit the Faroe Islands in a pagan parallel to human society, with the two worlds overlapping. I suggest that while SSCS volunteers appeared like hidden people around the landscape, it is Faroese antiwhalers who become ‘hidden’ through their actions.

This article’s role within this thesis is both empirical and theoretical. It provides a wealth of information on Grindstop 2014 as well as the Faroese reactions to it. It describes how the two systems of orderings interacted over the course of the summer. It thus also describes how international anti-whaling orderings and their Faroese opponents (cf. Blok 2011) are enacted at the local level through the actions of those involved.

5.3. Inclusive hunting

Remaining at a local level, this co-authored article examines the institution of grindadráp from the early 19th century to the present utilising cultural theory. It describes how representatives of the different social solidarities have interacted and various changes based on their particular narratives have been implemented. I am lead author of this piece, contributing the bulk of text, data and analysis, with Russell Fielding providing data and input regarding specific aspects of grindadráp.

Modern grindadráp is described as emerging as an alliance between egalitarian and hierarchical actors. This was a reaction to the decline of the practice, due in part to a temporary dearth of whales and consequent decline in the institution around it. Prior to these changes, considerable conflict is described within grindadráp, with the division of the catch dominated by the strong and wealthy. The survival of the practice was thus imperilled. The solution was the institution and enforcement of an egalitarian logic – pilot whales are food for the whole community. Change was thus implemented utilising a combination of egalitarian (community participation and endorsement) and hierarchical (laws bringing grindadráp into the nascent Faroese state) methods. As time has gone by, grindadráp has changed, but the egalitarian basis of the practice has been reinforced.

This article examines how grindadráp has changed in meeting successive challenges around the distribution of meat, killing methods, sustainability and the issue of toxins in pilot whale meat. In each of these challenges the narratives of the different social solidarities are at play.

Growing urbanisation presented a challenge to the egalitarian basis of grindadráp as the number of people within a community entitled to receive a share of meat became so great that the amount received by each person
became very small. This presented a danger to grindadráp as there was increasingly little incentive to participate. The solution was the innovation of the ‘killers share’, where those who participated were allocated meat initially with extra meat being distributed in the community. This represented a solution from the individualist solidarity, those who put most in should be rewarded. This did not threaten the egalitarian-hierarchical basis of practice, because commercial sale was still prohibited and all continued to retain the right to take part in grindadráp.

Changes in killing practice also revealed multiple understandings of the situation. An egalitarian concern regarding the cruelty of practice led to several tools and techniques being abandoned and new ones developed. This began with individualistic innovation, a single pilot whaler conceiving of an idea. This was then developed and tested by various hierarchical actors and in 2015 the spinal lance became the only tool to be used without special permission. At the same time, concerns about the competence of those involved led to the institution of a certification system for those who actually slaughter the pilot whales. This represented a hierarchical response to the issue and was reportedly resisted by some whalers as dealing a blow to the egalitarian basis of grindadráp. However, in stressing that all retained the right to take part (if not kill) it appears that the certification scheme has been accepted by the great majority of participants.

In contrast, criticisms about sustainability were met through the extension of hierarchical practices, notably the development of research programmes taking data at each grindadráp and a series of sighting surveys. The survey results are combined with the three hundred year catch record to allow Faroese authorities to estimate grindadráp’s impact on pilot whale populations. This (hierarchical) research has been effective in mollifying concerns of local egalitarian actors around sustainability.

The final challenge regarding the prevalence in toxins in pilot whale is arguably the most significant regarding the future of grindadráp: undermining the egalitarian foundations of the practice. Faroese society is currently in the process of trying to identify a solution to this problem.

Grindadráp has been adapted by participants at various times in its history to meet different challenges. Despite its overall egalitarian-hierarchical character, in meeting some challenges (for example around meat distribution and killing methods) solutions based on the narratives of other solidarities have been identified. In the language of cultural theory several ‘clumsy solutions’ have been identified. As such, the institution of grindadráp can
be considered to largely be ‘messy’ – it is possible for action based on narratives of different social solidarities to be voiced and accepted.

This article thus contributes both empirically and theoretically to this thesis. It builds on Papers I and II in providing more information on the practice of grindadráp, notably situating practice in history, showing how different perspectives have been integral to its continued development. Without the alliance of hierarchical and egalitarian perspectives it is unlikely that grindadráp would have maintained its contemporary place in Faroese society. An important feature of this alliance is that it was not a closed, elegant shop – individualistic perspectives were drawn upon at key times. Finally, this paper also highlights potential threats to the continuation of grindadráp allowing for limited prediction regarding the coming decades.

5.4. What’s missing from Ostrom?

Paper IV takes a more abstract approach to the previous three papers. It builds upon Paper III by comparing cultural theory’s approach based on the importance of the interaction between plural perspectives with an approach that conceives of an individualistic view of rational human behaviour. The body of theory cultural theory analysis is compared to is Elinor Ostrom’s design principles for common property resource (CPR) institutions (Ostrom 1990). The CPR institution that is used as a basis for comparison is grindadráp. The design principles have been highly influential, in part because they offer a counter to accounts pessimistic regarding the prospects of resource users cooperating to manage CPRs sustainably. They have also been one of the building blocks of Ostrom’s later work on social-ecological systems.

This paper attempts to assess the extent that cultural theory can ameliorate several of the criticisms of the design principles. These criticisms are felt to reduce the value of design principles in practice (Saunders 2014). Critics argue that Ostrom’s model is unduly hostile to macro-level intervention, is based on an overly narrow conception of rationality and the role of power within CPR institutions remains underappreciated. This article argues that cultural theory is less hostile to macro-level interventions through its requirement that interventions match the appropriate ‘style’ and ‘scale’ (Thompson 1998). “Thus the overall hierarchical management of marine resources in the Faroe Islands does not at present conflict with the egalitarian nature of grindadráp because they are conceived of at different social scales” (Paper IV).
Similarly, the plural perspectives integral to cultural theory necessitate a broader notion of rationality than appears within the design principles. Rationality within grindadráp is highly contextual, dependent on material-social context (cf. Bresnihan 2016:154). Thus the inherent ‘dividuality’ of Faroese people is rendered visible within cultural theory analysis.

Finally, power is ever-present within cultural theory analysis, as representatives of all solidarities strive to impose ‘their’ boundaries around a situation (Thompson et al. 1999:6-8). Power is conceived as emergent within the actions of competing representatives of different social solidarities (Thompson 2008b:142-5). Currently within grindadráp it appears that few voices are being excluded. However, this is not necessarily always the case, with inequalities manifesting in the quality of deliberation and elegance of numerous cases, suggesting certain voices are being shut out (Verweij and Thompson 2011). Indeed, as Paper II highlights, on-going conflict around grindadráp may be silencing some voices.

Within this analysis, grindadráp is considered to be a ‘successful’ CPR institution according to both theories as a body of long-lasting, seemingly ‘sustainable’ practices. However, this is based upon different epistemological bases. Within Ostrom-inspired analysis the cooperative practices of grindadráp are presumed to be a product of complex, strategizing, bounded rational actors acting in their individual self-interest. Because the rules suit users the institution continues. However, examined through the lens of cultural theory grindadráp appears successful for two reasons. Firstly, the institutional logic of grindadráp fits the socio-natural context within which it takes place. It remains popular within Faroese society, despite only a minority participating, because it maintains an egalitarian logic. This egalitarianism is self-reinforcing as food produced for non-monetary exchange underpins social relations. Grindadráp is not purely egalitarian however, and as one moves up the social scale it takes on aspects of hierarchy, matching modern Faroese understandings of their North Atlantic environment. Secondy, grindadráp is messy (see 3.3) and this has facilitated adaptation, voices from the individualist solidarity have been respected and accepted. Grindadráp success is thus understood as a product of the interactions of actors with plural rationalities, allowing it to adapt alongside the changing socio-material context of the Faroes, matching patterns of social relations within Faroese society.

This paper concludes by considering the extent that cultural theory can be used alongside Ostrom’s design principles. It highlights that not only are there practical advantages (they use similar forms of data) but also that
Ostrom’s later writings, attempting to develop better models of the individual, seemed to moving towards the idea of multiple forms of rationality (cf. Ostrom 2000). The overall conclusion is optimistic, calling for the two approaches to be used in complementary fashion. It asserts that further research should be conducted into the extent cultural theory insights can be incorporated into Ostrom’s later work on social-ecological systems. It likewise highlights how the individual is not separate from the environment, thus approaches that take a bounded individual as a simple starting point will struggle to understand behaviour in anything other than simplistic terms. Indeed, when policy is implemented based on such assumptions, it may prove a self-fulfilling prophecy as resource users subjectivities are transformed (Bresnihan 2016:166-8). Ostrom’s theory is unusual in some ways, methodological individualism is a starting point, however it is the form of institution that determines whether it is a success (cf. Stoker 2004:27).

Paper IV’s primary role in this thesis is theoretical. It broadens the conversation to include approaches that struggle to embrace the possibility of alternative viewpoints on a given situation. It highlights some of the weaknesses of these other approaches, embodied by Ostrom’s design principles. This highlights the importance of multi-perspective approaches in examining environmental problems and conflicts. Paper IV echoes Ostrom’s point that rational behaviour is bounded and contextual. However, it goes on to assert that the particular nature of that rationality can only be understood within a model of the individual as interpellated within a dynamic context. Cultural theory represents one such model.

### 5.5. Clumsiness and elegance in environmental management

The final paper of this thesis changes the scale of analysis, moving from the local level to the international level by focusing upon the global whaling debate. Based largely on secondary information, it performs a cultural theory analysis of global whaling from the birth of ‘modern whaling’ in the nineteenth century up until the current era of conflict. This endless discord has been criticised as deleterious to whale conservation and as imperialistic towards whaling communities (cf. Barsh 2001; Blok 2008; Burns and Baker 2000; Freeman 2001). It tracks how different actors have come to prominence, altering the nature of the policy landscape through their actions. Since the onset of modern whaling, whales and whaling practice have been conceived in narrow terms, depending on the dominance of particular actors on either side of the debate. Proposed solutions to the impasse are assessed according to the maxims of cultural theory.
The early years of modern whaling were characterised by an individualist perspective on what was then as now an important strategic resource, oil. Nature was considered able to ‘bounce back’ and fundamentally independent of human action. The course was thus set for continued expansion into new whaling grounds as improving technology allowed it. Voices began to be raised against this as declines in whale stocks became increasingly apparent. Actors articulating a hierarchical understanding of whaling – as something that can be sustainable provided it is appropriately managed and policed – became increasingly prominent and influential as new forums for whaling management, notably the International Whaling Commission (IWC), were created. It was to take around 25 years before hierarchical management methods (such as catch quotas determined by the IWC’s Scientific Committee) were respected by individualist whaling companies, too late to prevent the devastation of many whale species. The policy landscape was thus a largely elegant situation dominated by individualist actors, with members of the hierarchical solidarity becoming increasingly prominent and influential.

With the decline in whale numbers increasingly apparent, anti-whaling became one of the first major issues of the nascent green movement in many Western countries. Environmental NGOs articulating a largely egalitarian view of nature (as intricately connected and fragile) became increasingly prominent through anti-whaling campaigns. At the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment endangered species protection was one of the few areas of agreement and the first calls for a moratorium of whaling were heard. This pressure significantly altered the whaling policy landscape, enacting the clumsiest era. For the first time, within the IWC, representatives of each of the three social solidarities were present, with hierarchical approaches to whale management largely accepted by both egalitarian and individualist actors. However, continued societal shifts within many Western countries coterminous with the decline of the whaling industry rendered egalitarian actors increasingly powerful and unwilling to listen to the position of others. This dominance is epitomised by the institution of the whaling moratorium against the advice of the majority of the IWC’s Scientific Committee and in the face of protests by pro-whaling nations.

The post-moratorium situation retained a certain clumsiness – the dominance of egalitarian actors ensured greater adherence to the principles of sustainable management by pro-whalers (Bailey 2008). However, since the early 1990s the positions of the two sides have become increasingly ossified (bar the occasional small movement) with a small number of nations and
peoples continuing to hunt whales despite the vitriolic protests of the anti-whaling movement. This has led to a status quo seemingly neither good for whalers nor whale conservation. The situation within the IWC is largely elegant: the egalitarian logic is dominant, hierarchical proposals for limited whaling are hugely controversial and individualist views of nature are largely unvoiced.

This analysis of the international whaling debate is similar to previous research (e.g. Andresen 1993; Freeman 1990) in that it identifies the 1970s as the most effective era for international whaling management, although it differs over the reasons. These earlier writers argue that the 1970s represented the most ‘rational’ period of regulation, where expert advice was heeded within regulatory/political decision making, before and after which ‘interests’ were able to stymie international cooperation. Their arguments, to the cultural theorist, are an example of analysis based on dualistic institutional theory and tend to be accompanied by calls for increased hierarchical control within a better IWC. However, not only is the perceived opposition between emotion and rationality problematic (cf. Milton 2002) this effectively side-lines the key concerns of many (egalitarian) anti-whalers.

By contrast, utilising cultural theory reveals that the 1970s were the highpoint for regulating whaling because all three active social solidarities were represented and responsive within the policy landscape. ‘Science’, ‘emotion’ and ‘rationality’ are extant within all three social solidarities. It may be that without the egalitarian driven moratorium hierarchical management approaches might have been insufficient to prevent the extinction of some whale species (Nagtzaam 2013). The problem with the international whaling moratorium is not because it goes against the wisdom of representatives of the hierarchical solidarity but because it forms part of a static, largely elegant policy landscape. This article then also considers several ways forward, including ‘improving the IWC’ or moving discussion to a regional level. Neither approach is inherently clumsy, however. There is a clear need within the global whaling debate to find a more constructive policy landscape.

Paper V contributes to this thesis by providing analysis of the whaling debate at the international level. This further completes the picture beyond grindadráp providing a context that influences and is influenced by Faroese actions. It highlights how different perspectives on whales and whaling have been an ever-present in the modern era and their often dysfunctional interaction has shaped the contemporary policy landscape.
6. Discussion

So a scant while after the remarkable musical talents of Tears of the Mushroom had been so spectacularly unveiled to Ankh-Morpork high society, the goblins had become people, strange people, yes, but people nevertheless. Of course, there was the smell, but you couldn't have everything.

Terry Pratchett, *Raising steam* (2013:40)

This thesis has sought to study how different understandings about the world are manifest within one complex socio-environmental problem, a part of the global whaling debate – *grindadráp*. This has been carried out by collecting ethnographic information from three months fieldwork in the Faroe Islands and secondary information drawn from elsewhere. Bearing the research questions (1.1.) in mind, this section describes how utilising a plural perspective approach incorporating cultural theory brings a broader understanding of the whaling conflict into focus, focusing on how conflicting viewpoints have shaped *grindadráp* in the past and making tentative predictions regarding future developments.

6.1. A greater *grindadráp*

To use the language of the ontological turn, when researchers tend to order *grindadráp* they often focus on two aspects of the institution: the practice and conduct of the drives themselves and the distribution of meat (cf. Joensen 2009; Kerins 2010). However, the articles discussed here show, to paraphrase Nauerby’s study of Faroese national identity (which explores the symbolic importance of *grindadráp*), ‘no whaling is an island’ (1996). As such, this thesis has explored several practices that have been important to the development of *grindadráp* and indeed to the nature of the ‘matter at hand’.

As Paper I illustrates, the organisation of contemporary *grindadráp* works on a number of levels. At the level of the drives themselves is a community that polices itself to a certain extent. This is then complemented by state-based authority, embodied in the person of the *sýslamaður* (‘sheriff’) who is ultimately responsible for the decision to conduct *grindadráp* and the success thereof. The authority to make rules regarding *grindadráp* ultimately lies with the Faroese government, where the hunting of marine mammals falls within the purview of the Faroese Ministry of Fisheries. The Faroe
Islands are then also founder-members of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) and thus cooperate to an extent in management of marine mammal species alongside neighbouring countries.

Closer examinations of the various components of grindadráp reveal a multitude of different attitudes towards nature, manifesting at different social scales. For example, several of the whalers I spoke to represented their primary motivation for participating in grindadráp as relating to whether they have a personal need for pilot whale meat (see Paper III). In the language of cultural theory, they appear as members of the individualistic solidarity: they are self-motivated, self-interested entrepreneurs earning nature’s bounty through their hard work. To successfully drive pilot whales, however, requires cooperation. This is not a problem for individualists per se, who often cooperate. However, in the case of grindadráp during the 19th century, the decline of the institution and the challenges of practice meant that catch distribution was dominated by the strong and wealthy (Joensen 2009). The solution was to institute the egalitarian-hierarchical institution that has continued to this day.

The egalitarian-hierarchical character of grindadráp is manifest in the organisation that is described in Paper I. The overriding logic of grindadráp is to provide a source of food for the community. This is maintained both by community fidelity to the principle, but also allowing a certain degree of hierarchical control to occur. As Paper IV points out, this is not unusual – purely egalitarian institutions often run into problems once they reach a certain size or complexity. The general response is then either to integrate a hierarchical logic (defined roles and responsibilities differentiating community members to a certain extent) or to fracture into several smaller egalitarian groups (cf. Douglas and Mars 2003; Douglas and Wildavsky 1983). Indeed, few institutions are comprised ‘elegantly’ upon the membership and narratives of a single social solidarity – the amount of information that cannot be processed (‘surprise’) often rapidly creates a situation where the narratives of other social solidarities become impossible to ignore.

The hierarchical practices of grindadráp merit some particular considerations. Examining historic and contemporary practices (Papers I-III), it is clear that they have developed considerably over the past 200 years. Indeed, the institution of grindadráp has altered extensively over the past 30 years, for the most part in hierarchical fashion. This is most obvious in the implementation of several research programmes around pilot whales and pilot whaling, which has generated data on pilot whale populations and the levels of pollutants in the North Atlantic and in the Faroese population. Some of
these data, mainly data on the biology of pilot whales, is discussed at NAM-MCO, a body with a primarily hierarchical perspective on reality (Paper V). As such, since the 1970s, the institution of grindadráp, has continued to be based on a largely egalitarian narrative, but has gained several additional hierarchical extensions. In my eyes, ‘grindadráp’ has been enlarged over the past thirty years to encompass a range of further practices.

6.2. The role of conflict
Analysing the changing institution of grindadráp requires one to appreciate how different understandings of the practice have been in conflict at different times during history. Recapping the previous section, modern grindadráp emerged because without an egalitarian ethos it could not function – to successfully hunt pods of pilot whales requires cooperation at a community level. This egalitarianism is supported by various hierarchical practices. However, this does not tell the whole story; differing views of grindadráp have always been extant and their interaction has been integral to the modern institution. Paper III describes a series of issues that have arisen throughout the history of grindadráp that have been dealt with based on alternative logics to hierarchy and egalitarianism. In finding solutions to challenges in distributing meat in an urbanising society and in developing new methods for efficiently killing pilot whales, grindadráp has notably drawn upon the knowledge of the individualist social solidarity. It is actions like these that form part of Paper III’s argument that grindadráp is a largely messy institution, able to find solutions to challenges drawing on the conflicting narratives of several different social solidarities (cf. Ney and Verweij 2015).

This picture is still too simplistic; at present, it feels too much like all innovation around grindadráp has emerged organically and smoothly within Faroese society (cf. Jasanoff and Martello 2004). This however fails to place grindadráp within the global whaling debate, which is the contribution of Papers II and V. It is notable that many of the changes within grindadráp have occurred since the world at large became aware of the practice and a number of conservation organisations began campaigning in the Faroes. Respondents painted a picture of an on-going process of change and reflection within Faroese society being speeded up by the flurry of attention from environmental groups.

The global whaling conflict and the policy landscapes within which it is fought can be seen as intruding on grindadráp in several ways. Firstly, in
2014, this was manifested in the presence and actions of Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) during their campaign Operation Grindstop 2014\textsuperscript{53} (Paper II). SSCS attempted to enact a different understanding of whales and whaling, one that drew heavily on the rhetoric, tropes and actions that had been employed in anti-whaling campaigns of the past. Thus SSCS attempted to order \textit{grindadráp} as a part of a greater struggle. While the eventual effects of Grindstop 2014 are naturally unclear, among those Faroese actively against \textit{grindadráp} it was viewed as counter-productive, in effect strengthening \textit{grindadráp}'s place within Faroese society and the state. In common with several other whaling countries, lacking any means to force the Faroese to change, SSCS' criticism was seen to be playing a part in ordering whale hunting practices as an essential part of a local culture (cf. Brydon 1996; van Ginkel 2004; Mathisen 1996). The 'hybrid' ordering that emerged during the summer was a product of actors enacting different systems of ordering. This was largely to the detriment of Faroese anti-whaling activists, who found themselves struggling to avoid to be seen picking one ‘side’ or the other. Having said this, several of them have been able to forge connections to the greater anti-whaling movement; by forming a branch of Earthrace Conservation an international anti-whaling group has gained a tentative foothold on the Faroe Islands, possibly for the first time. The effect that this connection will have on the small Faroese anti-whaling movement will be an interesting development.

Many of the hierarchical practices that are extant in contemporary \textit{grindadráp} have their roots in the global whaling debate. Much of the research on pilot whale biology has been conceived to challenge the received wisdom that a) all whales are endangered and b) that whaling practices inevitably push hunted species to the brink of extinction (cf. Blok 2008; Kalland 2009). The combination of extensive catch records going back hundreds of years and regular sighting surveys has allowed pro-whaling advocates to make powerful arguments that \textit{grindadráp} is not a conservation issue. These are hierarchical arguments, nature and human interactions with nature are finite and measurable, i.e. it is possible to say with a degree of certainty whether \textit{grindadráp} presents a threat to the survival of the long-finned pilot whale. These arguments have been successful in demonstrating for many Faroese that \textit{grindadráp} is not a conservation issue. However, as Paper V

\textsuperscript{53} SSCS subsequently returned to the Faroe Islands in 2015 for \textit{Operation Sleppið Grindinni}, largely similar to Grindstop 2014. SSCS announced they would not be campaigning in the Faroe Islands in 2016 (Watson 2016).
shows, this fails to mollify many anti-whaling actors, who see nature based on the narrative of the egalitarian solidarity – nature is fragile and the repercussions of exploitation are unknown. This is manifest in the SSCS orderings described in Paper II: the population status of pilot whales is unknown and grindadráp must end immediately.

It is however worth considering how grindadráp differs from other parts of the global whaling debate. As noted in Chapter 2, there are considerable differences between whaling nations and practice. For example, as noted above, two of the prominent whaling nations, Iceland and Japan have been characterised as “elite-driven countermovements” (Blok 2008:45; cf. Brydon 1996; Watanabe 2009). In essence, it is argued that pro-whaling mobilisation in these countries has been steered primarily by elite groups. These elites have actively worked to enact particular practices of whale hunting and whale meat consumption that have been variable during their respective histories, essentialising diverse human-animal relationships. In the case of Japan, it has been argued that the elite pro-whaling discourse integrally conceives of whales as a resource, which should be exploited for economic gain (Watanabe 2009). Similarly, in Iceland, a strong element of nationalist discourse since the late nineteenth century has been built around Icelanders’ ability to rationally utilise natural resources, including marine mammals (Brydon 2006). Whaling thus has become an issue larger than the small number of individuals and companies involved. As such, it is largely a symbolic practice to most Icelanders (the majority of whom continue to support whaling [Rasmussen 2014:90]), whaling standing in for the right of Iceland to determine for itself what it can and cannot do with ‘its’ natural resources (Brydon 1996).

By comparison, grindadráp differs considerably, not least in terms of practice: both Icelandic and Japanese hunting is largely conducted from boats actively seeking out whales and using explosive harpoons, from which meat is sold commercially. As Paper I shows, Faroese drive style hunting is spontaneous and opportunistic, employs hand held killing tools and the meat is distributed largely among participants and the community. However, I would argue that Faroese nationalist attitudes to nature do bear some

54 There is unfortunately insufficient space to fully discuss Japanese ‘special permit whaling’ (see Chapter 2) or the various other Japanese practices sometimes called “Small-Type Coastal Whaling” (Iwasaki-Goodman and Freeman 1994).

55 As described in Chapter 2, pilot whales are driven when conditions are right and there is local desire to do so. Whales are not actively searched out to be hunted.
resemblance to Icelanders. Nationalism in both countries emerged on the back of transformed relationships with the sea caused by the development and adoption of new technologies (Sanderson 1992:5). Indeed, Paper II highlights how local control and management of resources form a part of Faroese-pro-whaling orderings. Indeed, as with Iceland, Greenland and Norway, Faroese whaling falls under the purview of the Ministry of Fisheries rather than Environment (Ívarsson 1994:180). Utilising cultural theory, I would suggest that Japanese and Icelandic whaling are more individualistic within their whaling institutions. The global anti-whaling movement (and declines in whale numbers) have been successful in forcing them to bow to considerable monitoring and regulation (Paper V). As such, they appear to be individualist-hierarchies, individualistic at lower social scales but increasingly hierarchical as one moves from the local to the regional to the international scales. This contrasts with grindadráp’s egalitarian-hierarchy. Thus, the cooperation within NAMMCO is based around a shared need for hierarchical management information in the North Atlantic. The scientific practices of grindadráp are therefore one of the connections that link the Faroe Islands to the global whaling debate, part of greater struggle to enact a particular universalistic vision of nature as inherently manageable (cf. Tsing 2005).

The Faroe Islands are clearly one of the minor players in the global whaling debate, with most controversy clustering around Japan (cf. Blok 2008). It should be noted that they are not passive but have been actively involved over the past thirty years. NAMMCO presents an obvious example of this, with the Faroe Islands active in its foundation and funding in 1992 and in shaping the nascent organisation’s focus and activities (Ívarsson 1994). The existence of NAMMCO allows the Faroe Islands to meet the requirements of international law (Hoel 1993:121-122)\(^{56}\). Likewise, during the 1990s Faroese pro-whalers actively collaborated with similar activists from other nations in at least two international associations: the World Council of Whalers (WCW) and the High North Alliance. Members of the Faroese Pilot Whalers Association (see 2.2.) are reported to have fully participated in WCW General Assemblies (Kerins 2010:181). Furthermore, as evidenced during Grindstop 2014 (see Paper II), Faroese people actively contest anti-

\(^{56}\) The 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea Convention asserts that states should “work through the appropriate international organizations for their conservation, management and study” (Article 65, in Hoel 1993:122).
whalers’ depictions of grindadráp; high levels of English knowledge and access to the internet meant that the discourse of SSCS was met with an alternative picture put forward (e.g. Heinesen 2014).

In sum, throughout its modern history, grindadráp has maintained an egalitarian-hierarchical character, this is not say that is has remained static nor disconnected from the greater ‘system’ (cf. Marcus 1995:111) of the global whaling industry and debate. Integral to its development has been the openness to innovation that does not fundamentally undermine its purpose, which is to provide meat for those who want it in the community. As Papers II and III note, the issue of toxins in pilot whale meat appears as arguably the greatest threat to grindadráp (cf. Fielding 2010) because it undermines this ethos, after all, what use is a public good that may damage public health? This is a question that Faroese society is currently in the process of discussing around grindadráp.

6.3. A clash of the commons

It is possible that the forgoing is rather bewildering to the reader, after all if grindadráp is an egalitarian-hierarchical institution, with a fundamentally egalitarian ethos, why is it being attacked by anti-whalers who, according to Paper V, also have an egalitarian view of whales and whaling? I believe the answer to this has two components. Firstly, the majority of Faroese people have accepted the hierarchical science integral to grindadráp. This, in combination with the ability and willingness to innovate within the institution has reassured domestic critics regarding the sustainability of pilot whaling and that sufficient efforts are made to mitigate the suffering of the animals hunted (cf. Paper III). Secondly, there is a difference in scale between the anti-whaling orderings of many international critics (such as SSCS) and that of the Faroese pro-whaling advocates. This is perhaps best illustrated by a brief discussion of ‘common property resources’ often known as the commons.

According to one definition, common property resources are valued resource systems sufficiently large to render exclusion of other users problematic and at risk of over-use (Ostrom 1990:30). As Paper IV suggests, according to cultural theory, true common property resource institutions are based on narratives about being good for the community as whole57. Understood

57 Although as most common property resource institutions have some relationship to the market it is important to be aware of the ‘privates’ that sit alongside ‘the commons’ (see Paper IV).
in this way, the ordering practices of both Faroese pro-whalers and SSCS can be seen as attempts to enact particular common property resource institutions. However, where they differ is over the appropriate scale that marine mammal stocks should be managed. The orderings of Faroese pro-whaling actors are decidedly local; the pilot whales are Faroese and the regulation should be firmly within the purview of the Faroese people and authorities, even if there is some recognition that cooperation needs to occur where stocks are shared with immediate neighbours. By contrast, SSCS order marine mammals globally, articulating an egalitarian narrative that the ocean ecosystem upon which all life depends is fragile and in need of protection. Indeed, as Paper V describes, anti-whaling activists were in the past extremely successful in forging a global movement built around an egalitarian concern for whales as symbolic of nature as a whole. At present, in the Faroe Islands, in the absence of compelling evidence (to Faroese pro-whalers) that grindadráp is a conservation issue, anti-whalers struggle to convince and lack the power to compel. The hierarchical scientific practices of grindadráp are vital to this – in comparison to the global whaling debate elsewhere scientific knowledge remains relatively sovereign regarding the status of pilot whale populations in the Faroe Islands (cf. Blok 2011:59-60).

6.4. Future developments

It is also relevant to consider future developments within grindadráp. One of the advantages of cultural theory is an ability to make limited predictions (Thompson 2013:427). Indeed, as a theory of dynamic context, a successful institution can easily change into an unsuccessful one if it doesn’t adapt to changing circumstances. If, as this thesis has suggested, the egalitarian-hierarchical but still messy nature of grindadráp has been a factor in the practices continued prominence within Faroese society then it follows that anything that affects this nature is likely to threaten grindadráp’s status. The issue of toxins collecting in the pilot whale population has already been noted as undermining the egalitarian purpose of grindadráp. It is also likely one of a number of threats to the population status of the species itself. If evidence begins to mount that pilot whale numbers are dwindling, even if grindadráp is not implicated in it, then that will challenge Faroese claims that population numbers can be managed effectively. This would likely lead to considerable soul-searching and a decline in Faroese popular support for grindadráp. A 2014 weighted survey of the Faroese population reported
that only two per cent of those who felt the grindadráp should cease stated it was because the practice was unsustainable (Gallup Føroyar 2014).

A notable trend in grindadráp over the past thirty years has been the increasingly hierarchical character of the institution; many of the changes entail a certain increased division of roles and responsibilities at different social scales. This then begs the question of how hierarchical grindadráp can become before its integral character is altered. As Papers I and III describe, it seems that grindadráp participants have been convinced of the value of a certification scheme, adding an element of hierarchical control over those who actually slaughter the whales. Depending on the measures employed it is possible that further institution of hierarchical schemes could undermine the egalitarian grindadráp. A good example of this is provided by a recent change in the law: the so-called ‘Sea Shepherd’ law was instituted to increase the capacity of the Faroese police to deal with protestors interfering with grindadráp. Parts of the law were uncontroversial, such as increasing the level of fines that could be levied, however what caused considerable discussion was a change that extended the obligation to report pilot whale sightings to foreigners, with the possibility of custodial sentences the result. Previously, Faroese people had a legal duty to report sightings of pilot whales and under this new amendment to the law this requirement also pertained to non-Faroese people in the country. There were immediate responses to this change. Firstly, it generated negative publicity towards grindadráp (e.g. Sea Shepherd Global 2015). Secondly, the law was also quickly challenged locally on constitutional grounds. The lawyer making the challenge informed me that whilst the increased fines were unproblematic among Faroese, the extension of the reporting obligation was an issue (Weihe Joensen Pers. Comm.). Another respondent echoed this, stating that it changed the nature of debate around grindadráp from an animal welfare issue to a human rights issue. From a cultural theory perspective, the Sea Shepherd Law can be understood as potentially disrupting the egalitarian nature of grindadráp by extending the grindadráp institution beyond the Faroese community and by undermining the voluntary nature of the practice.

Finally, as noted in Paper II, grindadráp is not an important part of many Faroese lives. Indeed, modern lifestyles and employment render it difficult for many to participate in grindadráp. As one writer notes: “there is of course the possibility that the mentality, lifestyle and taste of the younger

---

58 Twelve per cent of those sampled stated that grindadráp should end.
generation will change” (Joensen 2009:252). As noted in 2.1., *grindadráp* is just one of a range of subsistence practices that the majority Faroese households receive food from. If this were to change, with the Faroese getting their food from elsewhere, then it’s possible that *grindadráp* will cease. At present, the *grindadráp* institution has been successfully adapted to contemporary Faroese modernity. Depending on societal development paths taken, this may not always be the case.

### 6.5. Theoretical reflections

As noted throughout this thesis, within efforts to understand many environmental conflicts is a paradox: environmental issues are complex yet in order to take action an issue needs to be simplified. Indeed, all theories can be understood as particular framings of the world – ‘framing’ entailing that *something* is cropped out. Simplification is a political challenge and disagreements about simplification processes reoccur time again in different times and places. The global whaling debate is a classic example of this: the supermantra of whaling as a single particular practice threatening all whale populations in the same way requires a single blanket solution – the cessation of all whale hunting. The failure of this simplification to be accepted universally has directly led to the rise of opposing groups articulating a pro-whaling discourse (Blok 2008; Epstein 2008). Similar conflicts over the simplified nature of the complex ‘matter-at-hand’ can be observed elsewhere, for example Hannigan has described how conflicts over hydraulic fracturing (fracking) tend to pit particular models of the environmental impact (as negligible or devastating) against one another (Hannigan 2014). In the case of fracking, as with other environmental issues, it appears that apparent problems have been readily conceived as simply technical matters by their advocates, easily solved by relevant authorities, whereas opponents see this as linked to broader questions about the state and nature of modern society (cf. Dryzek 2013). Indeed, several writers have pointed out that the act of framing an issue as a purely scientific or technical issue may obscure the broader politics that may lie at the heart of the matter (Jasanoff 2005; Jasanoff and Martello 2004; Wynne 2005). It thus seems clear that environmental conflicts are messy, they cannot and should not be understood from a single viewpoint. Indeed, seldom is the case where there is one ultimate truth. *Grindadráp* is a provider of free food, a form of community enactment and the cause of unpleasant death to pilot whales.

In exploring the case of *grindadráp* this thesis has combined two environmental sociological traditions. Firstly, it reflects on how conflict around
grindadráp plays out using the theory of the ontological turn. Secondly, using cultural theory, the quality of dialogue and its role in the changing nature of grindadráp are assessed. This discussion section has shown that different voices have been excluded and included at different times, through the actions of social actors. Furthermore, following the thesis’ second aim, cultural theory has been offered as a tool for assessing the nature and quality of dialogue between groups articulating different narratives on pilot whaling. As such, in the spirit of theoretical pluralism (cf. Irwin 2001), this thesis can be seen as an argument for cultural theory’s place within the environmental sociological toolkit. Cultural theory’s constrained relativism provides an approach to assessing diversity that retains enough pragmatism to be workable. It thus presents a language for opening up overly elegant conflicts and a way to cautiously constrain situations mired in relativistic confusion.

As described in Chapter 3, cultural theory resembles several other sociological approaches – it’s social constructivist, whilst reiterating that there definitely is a reality ‘out there’ and it argues that ‘better democracy’ is an integral part of dealing with environmental issues in a more generally satisfactory manner. For example, Dryzek’s “ecological democracy” covers similar ground. Within Dryzek’s discourse analysis approach, nine different environmental discourses are presented. Dryzek argues that deliberation between actors advocating for “the interests of the community as a whole, rather than selfish interests within the community (or outside it)” (2013:237), should be able to juxtapose different perspectives and knowledge about the environment and generate creative solutions to problems that arise. Cultural theory’s approach echoes some of this: it is argued that there is creative potential that may be unlocked through respectful interaction between actors from different social solidarities. There are however differences: firstly, the concept of clumsiness within cultural theory does provide some measure of deliberative quality. This combined with a typology of solidarities provides some way of comparing different problems – which situations are clumsier than others? This then creates the possibility of greater cross-case comparison, which highlights a second difference. Many social constructivist approaches focus heavily on explaining particular historically situated moments: i.e. their model pertains to particular situations. Cultural theory differs by arguing for the constant presence of the five social solidarities across time and space. In a sense this is a more ‘realist’ or ‘pragmatic’ perspective than many constructivist accounts. It is because of this that cultural theory (as argued in Paper IV and 6.6.) presents the
potential for creating policy instruments and interventions aimed at creating clumsier social institutions. Cultural theory thus presents one way of attempting to bridge the realist-constructivist divide in social science (cf. Irwin 2001).

This is not to say that cultural theory solves all problems relating to the sociological analysis of environmental problems. Indeed, as 3.3. shows, as with any theory, it has its own limitations. There continues to be a need for multiple tools of sociological analysis and continued collection of empirical material. Indeed, it is in this latter role that more constructivist accounts (such as the ontological turn) come into their own. After all “[cultural theory] should shed light on [a] ... debate but, as always, it’s no substitute for knowing a lot about the topic” (Thompson Pers. Comm.). Similarly, rational choice theories, for all the criticisms raised in Paper IV, remain powerful tools for analysis, provided their limitations are recognised. One advantage of the cultural theory approach is that as way of ordering data it does not clash with other approaches. Cultural theory analysis requires the researcher to avoid being guided by one set of normative concerns and aspires to pluralism in data collection. This means that cultural theory can be brought to bear alongside the other methods and theoretical lenses of environmental sociology such as discourse analysis and social movement theory.

6.6. Future research

Based on a short period of fieldwork and focusing on narrow subject matter, there is obviously scope for further research in developing some of the arguments made here. Firstly, in this presentation grindadráp stands somewhat separate to other non-commercial subsistence practices in the Faroe Islands. How pilot whaling sits alongside fowling and fishing practices is undeveloped in the literature. Likewise, with grindadráp situated within the Faroese Ministry of Fisheries and with certain Faroese arguments based around ensuring the right to continue to utilise local resources (cf. Paper II) it is important to investigate how grindadráp connects to the fishing industry, the largest industry in the Faroes.

A second focus would be upon continued changes in grindadráp, what effect have the new rules regarding technology and certification had? The latter in particular presents the possibility of exploring which groups of the

---

59 An aspiration shared within the burgeoning field of ‘sustainability science’ (Jerneck et al. 2011).
Faroese population are involved and whether this is changing. Several respondents mentioned that they had noticed that increasing numbers of women were attending and involved with grindadráp, a practice which is presented often as a largely male preserve. From a cultural theory perspective, if this were the case, it would suggest that certain aspects of grindadráp were becoming more egalitarian – i.e. the dissolving of (hierarchical) gender-based boundaries. Likewise, the continuing development of the Faroese anti-whaling movement is of interest, both because of its connections to global activism but also for their part in constructing a particularly Faroese modernity.

Thirdly, the impacts of increased information regarding toxins in pilot whale meat upon individual behaviour can be more thoroughly explored. Since the 2008 medical guidelines urging Faroese people to desist from eating pilot whale meat and blubber, one weighted survey reported that only 20 per cent of responses had reduced their consumption (Gallup Foroyar 2014). This is intriguing for, as noted above, scientific advice about pilot whale numbers is widely accepted. During fieldwork, Faroese anti-whaling activists argued that many Faroese failed to truly grasp the implications of this medical advice. Others suggested that they were capable of assessing the risks of different foods (see Paper III). It is relevant to investigate whether the ongoing international whaling conflict is affecting the authority of medical researchers within the Faroese population and what implications there are of this. Drawing on a sociology of scientific knowledge perspective may be illuminating in exploring how different ‘scientific issues’ are framed around pilot whales (Irwin 2001).

Finally, grindadráp could be critically compared to other common property resource institutions elsewhere, both whaling institutions and others. Such work could also then look beyond empirical questions. Indeed, there is also considerable scope for theoretical development. It is worth considering whether it is possible to actively integrate clumsiness within environmental institutions. The potential for synergy with other bodies of theory is one avenue that may be explored. Building on Paper IV, it is worth considering whether Ostrom’s work on socio-ecological systems (which use her design principles as a building block) can also be augmented through integration with cultural theory, possibly alongside political ecology (cf. Saunders 2010). Furthermore, it is worth considering whether design principles for creating clumsy institutions could be created. Indeed, researchers have already taken some initial steps in that direction (Ney and Verweij 2015; Stoker 2004:46). Likewise, research into multistakeholder approaches to
sustainable development has thrown up a list of concerns to be addressed in order for success to occur (Boström 2014:356). These could be considered alongside the maxims of cultural theory when gauging the likelihood of institutional success in dealing with environmental issues. Also, the extent that cultural theory chimes with social movement research could be explored. Regarding social movements, the typology of cultural theory is perhaps best placed to contribute to on-going research on how different framing techniques are constrained or enabled within particular contexts (cf. Benford and Snow 2000:629). It might then be possible to assess what different social solidarities are manifest within social movements involved in different environmental conflicts. Cultural theory might then also contribute by allowing the exploration of the extent that framing individual and collective identities is fundamental to the understanding of social movements (cf. Benford and Snow 2000:631), providing information on the importance of socio-material contexts to different frame alignment processes within social movements (cf. Snow et al. 1986). In doing so, care must be taken to ensure that cultural theory does not simply become a theory of personality types, contra the theory’s methodological maxims (see 4.2).
7. Conclusion

What we do here is build models of what bits of the world would look like if only they were constructed in full accordance with the applicable laws, by-laws, regulations and conventions. You have to realise ... that most things in this world come about through shabby pacts of happenstance, compromise, blind-eye and baksheesh. The way things are supposed to happen and the way they actually do are completely different.


This thesis has presented a strategically situated micro-ethnography of the Faroese part of the global whaling debate. Following this thesis’ first aim, utilising two different theoretical lenses, that of the ontological turn and the theory of sociocultural viability, it has argued that to analyse an institution such as *grindadráp* one needs to understand how it is connected to wider processes in society and different understandings of reality. As such, it has provided a broad description of *grindadráp*, innovating in the emphasis given to various scientific practices and by presenting (in Paper I) the first academic recognition of the existence of organised Faroese opposition to pilot whaling. The narrative has examined how *grindadráp* is linked to the global whaling conflict, through the actions of anti-whaling protestors and in the scientific and management practices that are performed. This thesis suggests *grindadráp* has retained its prominent place in Faroese society because it has been able to incorporate different perspectives on reality and thus deal with any challenges it faces. It asserts that arguably the greatest current threat to its continuation lies in the high levels of toxins in pilot whale meat. This undermines the egalitarian purpose of *grindadráp*, i.e. to provide free food and nutrition to the community (Paper III).

While *grindadráp* has remained popular within the Faroe Islands it has continued to remain a controversial issue elsewhere. Arguments that are convincing within the Faroes fail to meet the criticisms of anti-whaling activists from abroad (Paper II). This is a clash of scale, with international organisations pushing for a global approach to preserving marine mammal populations against the highly localised or regionalised arguments of Faroese pro-whalers (Paper II-III). Having been successful in largely ending commercial whaling, anti-whaling activists have sought to eradicate all whaling practices. However, in the absence of decisive strength to compel whalers
globally, the situation is one of stalemate, with neither side seriously interested in listening to the others’ views of reality (Paper V). While grindadráp has proven adaptable, the institutions of global whaling have failed to adapt to the contemporary whaling era, where diverse whaling practices have become essentialised as part of disparate ‘whaling cultures’.

This thesis has echoed numerous sociological arguments that a certain amount of diversity of perspective often needs to be retained in dealing with environmental issues. Furthermore, in employing the concept of clumsiness, this thesis is also arguing that diversity of perspective can be productive in finding solutions to environmental problems. The institution of grindadráp, no doubt like many others, has proved long-standing in part because it has been able to draw upon the narratives of different social solidarities without progressing into outright conflict. This is not however the same as to say that solutions to environmental issues need be complex; indeed the most mutually-agreeable solution may be as simple as changing the shape of a whaling knife. Thus clumsiness should not be conflated simply with complexity. More properly, clumsiness is a property referring to the quality of dialogue around a given issue – situations examined may be relatively ‘clumsier’ (or not) than others. The typology that cultural theory provides is thus one way of making sense of the diversity of perspectives extant in various environmental conflicts. It presents one effort to develop constructivist theory in a systematic manner. Thus, this thesis argues, it allows complex situations to be pragmatically simplified (i.e. made manageable) while providing a heuristic way of taking account of a certain amount of diversity.

Previous examinations of whaling debates (and indeed other environmental conflicts) have tended to ‘take a side’, accepting the normative statements of ‘their’ group as ‘rational’. This does violence to people who are involved in complex situations. This thesis, by utilising theoretical approaches that do not require sociologists to ‘pick a side’ regarding the nature of reality, has hopefully provided an example about how different perspectives on ‘the matter at hand’ can be handled. This is important, because as both the ontological turn and cultural theory highlight, what emerges is always the product of conflict and, furthermore, this conflict is productive – solutions are found in the spaces between conflicting worldviews. The sand-free quality of contemporary pilot whale meat (Paper III) may not have occurred without increasing concerns for animal welfare. Resolving many environmental challenges is likely to require ‘clumsy solutions’ and ‘messy institutions’ in contrast to the overly elegant fixes of situations dominated by just
one view of reality. Pragmatic, simplistic ways of coping with mess will always remain attractive. In practice, this often entails bids to create ‘neutral facts’, shorn of the social and cultural elements of problems (cf. Lövbrand et al. 2015). By contrast, I hope this thesis has helped show that social and cultural complexity have an important place (cf. Paper IV) – a complex world requires simplification, but not necessarily elegance.
References


FIELDING, R., 2013b. Whaling futures: a survey of Faroese and Vincen
tian youth on the topic of artisanal whaling. Society & Natural Resources, 26(7), pp. 810-826.


KUSENBACK, M., 2003. Street phenomenology: the go-along as ethno-
LATOUR, B., 2004. Whose cosmos, which cosmopolitics?: Comments on
LATOUR, B., 1993. *We have never been modern*. Cambridge, Massa-
cusetts: Harvard University Press.
vard University Press.
LATOUR, B. and WOOLGAR, S., 1986. *Laboratory life*. Chichester:
Princeton University Press.
LAW, J., 2004. *After method: mess in social science research*. Abingdon:
Routledge.
LIDSKOG, R., 2001. The re-naturalization of society? Environmental
LÖVBRAND, E., BECK, S., CHILVERS, J., FORSYTH, T., HEDRÉN, J.,
for the future of Earth? How critical social science can extend the conver-
sation on the Anthropocene. *Global Environmental Change*, 32, pp. 211-
218.
MARCUS, G.E., 1995. Ethnography in/of the world system: the emer-
gence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24,
pp. 95-117.
MATHISEN, S.R., 1996. "Real barbarians eat whales": Norwegian iden-
tity and the whaling issue. In: P.J. ANTTONEN, ed, *Making Europe in
MEYER, D.S. and STAGGENBORG, S., 1996. Movements, countermove-
ments, and the structure of political opportunity. *The American Journal of
Sociology*, 101(6), pp. 1628-1660.
MILTON, K., 2002. *Loving nature: towards an ecology of emotion*. Lon-
don: Routledge.
Routledge.
1-22.
MORISHITA, J., 2006. Multiple analysis of the whaling issue: under-


**Other references**

BERG, J. 2014 *Allt har sin tid*. Universal Music AB.


BERG, J. 2010 *Ismael*. Universal Music AB.


PART II

Figure 2 Image used on the cover of the Faroese magazine Prei (photo by Miriam and Janus Photography).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publikationer i serien Örebro Studies in Sociology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


