

# Urbanization in Greenland

*exploring the motivating factors of why people move to Nuuk*

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*Master thesis*



**AALBORG UNIVERSITY**  
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## **Abstract**

Migration from smaller to bigger towns is a trend in Greenland. As a case of urbanization, recent development has shown an increasing tendency of migration to Nuuk from other towns in Greenland. In literature, urbanization in Greenland has been described as being caused by both political, social, economic and historical factors. A literature review of the topic shows that not many research studies on urbanization have included qualitative interview studies on the subjective motivations of people who are moving. In this thesis, it has been deemed important to further investigate urbanization in the form of a qualitative study, as it is arguably possible to derive new knowledge of the reasons why people have migrated. With an interview study of people's motivations for migrating, the aim of this thesis is to add a qualitative perspective to the topic of urbanization in Greenland.

The key findings of the interview study include personal motivations such as individual freedom and anonymity, as well as social and economic factors. According to the study, there are both push and pull factors related to why people chose to move to Nuuk. Pull factors include social, economic and political factors, which together with personal considerations are linked to more opportunities in Nuuk both in terms of jobs and education, but also leisure activities and the personal freedom offered by urban life. In this context, Nuuk is argued to be in top of the "hierarchy of cities", in the Greenlandic context implying that Nuuk has become the preferred destination in people's pursuit of rich and varied opportunities, both understood as job, education, welfare, and cultural activities. Whereas Nuuk offers people the most opportunities in Greenland, the urban web is interlinked with the rest of the world, which is reflected by interviewees imagining seeking further opportunities in Denmark or Scandinavia.

On the other hand, push factors causing migration to Nuuk include social conditions in smaller towns and settlements, such as the lack of opportunities both in terms of welfare and social help, besides economic and political factors including centralizing tendencies and a lack of jobs in other regions in Greenland. These are major factors contributing to migration to Nuuk. Debate in Greenland has recently included discussions about centralization and the imbalance in development between Nuuk and the rest of the country. This political theme is also assessed in this thesis, because not only do the persons interviewed tell stories from their own perspective, they are well aware of the broader picture of urbanization in Greenland.

**Key words:** *settlement patterns, migration, urbanization, regional development, mobility, rural versus urban, demographic transition, Arctic*

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... All the participants in the interview study for their interest in this study and for their honest answers.

Without their participation and willingness to let me into their personal life choices and stories, it would not have been possible to carry out this thesis. In my mind, their reasons for moving to Nuuk add personal perspectives to the knowledge of the changes and dynamics of urbanization and society in Greenland.

... Employees at Polarbiblioteket/Arktisk Institut (Jan Idor Jacobsen Boklund) and Aalborg University Library for helping me with the literature review; Birger Poppel, one of the principal investigators of Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic; Anne Merrild Hansen, leader of AAU Arctic; Kelton Minor, Greenland Perspectives Survey who showed interest in collaborating with me on the topic of this thesis; Arctic Consensus for providing me with an office in Nuuk, and the people who welcomed me in Nuuk and gave me inspiration on the topic of urbanization.

## 1. Introduction

The world is becoming increasingly urbanized. In 2007, the world's population reached a “tipping point” within global urbanization, as there were more people living in urban than rural areas.<sup>1</sup> Dybbroe (2008) asks: *Is the Arctic really urbanizing?* A rhetoric question, it seems today, since the demographic development with more people living in urban areas is also a dominant trend in the Arctic.<sup>2</sup>

The arctic *is* urbanizing, and Greenland is too. But what does urban mean in a Greenlandic context? In the case of Nuuk, why is urbanization occurring in Greenland? What aspects of the capital motivates an increasing number of people in Greenland to move there? This thesis seeks to answer these questions. In the empirical data, I aim to explore the interviewees' motivations for migrating: why they have moved from “the coast” to the capital, and what their experience with living in Nuuk is like.<sup>3</sup> It explores their opinions about this development in order to put into perspective their individual choices with the political tendency of urbanization and centralization. One of the interviewees states:

“Somehow, it does not work if you gather everyone in one place. Firstly, there is not enough space. Secondly, you take away all the charm of the rest of Greenland, because everyone is concentrating in Nuuk. And well, it is just... I think it is a pity.”<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, the interviewee herself calls this double standard, as she is also one of the persons who chose to move to Nuuk. Other interviewees are positive about the development, as they see opportunities in concentrating a greater number of people in one town.<sup>5</sup> These political stances on urbanization carry reflections of individual choices. However, the main focus is on the interviewees' individual motivations representing conceptualizations of the urbanization trend.

Urbanization has been a dominant trend in Greenland for the past 75 years. Urbanization is often characterized as increased population density and inhabitants moving from the smaller settlements to the larger towns or cities.<sup>6</sup> Urbanization and depopulation of the settlements in Greenland have historically been a controversial topic.<sup>7</sup> Recently in Greenland, attention in public debate has been focused on the population

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<sup>1</sup> Beall, Guha-Khasnobis, and Kanbur (2010), p. 3

<sup>2</sup> Nordic Council of Ministers (2011), pp. 21-38

<sup>3</sup> ‘*Sineriammi*’ or ‘*på kysten*’ (translates “on the coast”) is a frequently used term – especially in Nuuk – referring to the rest of Greenland, outside of Nuuk.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix 7, IP12, Nina1

<sup>5</sup> Interview person 4 (IP4), Bent

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Dybbroe (2008), Christensen et. al. (2017), and Nordic Council of Ministers (2011)

<sup>7</sup> [\[Web8\]](#) bibliography

development, as the influx of people to Nuuk reached new levels in the beginning of 2019.<sup>8</sup> In an article published on the online media [Sermitsiaq.ag](#), the head of municipal administration raises his concerns about the increasing number of new inhabitants in Nuuk.<sup>9</sup> The concern is whether the town of Nuuk will be able to accommodate the new inhabitants, and generally provide the necessary service in terms of e.g. day-care and schools, if the migration pattern from the coast to the capital continues.

The dynamics of urbanization in the Arctic have been discussed by scholars for the past decades. Yet, the motivating factors of *why* urbanization is happening in Greenland is relatively underrepresented in recent research. Scholars have studied urbanization in Greenland from various standpoints – historical, colonial, social and political. Some emphasizing the political decisions of the past decades in their assessment of the dynamics which are leading to increased urbanization in Arctic societies.<sup>10</sup> Acknowledging that centralizing policies have contributed to urbanization, this thesis aims at further exploration of the personal factors.

A literature review of the topic of urbanization in Greenland shows that not many research studies have included qualitative interview studies on the subjective motivations of why people actually moved. One aspect of the theory and literature on urbanization relates to the sociological and psychological aspects, including social relationships. Thus, changes in social interactions, anonymity, and “the characteristics distinctive of the mode of life associated with the growth of cities,” are important notions in understanding urbanization as a phenomenon.<sup>11</sup> Important and more positive aspects include potential economic development and increased investments, which are argued to come with population concentration, as human resource is a prerequisite for economic growth.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in interviews, I have assessed push-pull factors. Among pull factors are e.g. the individual freedom in the city, which also includes a higher activity level in Nuuk compared to the rest of towns. Exploring the reasons why people move, I have analyzed their choices on an individual level and their view on the development of urbanization. According to the literature search, there are no interview studies asking people through qualitative in-depth interviews why they chose to move. Thus, the main focus is on the personal factors of migration mentioned by interviewees.

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<sup>8</sup> According to this article [\[Web1\]](#) (bibliography), Nuuk received a number of 241 new inhabitants just within the months of January, February and March 2019. The total number of inhabitants in Nuuk from 2018 to 2019 increased with 188 persons.

<sup>9</sup> [\[Web1\]](#) and [\[Web3\]](#) Bibliography

<sup>10</sup> Poppel (1997), Sejersen (2010) and Hendriksen (2014). Hendriksen (2014), p. 15 calls for further investigation of Greenlandic urbanization: “Overall, research should be carried out in order to shine a light on the whole complex of problems surrounding Greenlandic urbanization and the development of commercial and settlement patterns.”

<sup>11</sup> Wirth (1938) in Dybbroe (2008), p. 22

<sup>12</sup> E.g. the Capital Strategy for Nuuk works with this assumption, *Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq* (2016), p. 7

## **Problem formulation**

I have considered the question “*Why do people in Greenland move to Nuuk?*” the best possible way of investigating the motivating factors in this particular case of urbanization. This is because the question, although simple in its formulation, contains a variety of possibilities for extracting relevant knowledge. Interpreting the answers to the simple question, “Why did you move to Nuuk?” opens up for a conceptualization of urbanization as a phenomenon experienced locally and individually by the interviewees. While asking why people move to Nuuk, it is also interesting and important to ask why they moved away from the rest of the country. In the empirical data study, I have considered the comparative aspect of Nuuk versus the hometown of the interviewee, as it appears frequently due to the relational nature of the question *Why did you move to Nuuk?* Assessing the underlying motivation within this question, I include in the formulation: “what are the disadvantages and lack of opportunities in their hometown?” Summing up, the problem formulation in this thesis is “*Why do people in Greenland move to Nuuk?*” containing three steps of analysis:

1. Literature review and theory
2. Qualitative interview study and analysis
3. Discussion of analysis results with theory

## **2. Research design**

My aim with this thesis has been to study the urbanization phenomenon in Greenland via a case study of some of the motivating factors for moving to an urban center in Greenland. By a qualitative study using interviewing, participant observation method and systematic text condensation analysis as methods, I have approached this trend in a Greenlandic context.

In general, the aim is to produce knowledge of some of the reasons and motivations mentioned by a group of informants to the question of why they moved from other parts of Greenland to the capital of Nuuk. In short, the group of informants chosen consists of Greenlanders from other towns than Nuuk. Within a bottom-up approach, by asking people *why* they moved, they can describe the phenomena they experience in their own words. Afterwards, by identifying common themes and patterns, it is possible to analyze interviews in order to provide new knowledge about urbanization in Greenland and migration to Nuuk.

This thesis relies both on a deductive and inductive approach. The research design is organized within three steps of analysis, starting with a literature review and afterwards inductively analyzing data from the qualitative study, to finally deductively returning to the literature in the final analysis. This method is chosen

in order to analyze the new themes and findings from empirical data compared to the knowledge in literature. The aim is to provide new knowledge which can contribute to research on the topic of urbanization in Greenland.<sup>13</sup> It is not the ambition to obtain quantifiable data, as the purpose is to approach the complex issue of urbanization by asking people directly and deriving knowledge from the empirical data. However, quantitative data are used put the qualitative study into perspective and literature provide an overview of the theory of urbanization in Greenland, as well as in the Arctic. The process of methodological and analytical considerations will be further described below and in the methodology section of the study.

The literature review and theory section answer the following research question:

1) “How can the increased migration to Nuuk be understood theoretically as a case of urbanization in Greenland?”

Moving on to the interview study, I analyze data from interviews within an inductive approach. Although I do not use theory directly to form the interview guide, a preliminary focus of interviews is naturally influenced by my initial literature review and reading literature on the topic. To clarify the preconceptions produced by these procedures, I have included a thematizing of the research in appendix 4, which was done before conducting interviews.<sup>14</sup> Thus, after conducting the interviews, in analysis, I ask the following research questions:

2.A) What do interviewees mention as the motivations or disincentives for moving to Nuuk in relation to staying in their hometown?

2.B) What is their connection to the hometown?

2.C) How do they experience living in Nuuk and how do these experiences describe the phenomenon of urbanization?

2.D) What is their political opinion about urbanization, understood as migration from smaller to bigger towns?

Part of the research questions include an overall perspectivation of the issue to a next level of abstraction. By asking the interviewees about their personal opinion on the migration pattern occurring in Greenland, a both political and self-reflective perspective is investigated within this case of urbanization. Discussing the results of the analysis, theory and literature review is introduced again in the discussion and conclusion, with the research question:

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<sup>13</sup> And maybe to future surveys. See the perspectivation section

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix 4 Thematizing

3) “What are the reasons people in Greenland move to Nuuk from other towns and settlements, and why are these motivating factors of urbanization?”, where new findings are assessed applying theory from literature review.

Forming the basis of the qualitative study, I have conducted 12 qualitative interviews within the topic of urbanization in the case of migration to Nuuk.<sup>15</sup> This part constitutes a case study with qualitative empirical data and aims at answering the part of the problem formulation “Why do people in Greenland move to Nuuk?” with the underlying research question “What are the motivating factors of moving to Nuuk from other towns and settlements in Greenland mentioned by a group of interviewees?”

### 3. Literature review and theory

#### I. Urbanization as a global and Arctic trend

Urbanization is an interdisciplinary field of study. Sociology, history, geography, anthropology, planning, development as well as other fields have all contributed to the research of the ‘urban’.<sup>16</sup>

Given its complex nature, it is important to clearly define the specific research focus. In this thesis, the topic of urbanization is inspired by an interdisciplinary perspective. In the following sections, I will provide an overview of definitions of urbanization in the Arctic, as well as a historical, political and theoretical overview in Greenland.

Urbanization is sometimes referred to as the proportion of the total national population living in areas classed as urban – in UN’s definition. While in a social research-related perspective, as in ‘Megatrends’ published by Nordic Council of Ministers (2011), urbanization is characterized according to population density and numbers, but also with an influence on society as a whole.<sup>17</sup> The mere denomination of being a ‘megatrend’ defines urbanization as having an “overall impact on everything else”.<sup>18</sup> In this paper, urbanization is defined as in Nordic Council of Ministers (2011): “Urbanisation refers to the process through which society is transformed from one with predominantly rural characteristics in terms of economy, culture and lifestyle, to one which can be characterised as urban.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Interviews were conducted in Nuuk between March 6 and 16 2019. Moreover, I spent five months in Nuuk in Autumn 2016. Although not within this research purpose, the stay provided me with basic knowledge about the town and the recent development. Furthermore, I grew up in Qaqortoq in South Greenland and lived there for 12 years in total, which has also contributed to my basis of knowledge of Greenlandic society.

<sup>16</sup> Dybbroe, Dahl and Müller-Wille (2010), p. 124

<sup>17</sup> Nordic Council of Ministers (2011), p. 22

<sup>18</sup> Nordic Council of Ministers (2011) p. 9

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. P. 22

When defining urban development, one should also be aware of the distinction between urban growth and urbanization. Urban growth describes the increasing proportion of people living in an urban area, while urbanization includes the relative aspect of the proportion of the population living in urban areas compared to the one living in non-urban areas. Some argue the definitions vary with regard to what characterizes an urban area. In the Arctic, the different countries have different measures for their population. According to UN statistics, in 2018, 49,107 inhabitants in Greenland were living in urban areas.<sup>20</sup> According to the UN website for World Urbanization Prospects, the definition of urban is based on the definition by national statistical offices.<sup>21</sup> Thus, based on the national definition of urban areas, in a Greenlandic context this seems an overestimation. Nevertheless, they count as urban although one would not characterize all towns in Greenland as “urban” compared to the world at large. Settlements of different sizes are characterized as towns (urban) versus villages or settlements (rural) according to their functions. In Nordic Council of Ministers (2010) is stated: “Greenland has no clear definition of urban versus rural as all people are live in settlements of different sizes. There is a difference between towns and villages, which was based on their functions. All municipal centres were towns and all other settlements were villages, independent of size.”<sup>22</sup> As will be discussed in the perspectivation, an improvement in relation to measuring and studying urbanization in Greenland would be to have clearer classifications of when a settlement is an urban versus a rural area in order to monitor urban development.

Within terminology, Christensen et. al. (2017) describe an interesting distinction: “There is evidence to suggest a general demographic movement from smaller settlements (translates to *nunaqarfik* in Greenlandic, the place where nature is) to small towns, and finally to larger towns or cities (translates to *illoqarfik* in Greenlandic, the place where the houses are) such as Sisimiut (North Greenland), Qaqortoq (South Greenland) and Nuuk (the capital in the middle of Greenland) (see Rasmussen, 2010).”<sup>23</sup> The dichotomy between *nature* versus *houses* is thus possible to trace in Greenlandic language. This is interesting in relation to assessing the notion of place and sense of belonging among interviewees, and whether these are significant differences when exploring urbanization in Greenland.

## **II. Background of settlement patterns and urbanization in Greenland**

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<sup>20</sup> ‘Annual Urban Population at Mid-Year, 1950-2050 (thousands)’

<sup>21</sup> Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2018). World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision, Online Edition. (POP/DB/WUP/Rev.2018/1/F19). As for the extrapolation method, the population extrapolations are based on urban-rural ratios calculated by results from two national census and thus obtaining hypothetical urban-rural growth and urbanization.

<sup>22</sup> Nordic Council of Ministers (2011), p. 27

<sup>23</sup> Christensen et. al. (2017), p. 356

It has been deemed important to include a political and historical dimension of urbanization. Development in Greenland in modern times is mostly referred to as post-WW2, and urbanization characterized as migration patterns from smaller settlements and towns to bigger towns already appeared from the 1950's.<sup>24</sup> Christensen et. al. (2017) describe the link between policies and demographic movement pattern: "Centralization policies put into motion a distinct rural-urban geography in Greenland, which in recent decades has become increasingly focused around urban centers, such as Ilulissat, Sisimiut, Nuuk, and Qaqortoq."<sup>25</sup> The centralization policies with the described effect refer to political changes in the past decades, including development policies such as G-50 and G-60. Overall, development has been extremely rapid, causing major changes in society and value structures.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the SLiCA survey (2015) describes that: "The changes in the economic, political and social structure led to a break with the traditional norm and value systems. Due to the rapidity of the process these systems were not naturally replaced by new norm and values."<sup>27</sup> Within this 'anomie' or lack of norms, an interesting aspect of urbanization in a phenomenological perspective includes values, opinions and reflections within interviewees' own life choices.

### III. Political perspective on urbanization

When considering urbanization in Greenland, another important notion is the political transition the country has undergone. The lack of development or depopulation of the settlements in Greenland is a sensitive topic. Few Greenlandic politicians publicly embrace the depopulation of the settlements, but at the same time, the development policies of the past decades have had a centralizing effect on the population.<sup>28</sup> The introduction of Self-Government in 2009 and the municipal reform the same year, brought along with them increased urbanization, including earlier policies with a centralizing effect.<sup>29</sup> In 2009, the municipal reform (*strukture reformen*) resulted in gathering the 18 municipalities in four (now five) municipalities in Greenland. Among the purposes of the reform was to improve and equalize the quality of welfare services, as well as benefit to municipalities economically, as they were expected to create economies of scale. However, an evaluation report from 2015 concluded that overall, there were no cost savings (yet) from the reform.<sup>30</sup> Yet, it had improved the quality level in municipalities and made it easier to attract skilled employees to the central administration.<sup>31</sup> It also concluded, not surprisingly, that there had been an increased migration from

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<sup>24</sup> E.g. Dybbroe (2008), p. 25

<sup>25</sup> Christensen et. al. (2017), p. 356

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 91

<sup>27</sup> SLiCA (2015), p. 91

<sup>28</sup> E.g. the Municipality Reform of 2009 is commonly viewed as a policy which has caused centralization (although the intention was opposite, see BDO (2015). Also, Sørensen & Forchhammer (2014) mention that Nuuk is "criticized for carrying on a Danish policy of dominance and centralizing." (p. 119).

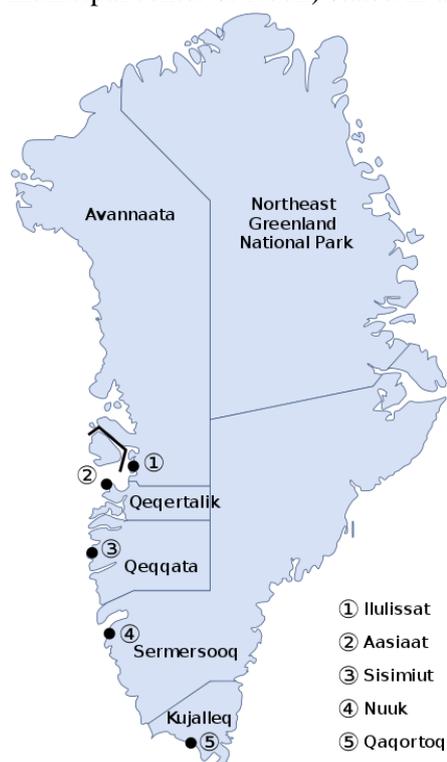
<sup>29</sup> E.g. the abolition of the 'uniform price system', which increased the gap in price levels between settlements and bigger towns, as mentioned by Henriksen (2014), p. 9

<sup>30</sup> BDO (2015)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 11

smaller to bigger towns.<sup>32</sup> Hendriksen (2014) mentions that some of the towns which were urban centers before the reform experienced a decrease in population size causing: “(...) a massive brain drain from previous towns that were municipality centres.”<sup>33</sup>

Public debate recently included a discussion about whether jobs should be relocated to the rest of the country from Nuuk. In 2016, three mayors from municipalities outside of Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq (with the municipal center of Nuuk) stated in a report that 600 public jobs should be relocated from Nuuk in order to



create more balance in the country.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, the Self-Government at that time rejected the proposal arguing that it was better to continue collaboration providing municipalities with more tasks.<sup>35</sup> This debate showcases a gap between the capital of Nuuk as the blooming administrative and political center, and the rest of Greenland’s regions sometimes feeling forgotten. Thus, the mayors stated in the report: “We are no longer an integral people with the same development opportunities.”<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, the Capital Strategy for Nuuk is a clear manifestation of urbanization in Greenland on the political scene. The strategy of the Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq municipality includes the goal of the population of Nuuk reaching 30,000 inhabitants by 2030.<sup>37</sup> This estimation is a political goal, however, the strategy claims that according to population extrapolations (keeping status quo without strategic goals) Nuuk will have a population size of 25,000 people in 2030.<sup>38</sup> Yet, as a growing capital, Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq does not hope that the development will accelerate further. In an

*The five municipalities of Greenland with municipal centers marked.*

e-mail response, the Head of Communication in the municipality says the following about the development:

“When the strategy was published, I was often asked the question if we imagine that 53 percent of the population is to live in Nuuk. (The correct number would be 57 percent if one uses the standard prognosis as

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 13

<sup>33</sup> Hendriksen (2014), p. 10

<sup>34</sup> [Web5] and Berthelsen et. al. (2016) “En ligeværdig fremtid” (‘An equal future’)

<sup>35</sup> [Web6] bibliography

<sup>36</sup> Berthelsen et. al. (2016), p. 6

<sup>37</sup> Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq (2016), p. 38.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 39, in The Capital Strategy states: “Today, 30 per cent of the Greenlandic population lives in Nuuk. According to prognoses, it will have 25,000 inhabitants in 2030, equalling 40 per cent of the country’s population. Many want to relocate to Nuuk. Consequently, we want to enable Nuuk to grow even faster. Our goal is to number 30,000 inhabitants in 2030.”

baseline). The answer to this is: We hope not. The significant economic growth which is needed to make the economy self-sustaining is impossible to base on a constantly decreasing population number.”<sup>39</sup>

If the capital is to double its size over the next ten years, inevitably there will be consequences for the rest of the country. Thus, increasing urbanization presents a number of challenges both for Nuuk and for Greenland as a whole. Some of these relate to the lack of housing in Nuuk, resulting in homelessness for some, which has been well-reported in both research and media.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, there is a well-documented out-migration from Greenland to Denmark.<sup>41</sup> If the development continues, understood as Nuuk becoming an even bigger metropole, challenges might occur. These challenges (although still rather hypothetical) relate to the ability of both the public and private sector to recruit enough skilled workers in the rest of Greenland. Thus, strategic economic interest areas such as e.g. fisheries, mineral extraction industry and tourism industry might be challenged. A counterargument to this rather negative projection of urbanization is that there is also a potential in an increased population size of the capital, as this might attract investments. Another argument, which is mentioned in the Capital Strategy is that a bigger capital can strengthen Greenland’s role internationally, and benefit all of Greenland, if Nuuk becomes known internationally as the “Arctic capital”.<sup>42</sup>

#### **IV. Theories on urbanization in Greenland**

Since Greenland gained home-rule in 1979 and later, in 2009, Self-Government, societal and political changes have transformed Greenland. Sejersen (2010) calls the past decade a “total transformation of society including the development of the position of towns.”<sup>43</sup> This transformation is related to political changes in Greenland, as the ‘hyper-industrialized’ society, as Sejersen (2010) calls it, requires an educated and mobile workforce. According to Sejersen, it is of utmost importance to the different towns and municipalities to make these places attractive. In this perspective, a study of the reasons of urban migration in terms of asking Greenlanders about *why* they find the capital especially attractive is deemed as relevant.

The main surveys on urbanization in Greenland have been based primarily on quantitative data, although some have included qualitative interviewing in their methodology. Beall, Guha-Khasnobis, and Kanbur (2010) state: “(...) our analysis shows why it is necessary to go beyond statistics and the demographic arguments to better understand the social, economic, and political changes wrought by rapid urbanization,

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<sup>39</sup> (Own translation) of an e-mail response from the Head of Communication in Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq, March 15, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> Christensen et. al. (2017), p. 356 and [\[web7\]](#) bibliography

<sup>41</sup> E.g. by Huppert (2016), p. 3: “in average 50% of the current total outmigration from Greenland is based from Nuuk.” And stating (p. 14) that many move to Denmark due to e.g. lack of housing.

<sup>42</sup> Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq (2016), p. 10

<sup>43</sup> Sejersen (2010), p. 180

and the implications for development research and policy in an urban world.”<sup>44</sup> This “going beyond statistics and the demographic arguments” has been a clear aim in this study focusing on the social, economic and political – not to mention the personal – aspects of urbanization within a Greenlandic context.

In the light of political factors of urbanization, a qualitative interview study has the potential of adding depth to the basis of knowledge in literature often based on quantitative method. A common picture often described is that of the population moving from the smaller to the bigger towns due to job opportunities, better education and health care services.<sup>45</sup> Hendriksen (2014) points at the political and institutional framework as one of the *driving factors of urbanization*: “Also in Greenland, with its 56,000 inhabitants spread over 17 so-called towns and 58 settlements, there is a clear correlation between settlement pattern and job opportunities. But to a high extent the distribution of jobs and trades are a consequence of political and/or administrative decisions or lack of it.”<sup>46</sup> Hendriksen (2014) claims that the lack of distribution of jobs in the public sector from larger towns in Greenland to other geographical regions has caused a waste of local resources and opportunities. He argues that the centralization is leading to an unsustainable economic situation of larger towns depending on public financed jobs. According to this scholar, an important aspect of urbanization is the social and personal situation of the people who move – the main characters in urbanization – about whom he says: “People start to look elsewhere, and as always in this process, the resourceful are among those who move first, creating a downward spiral.”<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, Bo Wagner Sørensen (2003) investigated the issue of the rapid development of Nuuk in 2003 and already back then identified the methodological lack of qualitative research on the topic. He argued that the public are seldom presented with “ordinary Greenlanders’” own view on the development, while often with researchers’ statements about the effects of urbanization in Greenland.<sup>48</sup> For Sørensen, this was a motivation to carry out qualitative research and interviews to identify characteristics of urban society and development in the capital of Greenland.<sup>49</sup>

Several scholars, i.e. Dahl (2010), have described the historical perspective of concentration policies in Greenland. While Dybbroe et.al. (2010) provide a broad perspective on urbanization throughout human history, with a focus on the Arctic urbanization, Sejersen (2010) points to the societal impact of urbanization.

Assessing the urban context in the Arctic, Collignon (2008) emphasizes there is a point in looking beyond the definitions of “urban” versus “rural”. This, she argues, is because the villages are defined by their

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<sup>44</sup> Beall, Guha-Khasnobis, and Kanbur (2010), pp. 3-4

<sup>45</sup> E.g. the two publications NORDREGIO (2010) *Mobilitet i Grønland*, *Sammenfattende analyse* and Nordic Council of Ministers (2011)

<sup>46</sup> Hendriksen (2014), p. 1

<sup>47</sup> Hendriksen (2014), p. 10

<sup>48</sup> Sørensen (2003), p. 185

<sup>49</sup> Sørensen interviewed together with colleagues 40 informants both ‘Nuummiut’ and newcomers from 2001-2002.

relations and territorial networks.<sup>50</sup> She places Arctic cities rather low in the “hierarchy”, as they generally do not have many opportunities. In the Arctic, she identifies only Barrow (Alaska), Inuvik (NWT, Canada), Iqaluit, Goose Bay (Labrador, Canada) and Nuuk as urban centers. Collignon (2008) describes the “hierarchy of the cities”, which occurs in an urban and global context, as the urban centers are interlinked and competing within their “power of attraction”.<sup>51</sup> She explains cities are places of power, and within this power relation: “The power of attraction of a city depends on the level of services it offers: their number, their variety, and their sophistication or complexity.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, within a Greenlandic context, this theory implies that there is a dynamic system linking places in the country.

The Mobility Survey of 2010 included qualitative interviews and questionnaires about the mobility of the Greenlandic population in relation to new economic activities, but did not include an investigation of why people actually moved.<sup>53</sup> Another former research project from 2015, Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic (SLiCA), included a participatory method and also focused on people’s motivations for staying or moving away from their settlements. The research project included qualitative group interviews and face-to-face-interviews. Yet, it did not include in-depth interviews with individuals on the topic of migration, and focused primarily on settlements.<sup>54</sup> Currently, there are two major scientific projects on migration and urbanization in Greenland and other Arctic communities. Firstly, the Greenland Perspectives Survey (on-going) focuses on how Greenlanders view their own past and future in relation to political, economic and environmental changes.<sup>55</sup> Also, Polar Peoples (2014-2019) focuses on past, present and future population trends across the Arctic and uses demographic and geographic tools – primarily within a quantitative method.<sup>56</sup> From 2006-2009, the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies at the University of Copenhagen initiated a research project called ‘The Urban Greenland’<sup>57</sup> which included an International PhD School for the Study of Arctic Societies in 2007 with the theme of Urban Communities in the Arctic.<sup>58</sup>

## V. Urbanism and urbanization

Indeed, there are social scientists who have studied urbanization in Greenland and in the Arctic using qualitative methods and with a social constructivist standpoint. Scholars such as Dahl (2010), Henriksen

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<sup>50</sup> Collignon (2008), p. 13

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> NORDREGIO working paper (2013), p. 202 (‘Methods’). For further reading view NORDREGIO (2010) *Mobilitet i Grønland*

<sup>54</sup> SLiCA (2015), p. 116. And background interview with one of the principal investigators of SLiCA, Birger Poppel on March 14, 2019

<sup>55</sup> Carried out by researchers from University of Copenhagen, Kraks Fond Byforskning and University of Greenland – Ilisimatusarfik. See Greenland Perspectives Survey (2018)

<sup>56</sup> With NORDREGIO as lead partner of the project.

<sup>57</sup> With the Danish title “Det Urbane Grønland – bevægelser, narrativer og kreativitet”.

<sup>58</sup> The main publication from this project is Sejersen et. al. (2008)

(2014) and Sejersen (2010) have studied urbanization in Greenland from a historical, identity and colonial theoretical viewpoint, arguing that political decisions have formed the framework of urbanization in Greenland throughout history.<sup>59</sup>

In the introduction to the 2010-issue of the journal *Acta Borealia*, Dybbroe, Dahl and Müller-Wille (2010) point at the technological development as causing a change in the way urban areas and urbanism affect even remote communities. They argue that communications technology “urbanizes” communities, including even rural areas in the Arctic: “It does not lead to homogenization, but it opens for remote communities to share or adopt traditions, urbanism, which we otherwise associate with urban places, and most people have had experience with living in urban places. Urbanism is no longer restricted to urban areas and rural life no longer epitomizes the “traditional” cultures. In probably no region is this development better observed than in the Arctic.”<sup>60</sup> Moreover, Dybbroe (2008) interlinks the Arctic with global theories of urbanization by e.g. sociologists such as Tönnies, Simmel and Wirth. She describes sociologist Georg Simmel’s idea of the urban versus the rural: “The city creates psychological conditions that produce individuality, marked by intellectualism, rationalism, emotional reserve and sophistication. This is an ethos of indifference that is conducive to both freedom and loneliness, whereas small town life rests more upon deeply felt and emotional relationships and the social control of community members.”<sup>61</sup>

Urbanism includes, within a sociological and anthropological point of view, “modes of life characterized as urban”, as described by Dybbroe (2008), quoting Wirth (1938).<sup>62</sup> Dybbroe (2008) asks whether the Arctic is really urbanizing, and answers *yes* to her own question. She describes that a process is underway in the Arctic comparable to what happened in Europe, “(...) with people moving into towns to look for better opportunities (...)”.<sup>63</sup> She describes the process of urbanization in Greenland vividly: “On moving into urban apartments, extended families have become slimmed down to resemble nuclear families; hunters have become wage workers or crew members on trawlers; their wives have gone to work in the fish factory or the store.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, emphasizing some of the social changes this transformation brings with it, urbanism along with urbanization relates to the socio-cultural, economic or political changes in society. Here, it is important to note the difference between urbanization, as it is defined in the above-mentioned sections, and urbanism, characterized as an urban lifestyle and ways of life as described above.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Other good historical overviews include e.g. O. Marquardt (2008), B. Poppel (1997), J. Kaalhauge Nielsen in Nuttall, M. (2005) *Encyclopedia of the Arctic*, R. O. Rasmussen/NORDREGIO (2013) and S. Dybbroe (2008).

<sup>60</sup> Dybbroe, Dahl and Müller-Wille (2010), p. 121

<sup>61</sup> Dybbroe (2008), p. 21

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14

To sum up, urbanization is often described as a development caused by the population moving from the smaller to the bigger towns due to job opportunities, better education and health care services.<sup>66</sup> Yet, social, economic, political and environmental factors play a main part in the development.

## **VI. Nuuk as a center on the periphery**

Drawing on island studies theory, Grydehøj (2014) adds interesting perspectives to the literature on urbanization in Greenland. This theory includes studies of the relationships between the islands and the mainland including a range of associations, and describes Nuuk in the light of *centre-periphery* in his 2014-article “Constructing a centre on the periphery: urbanization and urban design in the island city of Nuuk, Greenland.” The main argument in the article is that the conceptualization of Nuuk has changed during the past 70 years, from being viewed as a periphery in a Danish colonial perspective to a center in the current perspective. As Grydehøj describes the transformation: “Nuuk grew into a city and a political, administrative and economic centre relative to Greenland’s small settlements, which came to be seen as central to Greenlandic culture.”<sup>67</sup> Another aspect of center-periphery as is added by Grydehøj (2014), quoting Brenner (2014), stating the urban is no longer limited to the cities, and the countryside is no longer the ‘periphery’, as society as a whole is drawn into the urbanization-process. Grydehøj (2014) states: “Centrality and peripherality are instead relative measures of social, economic, cultural, and political power.”<sup>68</sup>

## **VII. “The real Greenland” – discourses about urban versus rural**

Urbanism and anti-urbanism narratives or discourses are often part of the literature on urbanization, e.g. describing shifts in discourses about settlements versus towns, versus the capital including the “Real Greenland versus Nuuk-dichotomy”.<sup>69</sup>

Within literature on urbanization in Greenland, often these discourses and dichotomies are used to constitute knowledge on some of the characteristics of urban society, especially of Nuuk. Some researchers argue that the dichotomies between “real Greenland” and the urbanized society changed during the past decades. Sociologists Sørensen & Forchhammer (2014) argue that before Greenland gained home-rule, there was an anti-urban narrative in Greenland from the 1960’s and following decades. From around 2000 and after gaining self-government in 2009 with increased political wish of independence, this narrative has changed. They argue that although there has been a shift from the urban ‘alienation’ to a more inclusive ‘Greenlandicness’, negatively loaded perceptions of Nuuk still remain: “Thus the status of Nuuk has changed towards increasing approval. However, Nuuk is also criticized for carrying on a Danish policy of dominance

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<sup>66</sup> E.g. the two publications NORDREGIO (2010) Mobilitet i Grønland, Sammenfattende analyse and Nordic Council of Ministers (2011)

<sup>67</sup> Grydehøj (2014), p. 205

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 207

<sup>69</sup> E.g. Sørensen & Forchhammer (2014)

and centralizing. In this sense it is still considered “a piece of Denmark on rocks”.<sup>70</sup> This perspective is interesting in order to understand and analyze the discourse of increased urbanization. The dichotomy of whether Nuuk is also considered part of “the real Greenland”, as e.g. Sejersen (2010) mentions, will also be included in the discussion.

### **VIII. Motivation theory and push-pull factors**

Motivation is a relatively complicated term. As described within several theories, however, motivation is considered overall within two major schools: the content theories of motivation, and process (or cognitive) theories of motivation. Generally speaking, content theories define motivation as “(...) the product of internal drives that compel an individual to act or move (hence, “motivate”) toward the satisfaction of individual needs.”<sup>71</sup> Especially within organizational theory and behavioral psychology, many motivational theories have been developed as extensions of Abraham Maslow’s theory of hierarchy of needs.<sup>72</sup> Maslow’s theory describes physiological needs, security needs, belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization.<sup>73</sup> The theory is based on the hierarchy of factors necessary for survival, thus, the lower-level needs are to be met before the upper-level needs become motivational. When Meyer (1955) reviewed Maslow’s theory, he stated: “(...) the author makes the point that ‘The organism is dominated and its behavior organized by unsatisfied needs. (...) As a need is satisfied its successor emerges. For example, when the physiological needs are gratified then the safety needs emerge. The author points out that although these tend to emerge in the order mentioned, the order is not rigid nor are they equally strong in each individual.’”<sup>74</sup> Thus, Maslow’s theory requires a critical approach to not generalize complex human reflection. However, it is useful when assessing motivations in terms of individual needs within the scope of this thesis.

Moreover, within the analysis of motivations, ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors of migration will be used. These are common tools of assessing factors within e.g. the topic of migration.<sup>75</sup> Within macro-theories on migration, Massey et. al. (1993) argues one of the most common is neoclassical economic theory. This theory is based on an economic principle that people move based on whether there is available work within their immediate space.<sup>76</sup> Micro-theories include Lee (1966) who stated there are four major factors of why people choose to

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<sup>70</sup> Sørensen & Forchhammer (2014), p. 119

<sup>71</sup> Enciclopedia.com ‘motivation and motivation theory’

<sup>72</sup> Other theories belonging to the content theories of motivation are Alderfer’s ERG Theory and Herzberg’s Motivator-Hygiene Theory.

<sup>73</sup> Maslow, Abraham H. (1954)

<sup>74</sup> Meyer (1955), p. 727

<sup>75</sup> E.g. Parkins (2010). Other common examples within research on push-pull factors in migration and ‘brain drain’ include e.g. Sunita Dodani and Ronald E. LaPorte’s (2005) study on brain drain from developing countries.

<sup>76</sup> Massey et. al. (1993) in Parkins (2010), p. 13

migrate: “(...) the area of origin, factors associated with the area of destination, intervening obstacles, and personal factors.”<sup>77</sup> Thus, through this micro-theory lens, the migration decision is determined by the personal factors, among others.

### IX. Quantitative data of population development in Greenland

When looking at the different towns in Greenland, the most significant factor of population change is migration. The influence from the movement pattern by far overrules the effect of the natural fluctuations in terms of births and deaths. *Figure 1* shows a continuing negative net immigration in Greenland for the past 40 years.



*Figure 1: Statistics Greenland's recent numbers on internal migration and migration abroad.*<sup>78</sup>

While Greenland has had a net-emigration in recent decades, the number of internal migrations is significant.<sup>79</sup> The internal migration generally from outer districts to the bigger towns, especially to Nuuk, has been going on for the last 50 years (*Figure 1*). Assessing urbanization in Greenland, an overview is provided of the migration from distinct settlements to towns, and specifically from other towns to Nuuk.

*Figure 2* below shows an increase in the population figures in the four biggest towns in Greenland (Nuuk, Ilulissat, Sisimiut and Qaqortoq) with a percentage of the population of 51 % in 2010 (from 23 % in 1955). The percentage of inhabitants living in other towns has remained the same – from 34 % in 1955 to 34 % in 2010. The biggest decrease in population size is the percentage of inhabitants living in villages, which has decreased from 44 % in 1955 to 15 % in 2010.

<sup>77</sup> Lee (1966) in Parkins (2010), p. 13

<sup>78</sup> Statistics Greenland, Greenland in Figures 2018, p. 8.

<sup>79</sup> NORDEN (2014), p. 55 describes Greenland's natural increase or decrease and net-migration

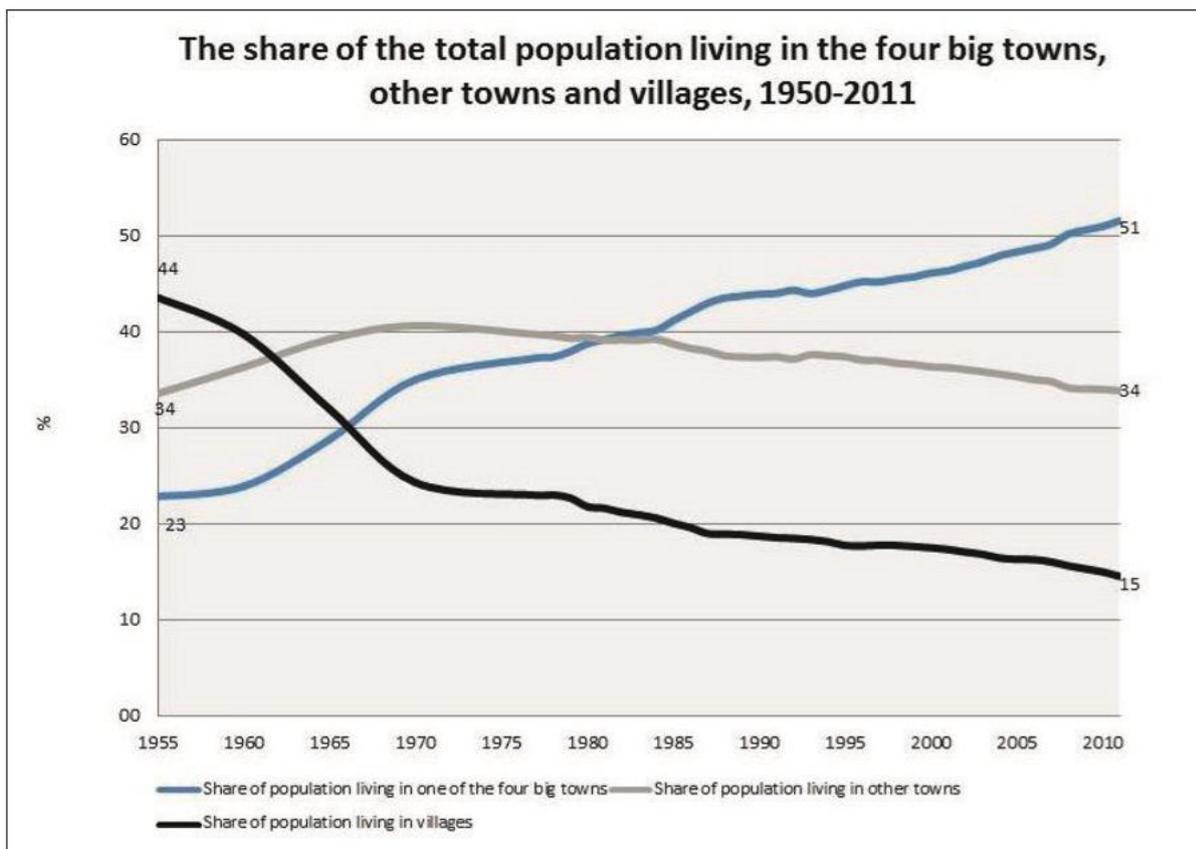


Figure 2: The share of the total population living in the four big towns, other towns and villages, 1950-2011<sup>80</sup>

Figure 2 shows an increase in the population size of the four biggest cities. Increasing figures from 1955-1975 in these towns from 23 % to 35 % correlate with the major reforms of G-50 and G-60, along with other development policies, e.g. public services and fisheries.<sup>81</sup>

In the case of Nuuk, over 30 % of Greenland's population now lives in Nuuk.<sup>82</sup> To further show the migration pattern from smaller to bigger settlements, I have visited Statistics Greenland for the most recent development. From 2015 to 2019 the population has increased by 992 persons corresponding to an average annual increase of 1.43 %.<sup>83</sup> In comparison, within the same period from 2015-2019, the percentage of the Greenlandic population living in towns increased by 0.26 %, while the population living in settlements decreased by 1.51 %.

<sup>80</sup> NORDREGIO working paper 2013, Maliina Abelsen: "Your region, your choice", pp. 105-107

<sup>81</sup> This correlation is also described by Hendriksen (2013) pp. 21-38

<sup>82</sup> Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq (2016), p. 38

<sup>83</sup> Appendix 8, Statistics Demographic Development

## 4. Methodology

### I. Methodological approach

A qualitative study in the case of people moving to Nuuk has been conducted using interviews as the primary data collection method. Other primary data sources include participant observation as well as news articles and policy papers. Furthermore, articles and books in literature review formed the theory on the topic of urbanization in Greenland and the Arctic.

I have used the method of phenomenological interview, as the aim is to explore urbanization as an experienced *phenomenon*. In this type of interview, the researcher explores the participants' own 'life worlds' to approach subjective accounts of motivations.<sup>84</sup> The simple question of why interviewees moved and the additional questions about their considerations, consequences, opportunities and the general experience may lead to a conceptualization of urbanization, because the concept is concretized in the everyday experience of the interviewee. This adds to the investigation of the 'life worlds' and reality as it is lived and experienced by the interviewee, which is characteristic of the phenomenological interview.<sup>85</sup> This method turned out to be useful, as the interviewees were willing to reflect and speak honestly both about the costs and opportunities of moving.

### II. Working strategy with interviews

Analysis has included a strategy for working with interview data.<sup>86</sup> Thus, the analytical process of the empirical data material has been organized into four phases. In the first phase, I have identified expected themes and theory, with the themes from existing literature on urbanization in Greenland. In the second phase, I have noted down first hand impressions of interviews before moving on to categorizing transcription, and in the fourth phase analyzing data using strategy of 'systematic text condensation'.<sup>87</sup>

### III. Case study

Nuuk in this thesis is considered a case of migration from smaller towns to an urban center. Representing an urban center in Greenland, Nuuk is chosen to explore one single case of migration as a case study. Nuuk is considered a "melting pot", establishing an opportunity to interview Greenlanders from all over the country about their choice of moving to an urban center. The case of Nuuk, however, is not representative of the general urbanization in Greenland, being a unique case. Nuuk is the capital, has the highest percentage

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<sup>84</sup> Kvale & Brinkmann (2009), p. 45

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 46-47

<sup>86</sup> See Appendix 5 Phases of the work process with interviews

<sup>87</sup> Malterud (2012). This strategy of analysis will be further elaborated on in the section XIII. Data analysis method

increase of inhabitants, and the city of Nuuk is the political and administrative center of Greenland. Thus, Nuuk is a *unique case* as opposed to a *representative or typical case*.<sup>88</sup>

Understood as increased migration and population density, urbanization in the four biggest towns of Greenland were deemed the most relevant as cases: Nuuk, Sisimiut, Ilulissat and Qaqortoq. Of these four towns I have chosen to focus on Nuuk, as it is the town with the most increase in the population size. Alternatives could have been Qaanaaq in North Greenland or Tasiilaq on the East Coast, which have had the highest increase in population besides Nuuk.<sup>89</sup> An interesting future comparative study would be to carry out the study in one or more of the other above-mentioned towns that experience urbanization. Important to mention within this case study is that the explored motivating factors only cover a small part of the people who move to Nuuk. Furthermore, there is no data whatsoever on the people who *did not* choose to move, nor the people who moved to Nuuk from other countries, which of course are also important perspectives.

#### **IV. Participant observation method**

Within methodology, I have chosen to include participant observation, a method belonging to ethnographic writing. The participant method includes the researcher noting down experiences, conversations and impressions by listening and observing.<sup>90</sup> The method generally falls into two types: regular, formal contact or full immersion.<sup>91</sup> In my case, I immersed in the urban setting in Nuuk, as well as being a participant observer while in Nuuk. Within the first mentioned, I noted down experiences in Nuuk related to urbanism such as partying, construction sites, and awareness of urban features. Another part of the participant observation method was taking field notes after interviewing. These field notes, especially my “first impressions” from interviews, have proven useful, as one easily forgets details, atmospheres and tones of an interview. Also, I have had private conversations on the topic of urbanization in Nuuk with people who are not informants. I have included these in this section, as their inputs are considered useful.

When in Nuuk, it is clear that development is going on everywhere. One cannot stop noticing building cranes constructing new apartments and all sorts of activity to accommodate more people. The most striking project is a new suburb by the public-private owned company Nuuk City Development, *Siorarsiorfik*.<sup>92</sup> Pictures below are taken in Nuuk in March 2019 by the author.

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<sup>88</sup> Bryman (2012), pp. 55-56

<sup>89</sup> [Web4] and Statistics Greenland, Statistisk Årbog 2017, p. 31

<sup>90</sup> Bray (2008), p. 305.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306

<sup>92</sup> [Web2] Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq (2016), p. 38



*Words on a building block in 'Sletten' ('the plain') say: 'ataatsimoorneq' ('togetherness') and 'periarfissat' ('opportunities'): expressing how some interviewees feel about their hometowns and Nuuk respectively.*



*Building cranes are a common sight in urban Nuuk. Here near the old churchyard, where new apartments are being built to accommodate the many newcomers in Nuuk.*



*Interviewee Maliina states that Nuuk and its inhabitants have kept their identity. Here a view of the old colonial harbor in Nuuk with the statue of missionary Hans Egede on top of the hill.*



*The newest suburb of Nuuk is 'Qinngorput'. The buildings here at Igimaq and Suloraq have a modern look, and some interviewees say they prefer this part of the city to the more ghetto-like and older Nuussuaq. Some again complain about the long distance by bus or car to get to the city center.*



*High-rising Nuuk Center was built in 2012 and contains both the first Greenlandic shopping-mall and the central administration of the Self-Government.*



*H.J. Rinksvej – the busy street in Nuuk, sometimes with congestion in the afternoon rush hour. Some interviewees mention the many cars as an urban feature they dislike.*

Some people regret that the development comprises tearing down old buildings to give space to the new. This is a picture of a house I passed every day on my way to the office, captured on a Facebook-post by one of my acquaintances. The post says: “H.J. Rinksvej B249, my lovely childhood home through 22 years must retreat to give space for the development. (...)”

Another urban experience I had was on Saturday during the first weekend of my stay. I was in the apartment of my friend in Nuussuaq, and there was partying upstairs with neighbors fighting loudly. The urban lifestyle includes – as Dybbroe (2007) mentions – that you unwillingly take part in other people’s lives – and struggles.<sup>93</sup> There is talk among the people I know in Nuuk about noise from their neighbors. It is not the community feeling of neighborhood, on the contrary, it is a matter of not getting involved in other people’s lives although living very close to each other.

Speaking with two women in Nuuk, I observed some hierarchical differences between Nuuk and the other urban centers in Greenland. One of the women was from Nuuk and the other from Uummannaq. They were unsatisfied with service when they visited the cultural house in Sisimiut. They wanted to be served during a holiday, and one of the women said: “I expect to be served when it is Easter... Come on, Sisimiut, you have to do better than that if you want people to come!” Being a smaller town than Nuuk, Sisimiut generally has less activity and competitiveness, and they were not satisfied with the service level in the one café in the town. This was a telling observation of the relations some citizens of Nuuk have with other places in Greenland. This, to me, shows that some people from Nuuk tend to look down on other places because Nuuk is bigger and offers better service within commerce and culture.

Another source (not informant) who has moved to Nuuk from another Greenlandic town mentioned that to her, one of the most attractive aspects of Nuuk is that “living in Nuuk is like living in London”. She explained that in Nuuk, there are so many Greenlanders from other towns, so the environment in Nuuk is less parochial, as in e.g. Sisimiut, where most inhabitants would be from there.

Another source (not informant) mentioned that in Nuuk there are groupings who confirm each other in their opinions, e.g. racist opinions. Although she is a Greenlander herself, she has got nothing against Danes and does not share these opinions.



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<sup>93</sup> Dybbroe (2007), p. 155

Touching upon this topic, I spoke to a Greenlandic woman who was quite convinced that my informants would avoid certain topics, as I am a Danish woman. She mentioned the ethnic and cultural differences and tensions that appear in Greenland, and that the informants might not tell me about these aspects. On other occasions, since I am not a native Greenlandic speaker but do speak and understand the language well, we shifted to Danish although the interviewee might have formulated him or herself more freely in the native language. However, mostly, when Greenlandic was preferred, the interviewee has spoken in Greenlandic, and I have asked sometimes in Greenlandic and sometimes in Danish, attempting to establish a common ground.

The overall experience with interviewing was a positive one. I did experience on one occasion that an interviewee expressed concern or discontent that researchers often come, do their research involving interviewing people in Greenland, and leave again, with no gains for the local population. I told him that sometimes collaborations between foreign universities and the University of Greenland were established, resulting in more dissemination of the acquired knowledge in Greenland. Yet, I also agreed with him that research does not always reach the public. I have reflected on this perspective, as it very much resembles issues mentioned within the “decolonizing methodologies” theory, which we are taught in Arctic Studies.<sup>94</sup> I think it is very important to keep in mind the concerns of the informants involved when interview studies are carried out, especially when they speak as private persons.

## **V. Selection method of interviewees**

The objective of the selection method has been to find a group of participants as diverse as possible, yet fulfilling the two criteria: born in Greenland and having lived another place in Greenland than Nuuk. In order to obtain a diversified group and answers to the question of why Greenlanders move to Nuuk, the method of contacting and selecting participants has been to address a broad audience in Nuuk. The chosen method of contact to potential participants was through a post in both Danish and Greenlandic in a Facebook-group with members based in Nuuk.<sup>95</sup> By use of the Facebook-post, the selection has depended on informants contacting me. There are two exceptions: interviewees 7 (Svend) and 11 (Pipaluk), who have been selected through the snowballing-sampling method, as other informants have suggested them to me, and I have contacted them afterwards. The advantages of the selection method were that the selection of informants is diverse, and that they participated out of their own motivation. The disadvantages were that I had little

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<sup>94</sup> E.g. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) ‘Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples’

<sup>95</sup> See Appendix 2 Contact (published in the public Facebook-group “Nuuk Borger Info” (“Nuuk Citizen information”), posts on February 22 and 24). Statistics Greenland recommended the Facebook-page which has over 7.700 members, and was deemed relevant for the purpose due to its broad audience.

control over the selection process, and that I did not reach an audience of people who were not on Facebook.<sup>96</sup>

All in all, the Facebook-post proved effective in establishing contact to the people who were interested in participating, who met the criteria and – most importantly – provided me with relevant empirical data. The adequate number of participants in a qualitative study depend on what one intends to explore.<sup>97</sup> Thus, it is more important to acquire a data material with abundant and diverse accounts of the matter to be explored, than an enormous number of participants.<sup>98</sup> The final number of 12 participants lived up to the goal of 10-15 participants fulfilling my ambition of having enough diverse material and at the same time being able to overcome the workload with the empirical data.

## **VI. Scope of informants**

The informants show differences within the following characteristics: gender and age, place of upbringing or birth (representing North/South/East/West) and work situations (employed/not employed).<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, almost all within the group have obtained a skilled education (including one student) and are employed (except two). Because the aim of this study is to obtain knowledge of the themes mentioned by a small group of people through qualitative interviews, the data does not aim at being representative of the general Greenlandic population, nor of the average Greenlander moving to Nuuk. This qualitative study is therefore not in any way quantifiable nor representative compared to quantitative surveys on the subject. Other groups which could have been alternative scopes in the selection (or interesting as future scopes of research) are foreigners in Nuuk, Danes, or Greenlanders who moved back to Greenland from living abroad. There are three informants belonging to this latter mentioned group, however, deemed relevant to the selection, as they still have a relatively recent experience of leaving their hometown.<sup>100</sup>

## **VII. Limitations**

Limitations in the selection method are e.g. that three interviewees did not move directly from their hometown to Nuuk, but had come to Nuuk from other places. Maliina (IP1), Jane (IP10) and Nina (IP12) had been away from their hometown for many years (8-19 years), and had moved to Nuuk from Denmark and Norway respectively. Interviewees showed reflection of the time distance and still maintained a connection to their hometown. This shows how a selection process this open is difficult to control.<sup>101</sup> Other limitations

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<sup>96</sup> Alternatives were Statistics Greenland, (but they could not hand out personal contacts), advertising in media in Nuuk, e.g. in the local newspaper or radio, but the offer I received exceeded the budget of this study.

<sup>97</sup> Kvale & Brinkmann, p. 130

<sup>98</sup> Malterud (2012), p. 801

<sup>99</sup> More information and a presentation of interviewees see Appendix 1 Information and presentation of interviewees

<sup>100</sup> Maliina (IP1), Jane (IP10) and Nina (IP12)

<sup>101</sup> Moreover, one interviewee was taken out of the study as she comes from Nuuk and thus, did not represent moving from another town to Nuuk.

are that the general public is limited to only the citizens who are on Facebook and does not include less digital citizens, including elderly people in particular.

Three of the interviewees in the study are people who I am familiar with. It has been considered, whether this was a limitation. Interviewees 5, 6 and 12 are people who come from the same town as where I grew up, and whom I know. My main concern about this has been that I did not want to “take advantage” of the confidence I was shown. Thus, I was conscious that interviewees should be thoroughly informed of the research purpose, asked the same questions, including challenging their views in the same way as the other interviewees. The interviewees thoughtfully provided me with the necessary knowledge for the research purpose, although they knew that I was familiar with some of the knowledge already. For all of the interviewees, I feel a deep gratitude and respect for their honesty and well-reflected answers to this complex and personal issue.

Another limitation is the translation process, as I have translated excerpts of interviews into English from Danish and Greenlandic. There might be some nuances lost in translation, so in order to provide transparency in translations, the original text has been included as an appendix.<sup>102</sup>

### **VIII. Interview method and language**

I have used the phenomenological interview method in approaching the topic of motivating factors of migration. Exploring the ‘life worlds’ of the interviewees’ own views and interpretations, I have concluded on findings from analyzing the meaning of themes and concepts.<sup>103</sup> The interviews have been semi-structured, and the interview guide has been formulated and used in a way that allows the interviewee to talk freely and reflect on their life stories in an open style. This method is chosen to motivate the interviewee to tell their story, to provide depth in the data and further the themes introduced by interviewees themselves.<sup>104</sup> The interviews have been recorded and later fully transcribed in order to conduct text analysis with the analysis strategy called ‘systematic text condensation’, including identifying categories and themes, meaning-condensation and coding.

The interviewees were informed of the purpose of the study and asked if they preferred speaking Danish or Greenlandic.<sup>105</sup> Yet, most interviews were conducted in a mix of both languages. The fact that nine out of twelve interviews are conducted in Danish shows that part of the group of interviewees belong to the bilingual group of Greenlanders. Yet, ethnicity did not determine the choice of language, as all interviewees are Greenlanders, defined as people born in Greenland and with at least one Greenlandic parent. The interviews mostly had a duo lingual aspect, as even in the Danish interviews there were times when the

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<sup>102</sup> See Appendix 7 Translated quotes in original language

<sup>103</sup> Kvale & Brinkmann (2009), p. 45

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 122

<sup>105</sup> See Appendix 2 Interview contact

interviewee (and the interviewer) shifted between Danish and Greenlandic. The three Greenlandic interviews ran fluently despite some repetitions because I wanted to make sure I understood correctly. Yet, the decision to interview in Greenlandic I argue has been the right one, in respect of the language preferred, and because those interviewees were much better at expressing themselves in Greenlandic. One of the interviewees who was interviewed in Greenlandic asked to see the transcript translated into Danish. Subsequently, the interviewee accepted the transcript with minor corrections.

## **IX. Transcription method**

Because the content analysis begins even in the transcription phase, this section contains some of the considerations involved in the transcription of the interviews.<sup>106</sup>

The interviews, lasting between 30 and 60 minutes, have been fully transcribed in order to facilitate the thematic analysis.<sup>107</sup> The chosen transcription method has been to maintain the original formulations in original language of the interviews before translating. I have translated the quotes used in analysis, as well as excerpts from interviews in displays (tables used in analysis). As some cultural nuances might get ‘lost in translation’, such as idioms in Greenlandic or Danish, I have deliberately chosen to replicate to maintain some of the originality within interviews. E.g., in Greenlandic *‘uummatera angerlarsimaffik’* means ‘home of my heart’. The expression is used by the first interview person Maliina, who expressed this about her hometown, and I chose to use the expression in the rest of interviews. Moreover, a transcription is never a direct rendition of the conversation or interview, as the written word is different to the spoken word. Yet, to include some nuances of the verbal communication and emotional aspect, pauses have been included in brackets of [pause] when there have been long pauses in the interviews, as well as outbursts of feelings such as [laughs] and [smiling] and [sigh]. Furthermore, repetitions of words are included as they convey meaning. Consideration has been given to whether the overlapping of sentences should be included as this shows social interaction between interviewer and interviewee. This has been solved practically by shifting lines and adding (...) when overlapping has occurred.

## **X. Ethical considerations**

Interviewees have all accepted the use of their full name in the interview survey. However, due to some sensitive and personal data in interviews, I have found it more correct to anonymize two interviews. These

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<sup>106</sup> Kvale & Brinkmann, p. 202

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 204

interviews contain personal stories which I deem socially damageable.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, the interview transcripts have not been attached in their full length.<sup>109</sup>

## **XI. Interview guide**

Interviewees were asked the simple question “why did you move to Nuuk?” as an opening question after practicalities such as name, age, years since arrival in Nuuk and information about the interview survey and their option of being anonymous.<sup>110</sup> I considered this the best strategy for having the interviewee talk freely about his or her experience and reasons for moving. The only disadvantage was that the interviewees often answered the question of his or her reasons for moving quite briefly, when asked in the beginning of the interview, while the purpose was to have them tell their story. Thus, I often repeated the question later on in the interview, which proved a good technique as they were often more open about telling their stories after some time and reflection. Furthermore, most interviews moved on in the end of the interview from the individual to the collective level when they were asked about the general development of Greenland with people moving to e.g. Nuuk from other towns. This was not to have them talk about other people but to get an insight into their opinions about the development, which was interesting data.

## **XII. Focus and structure**

An initial thematizing was deemed important to *thematize* the interview study and have a clear focus, as described by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). However, in the actual semi-structured interviews, the form was flexible and themes in the interview sessions were a collaborative effort between interviewer and interviewee. Moreover, due to preliminary analyses of interviews, some new themes were introduced during the data collection process, although the interview guide remained the same.

## **XIII. Data analysis method**

In analysis strategies, the nuances in procedures and terminology differ. Detailed descriptions of the procedure are needed to get an “intersubjective understanding of what happened to data during analysis”, as Malterud (2012) states.<sup>111</sup> Although any qualitative study explores the content and meaning of empirical data, a description is needed in order to provide a clear and transparent overview of research. One method is to add transparency to a qualitative research study by using *displays* to make the analysis process evident to the reader.<sup>112</sup> Dahler-Larsen (2002) refers to three “rules”, when he describes the method of producing data

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<sup>108</sup> Interview persons Ane (IP9) and Hans (IP3)

<sup>109</sup> The interviews have been transcribed in full length, and are available on request, yet with anonymization of the two sensitive interviews.

<sup>110</sup> See Appendix 3 for full Interview guide

<sup>111</sup> Malterud (2012), p. 803

<sup>112</sup> Brinkmann (2013), p. 148

through *display*.<sup>113</sup> These are the rule of authenticity, the rule of inclusivity and the rule of transparency. In short, within a display, the rule of authenticity signifies including original content from transcripts, the rule of inclusivity implies that all material is included, while the rule of transparency describes how the display has been elaborated. These rules are applied in the displays used in analysis.<sup>114</sup>

To benefit from the phenomenological interview method, an analysis strategy called “Systematic text condensation” has been applied. One of the advantages of this strategy is to decontextualize and afterwards recontextualize quotes (‘meaning units’) to avoid reproducing preconceptions. The strategy is built on the foundation of Glaser & Strauss’ Grounded theory, and uses tools such as coding, meaning units and preliminary categories.<sup>115</sup> A preliminary categorization has been conducted within the main research question of why people moved to Nuuk, and afterwards an analysis with remaining research questions has been conducted using the STC strategy and displays.<sup>116</sup>

According to this method, the procedure when analyzing qualitative data in an interview study can be organized in four steps: 1) Total impression – from chaos to themes; 2) Identifying and sorting meaning units – from themes to codes; 3) Condensation – from code to meaning; 4) Synthesizing – from condensation to descriptions and concepts.<sup>117</sup> The initial step in the process of analysis of a qualitative study is to establish an overview of the data. In this thesis, this step has been preceded with an initial categorization of the interviews after transcription, and afterwards a thorough process of steps 1-4 has been applied.

## 5. Qualitative interview study and analysis

### I. Preliminary categories: reasons for moving to Nuuk

The main reasons mentioned by the 12 interviewees for their moving I have identified as family and partners, job and education and social reasons.<sup>118</sup> The interviewees all elaborated on the theme of their reasons for moving to Nuuk, yet, some changed their reasons during the interview, while others stated the same reasons throughout the interview. Yet again, some provided more nuanced answers, while the main reasons remained the same.

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<sup>113</sup> Dahler-Larsen (2008), p. 37

<sup>114</sup> See examples of displays, Appendix 6

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 803

<sup>116</sup> Malterud (2012), p. 796

<sup>117</sup> Malterud (2012), p. 795

<sup>118</sup> In Appendix 6, an example of displays is provided of meaning units within ‘anonymity’.

Reasons for moving to Nuuk are categorized as:<sup>119</sup>

1. **Family concerns or partner getting a job in Nuuk:** (Maliina), (Markus), Bent, Else, Jane
2. **Job/education reasons:** Maliina, Markus, (Bent), Malena, (Else), Svend, Dorthea, Pipaluk, Nina
3. **Social reasons:** Hans, Ane

These categories are very broad and only provide a birds-eye view on the empirical data. Thus, in order to analyze personal stories as conceptualizations of urbanization, we need to further elaborate on the analysis, in order to dive deeper into the empirical data. An inductive analysis has been conducted using systematic text condensation as strategy, and the following sections are the product of this process.<sup>120</sup>

### Inductive analysis

Taking a step back from the preliminary categories above, I read through the 12 interview transcripts and identified preliminary themes.<sup>121</sup> The next step in the analysis process was to select meaning units (quotes), using coding as a tool select and analyze the content from data. Coding included gathering quotes or meaning units in the four chosen codes including subgroups (understood as underlying themes within data). The four codes used are described in the table below. The content within this thematic coding will be further elaborated on in the following four parts of analysis.<sup>122</sup>

### Definitions table

Code (theme)	Definition	Subgroups
1. <b>Family and social relations</b>	Understood as the motivations and considerations related to family or the experiences with social relations in Nuuk or in hometown	(Hometown, Nuuk,) family, partner, social norms, social differences, cultural differences, loneliness, anonymity, social problems
2. <b>Opportunities and personal development</b>	Especially job opportunities in Nuuk including lack of opportunities in hometown. Also personal advantages and disadvantages about Nuuk.	(Hometown, Nuuk,) job, education, personal development, (leisure) activities, anonymity and freedom
3. <b>Home and sense of belonging</b>	Often part of the considerations and relating to the consequences of the process of moving, as	(Hometown, Nuuk,) home/emotional connection or attachment, people, nature and

<sup>119</sup> See Appendix 1 for an overview of interviewees

<sup>120</sup> See Appendix 5 Phases of the work process with interviews

<sup>121</sup> Initially, I have identified 8 preliminary themes: 1. Social, 2. Political, 3. Opportunities and lack of opportunities, 4. Relation to hometown and Nuuk, 5. Economic (and job-related), 6. Environmental (and relation to nature and natural resources), 7. Urbanism (and experience with living in Nuuk), and 8. Personal (considerations and identity). These have developed into the four codes used for coding.

<sup>122</sup> The data selection has been conducted using the program NVivo 12, facilitating work with many pages of transcripts. The meaning units – or quotes – are afterwards viewed within their context, before moving on to further analysis, in order to ensure that the meaning is understood correctly and to not reproduce preconceptions.

	many of the interviewees miss their hometowns. Relation to nature and urban life as experienced with e.g. cars, people and whether this urban experience is in contrast to the natural environment	natural resources, environment, Nuuk new home?
<b>4. Political views on urbanization</b>	Political opinion about concentration in Nuuk and centralizing tendencies. Critical perspectives on development occurring in interviews, but also positive responses to the development. Sometimes related to their own urbanizing-process.	(Hometown, Nuuk,) urban challenges and consequences, development, depopulation, concentration, personal responsibility, Nuuk and the coast, diversity

**Reading guide to these following sections:** ‘I’ reads ‘interviewer’, while ‘IP’ reads ‘interview person’. The interview persons are referred to by number, in the following order: Maliina (IP1), Markus (IP2), Hans (IP3), Bent (IP4), Malena (IP5), Else (IP6), Svend (IP7), Dorthea (IP8), Ane (IP9), Jane (IP10), Pipaluk (IP11) and Nina (IP12). Furthermore, references to original quotes are included in Appendix 7 and ordered by number, thus, e.g. “Bent1” refers to quote nr. 1 in appendix.

### **Part 1. Family and social relations**

There are two overarching stories within ‘Family and social relations’: one of considerations of the family, and another of the individual motivations. Within this part of analysis, I have identified the main subgroups as family, partner, friends, social norms and differences, loneliness, anonymity and social problems. These subgroups refer to the underlying themes within the coding of transcripts, which have been assessed within their context.<sup>123</sup>

Within the first (family) category, the reasons for moving are e.g. that Nuuk is the new base of the family (IP1, 4 and to some extent 6), or because of the spouse’s job and wish to settle down in Nuuk (IP4, 6, 7 and 10). Thus, Maliina (IP1) mentions that she has been away from Greenland for eight years during her studies abroad, and in the meantime, her family moved their base from Sisimiut to Nuuk. This new family base in Nuuk is a motivation for her returning to Nuuk after finishing her studies abroad, and not Sisimiut, her original hometown. Maliina explains that both her parents and siblings are in Nuuk which made Nuuk more attractive than Sisimiut. Another determining factor Maliina mentions is that her husband is a real “*Nuummioq*”, which consequently made him to prefer Nuuk above Sisimiut.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Within a display, the meaning units/quotes from transcripts are selected and put in tables to provide an overview and transparency of some of the data within the code. Quotes in these following sections are taken from these displays. See Appendix 6 Example of displays.

<sup>124</sup> a *Nuummioq* = a person from Nuuk

Another example of the family being a dominant reason for moving to Nuuk is Bent (IP4), who gives two reasons. First, his children have become better at Danish than Greenlandic during their stay in Denmark. Bent mentions that Nuuk is more Danish-speaking, which is an advantage for their children because they have had problems with mainly speaking Danish while living in Paamiut. Bent himself is mainly Greenlandic speaking, but since they lived some years in Denmark, their children are better at Danish. Second, his wife is taking a master's degree in Denmark, which she will mainly be able to use in Nuuk where there are more jobs in the administration, as stated below.

“I: What thoughts did you have, what were your considerations, when you were to move to Nuuk one year ago?

IP: Well. My child - my children and my wife. They come first. My wife is right now taking her master's degree in Public health. So we did not think that there would be a job for her on the coast, only in Nuuk. These positions don't really show on the Coast.”<sup>125</sup>

When the family chose to move to Nuuk from Paamiut (although they are originally from Narsaq), Bent mentions that the connection to both Paamiut and Narsaq had decreased, which was also part of the reason for moving to Nuuk.

The primary reason why Else (IP6) and her husband moved is because the husband's job was closed down in their hometown.

“First and foremost, it is because of work, my husbands' ... in his case it was the company, they closed down in Qaqortoq. And then he got this job offer. And for my case, it was... [pause] That I also somehow wanted to try working with something different than working within economy. (...) I wanted to enter a bigger company, where there was a finance department, and where you could try some different things... and discuss with some colleagues and such. And I couldn't really see any opportunities in Qaqortoq.”<sup>126</sup>

The husband's job was first to be closed down two years before the move, but plans changed, and suddenly Else's husband was offered a new job in the company in Nuuk. Moreover, some of their friends started to move, which motivated them further. Else explains:

“I: To get back to your story, what considerations appeared then?

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<sup>125</sup> Appendix 7, IP4, Bent1

<sup>126</sup> IP6, Else2

IP: Then I started to... firstly I started to notice that a part of our social circle had disappeared, and there actually started to be a lack of people who we connected with socially.”<sup>127</sup>

Although she was very reluctant at the thought of moving at first, after two years, she and her husband decided to try. Else explains that she had begun upgrading her diploma so she was able to apply for other types of jobs:

“So somehow during these years, I have been preparing a bit for something which was going to happen. And then, well my husband got a job offer from his company, but here in Nuuk – and he went to the job interview and then he phoned home and said that he got the job... and then I just said: Oh no... [laughs] I just thought, oh no, you are kidding me. But... but we did it nevertheless. And then in the first place, we thought okay, we are going to Nuuk, and we try to be here for a while, and we keep our house, but... so we can always come back, if it goes all wrong.”<sup>128</sup>

Apart from Bent (IP4) and Else (IP6), the other interviewee emphasizing family and the partner’s job as determining factors is Jane (IP10). Jane moved to Nuuk from Norway, where the family lived until two years ago. Originally, she did not want to move:

“I: And what about you, was it also something that pulled you to come back to Nuuk, or return...

IP: No... not at that time, I was done trying to push coming back to Nuuk or Greenland in general. I have been pushing it already for some years, where I did not really get confirmed that, yes we can do that for some years or something. So, I was done, so I said, if you want to move, just move, because I am staying here in Norway, because what should I be doing in Nuuk? So...”<sup>129</sup>

Yet, as her husband really wanted to go to Nuuk and got a job there, she was finally convinced. The experience turned out to be generally a good one, as much of her family living in Nuuk were very happy with the decision and Jane also got a job in Nuuk.

The second over-all category in this code includes individual motivations. Within this category, interviewees mention moving to Nuuk because of loneliness or social problems in hometowns (IP3 and 9), or by a pull factor of their social circle (to some extent IP6, 11 and 12). Hans (IP3) moved to Nuuk after he got lonely living in Paamiut after quitting drinking and smoking hash.

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<sup>127</sup> IP6, Else3

<sup>128</sup> IP6, Else4

<sup>129</sup> IP10, Jane1

I: Yes, maybe if you can tell me about when you moved to Nuuk. I mean, why did you move to Nuuk?

IP: The development of Paamiut as a town had stopped by the time I left it. And then I also felt lonely. I did not drink or smoke hash any longer after I has been on rehab, I went to rehab in 2007. And then after I had been to rehab, I started getting some enemies.”<sup>130</sup>

In Nuuk, he has experienced hard times, e.g. being homeless for six days.

“IP: (...) The way of life in Nuuk is tough now. If you are not aware and you go down this way of abuse, people are capable of anything with no excuses. That is why I rarely go out at night. I myself play music and have always been interested in music. And then sometimes to play music together I invite people to come and play music. It is these opportunities I can see in Nuuk.”<sup>131</sup>

In Nuuk, he has found a community of music-lovers like himself, and he is no longer lonely as he expresses in this quote:

I: So here you are no longer lonely? You said you were sometimes feeling lonely in Paamiut, and is that different here?

IP: Here it is different, I mean, I meet new people every day like that. People I know sometimes stop by, and the phone rings. And I have someone to talk to in the town.”<sup>132</sup>

Ane (IP9) mentions several reasons why she moved to Nuuk from the East Coast. The initial reason she came to Nuuk was to participate in her cousin’s confirmation. Yet, the reason she stayed was that she did not want to return, as she did not like being in Tasiilaq at that time. Thus, part of Ane’s choice relates to the opportunities Nuuk had to offer, but also to social problems, which the following quote shows:

“IP: (...) I love living here in Nuuk. Because we have two children, and there are many opportunities, like swimming pool and our boys play football twice a week. And all the cafes and cinema, all the many opportunities we have here in Nuuk, which we can’t get in Tasiilaq. That... these.

I: But that was not the reason you moved, there were some other things?

IP: [Pause] I was abused... when I was 18-19 years old.

I: So, you could escape from that.

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<sup>130</sup> Appendix 7, IP3, Hans1

<sup>131</sup> IP3, Hans2

<sup>132</sup> IP3, Hans2

IP: Yes, I cannot see myself living in Tasiilaq in the years to come. Or... I travel to Tasiilaq every year, sometimes together with one of my boys or both, sometimes all four of us. (...)<sup>133</sup>

Later in the interview, Ane mentions she is concerned about having her children grow up in Tasiilaq, as there are so many suicides.<sup>134</sup> Ane explains there are no opportunities for young people, and many social problems related to abuse, suicides and alcohol. These social problems and lack of opportunities together represent push factors for Ane. The pull factors are the opportunities in Nuuk, most importantly that she got psychological treatment in Nuuk, which helped her.

Markus, Malena, Dorthea, Pipaluk and Nina mention job-related factors above social factors for moving to Nuuk. All five interviewees express that their reason for moving was job or education. Yet, social aspects and considerations are also appearing in their responses. E.g. Malena mentions she came to Nuuk because of a job, but she also points at anonymity as something she was missing from Denmark, and has found once again in Nuuk. To some interviewees, living in Nuuk is somehow a dilemma. Thus, Dorthea (IP8) and Pipaluk (IP11) both came to Nuuk to get an education, but both would like to return to their hometowns. Dorthea came to Nuuk seven years ago to become educated as a journalist, and is now working in her dream job in the national broadcasting corporation, KNR. However, since most of her family still live in her hometown Sisimiut, she is often homesick.

“I: But in relation to that you say about having some – these professional interests... is it kind of a dilemma?”

IP: Yes, very much a dilemma...

I: ... that you can't have both.

IP: Yes... that is why, I think a lot about Sisimiut, and that I love what I do in KNR, but I still feel I want to be more together with my family. But I can't get it all...<sup>135</sup>

Pipaluk is very attached to her hometown Uummannaq, but has lived in Nuuk for three years while studying to become a school teacher. During her studies, she has been back in her hometown (recently as an intern), as she often feels homesick. She has deliberately chosen subjects which she will be able to use when she returns home. She feels both a cultural and a social connection to her hometown and the way of life which she describes as more “traditional”. She describes in the following quote what she does not like about life in Nuuk:

“I: (...) so can you tell a bit more about why you don't want to live in Nuuk? [laughs] I mean...”

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<sup>133</sup> IP9, Ane1

<sup>134</sup> The TV-documentary “Byen hvor børn forsvinder”, DR2, 06-05-2019 has recently shown the difficult condition some people in Tasiilaq live in.

<sup>135</sup> Appendix 7, IP8, Dorthea1

I: Nuuk is too big, it is too big, it is mini-Copenhagen. People don't have time for each other in the same way, I think. And it... you need to prioritize much more here in Nuuk, I feel. And you put the things you need to do more into schemes, whereas in Uummannaq... everyone has more time. I don't know, I like that. And it is not so far if you need to go to them, or... It is not as time-consuming as in Nuuk, the day just flies by quickly. But I have always known, since 2013 I think, that Nuuk is not for me."<sup>136</sup>

She adds she is more careful with who she gets close to, as she finds people in Nuuk more superficial. Pipaluk's dislike of the urban way of life and comparison between her hometown and Nuuk creates a social push-factor. The pull is towards her hometown, where she plans to move back after ending her studies. Many interviewees (IP2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12) mention socially related aspects in Nuuk that they dislike, both in terms of stress (IP7, 10, 11) and a hectic way of life (IP7 and 10). Also, the cultural difference of making appointments before visiting people is something both Bent (IP4) and Jane (IP10) mention as a feature of social life in Nuuk. They miss the more casual and less committing social forms, which they are used to in their hometown. Bent says:

“IP: Yes, all my friends are busy. Each of them is busy with their work, right. With their family. So, they are tired, right, and if they are tired, they don't feel like getting visits. But in the smaller towns people are not as tired. Or, they might be tired, but the busy life is not that strong out on the coast, compared to here. [Laughs] So...

I: And there are not that long distances in the smaller towns...

IP: Yes, precisely. And also, you see most people in the course of the day, so you in the smaller towns you can see how people are feeling, right. We can already see it during the day, when we see them. So, we can see if they want to have a visit or if they look tired, but here we don't see each other all day."<sup>137</sup>

Jane misses the social norm in small towns, where you can always knock on the next door, if you visit someone unexpectedly and the person is not at home. She prefers to not have to make appointments, like it is in Nuuk.

“I: But why is that cozy, or why is it a good thing to have it like that?

IP: Because I think it gives you something, it does not give you any commitments. If I have to agree on beforehand that there will be breakfast for me tomorrow morning at nine. What if I happened to sleep in late? Do I then have to feel bad because I don't really feel like it."<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> IP11, Pipaluk1

<sup>137</sup> IP4, Bent2

<sup>138</sup> IP10, Jane2

Part of this social norm, according to Jane, is a feature of busy life and also linked with consumerism habits in Nuuk's urban life.

"I: But why do you think people are pressed at work here in Nuuk?

IP: Well, that is how life has become, you can't call anyone without them saying, and then they say 'we are busy' ... 'Busy with what?' 'We are going to the store'. And then you say 'Why are you going to the store?' and then they say, 'Well, we forgot', or 'We haven't shopped yet'. Before, it was like that you could just shop once a week, or once a month. Now it is like, the stores are open from morning until evening, and then they can shop every single night, or every single day."<sup>139</sup>

Many interviewees describe Nuuk as where there are many people they don't know, in contrast to the small-town social life where there are familiar faces and people greet each other. When they describe anonymity, e.g. Bent, Markus, Else and Nina emphasize the many people in Nuuk (who they don't know) and the fact that people look down into the ground, stating differences in interactions in smaller towns compared to Nuuk.<sup>140</sup> Nina expresses this as an urban feature she knows from Denmark:

"I: This thing about, looking up to see who is coming, is it something which you think, like, when it is something that people don't do in Nuuk, is it because you adapt to the others, or is it because you have realized that you don't recognize anyone?

IP: You know, I think I have done it, because I have realized that I don't necessarily know any of the people who are walking by. Like in Denmark, you are used to, if you are walking down "Strøget" (the main street) then the chance is very little that you meet someone you know. It is a bit the same here."<sup>141</sup>

Indeed, many of these statements represent rather negative experiences of living in Nuuk. However, it is important to mention that this is not the whole story. It will become clear that the urban experiences are generally good for most interviewees in the next 'opportunities' code, and as for this one, a few contrasting examples will be provided showing the adaptation to urban life which some interviewees seem to go through. Thus, Else does mention negative experiences of living in Nuuk, i.e. the time spent on transportation by bus, the busy life in the city and the anonymity. Yet, she also mentions that she has gotten used to the new life and is in the process of adaptation. Many of the other interviewees mention positive social aspects such as more of their family living in Nuuk, a more culturally mixed population, and more individual freedom, as there is more to do in Nuuk (which will be further elaborated on within 'anonymity' in part 2).

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<sup>139</sup> IP10, Jane3

<sup>140</sup> See Appendix 6 Example of displays, code 1, 'anonymity'.

<sup>141</sup> Appendix 7, IP12, Nina2

Also, both Maliina and Jane show a contrast to the general view on Nuuk as a place where you can be anonymous. Jane has lived in Norway in a small community but her job was quite far away, so she experienced it as anonymity, whereas in Nuuk, she says she is more often confronted with her work in her daily life. At least she explains that was part of her reluctance to move back to Greenland.

“I: ... or was it actually what you liked about Norway that you were a bit further away from...

IP: Yes, that was what I liked about Norway. I could be by myself very much; I could go shopping together with my family without being recognized by... anybody. Or my work-related things, for instance.”<sup>142</sup>

Probably because Maliina is the one among interviewees who has lived the most urban places outside of Greenland, she experiences Nuuk as less anonymous compared to other places in the world.

“IP: I just think it is cozy. Here in Nuuk, or in Sisimiut for instance. When you are shopping for dinner, in Pisiffik or in Brugsen, you meet like ten thousand acquaintances you just say hi and how are you doing, what has happened... I love it. I also think, I have missed it in all the years I have been away. I have missed a lot just being able to speak Greenlandic, when I lived in Canada, and Ecuador and USA. So, I really think it is nice. Yes, you cannot walk out a door and be anonymous, but it is not something that bothers me, on the contrary.”<sup>143</sup>

Thus, while other interviewees compare their experience with the hometown and experience anonymity in Nuuk, Maliina does not share the experience of being anonymous.

All in all, many of the interviewees' stories convey a story which resonates something like: 'it was not really meant to happen that I ended up in to Nuuk, but since I am now here and my family is well, we plan on staying for now.' Other interviewees mention motivating social factors including family living in Nuuk, welfare services, and personal freedom. Moreover, none of the interviewees say they regret moving to Nuuk. Some say that they consider moving back to their hometown in the future (IP6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12). Especially Svend, Dorteia and Pipaluk (IP7, 8 and 11) are convinced of someday returning home, yet with some circumstances still to change except for Pipaluk, who is very keen on returning home after finishing her education. The social aspect of the motivations for moving to Nuuk among interviewees is clearly a pattern, although woven into family, partners, social problems and an individual freedom and anonymity, which we will return to in the following code. In the following sections, I will go into further detail about the aspects of moving to Nuuk including opportunities, belonging and political views on urbanization.

## **Part 2. Opportunities and personal development**

Within the code of 'Opportunities and personal development', identified subgroups include job, education, personal development, activities, anonymity, freedom and welfare services. Within job and education, in the

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<sup>142</sup> IP10, Jane4

<sup>143</sup> Appendix 7, IP1, Maliina1

case of Markus, the main motivation for going to Nuuk was that his job was closed down in Narsaq. Markus says his decision of moving included: “The will to try something new. And to challenge yourself.” When his job was centralized, he decided to seek new opportunities in Nuuk. Here, he emphasizes both personal development and family:

“I: How did you experience moving to Nuuk?

IP: It was exciting, it was a bigger town with more things to do. And as I have children, it was also more suitable for them. These were the main reasons. My children’s future and my own future. And the working experience.”<sup>144</sup>

Markus’ experience is shared by several interviewees. More things to do (compared to their hometown) and the job and education opportunities are mentioned by 9 out of 12 interviewees as the main reasons of why they chose to move to Nuuk. Especially interviewees Maliina, Markus, Malena, Svend, Dorthea, Pipaluk and Nina mention a better future for their children and the personal development as reasons.

The participants emphasize the higher activity level and general opportunities in Nuuk in terms of leisure activities within sports, culture and music. The motivation within this subgroup of ‘activities’ is often expressed in comparison to the hometown, where it is lacking. Both Malena (IP5) and Nina (IP12) mention generally more things going on in Nuuk. Malena had wanted to move back to her hometown during her time studying in Denmark. Seven years later, when she returned home after finishing her education, she experienced the hometown empty and dead.

“I: So, in a way has there been a change in your... character, or your needs in relation to where you live, or what do you think?

IP: [Pause] Before I moved to Denmark, I thought something was happening all the time. All the time, in Qaqortoq. But when I came back from Denmark to Qaqortoq, it had just become, dead. Maybe it is just me... and then when I came to Nuuk, then it started to live up again. Yeah...”<sup>145</sup>

Thus, for Malena the lack of activity and opportunities in the hometown is a push factor. Nina says about opportunities in Nuuk:

“Nuuk is a... big city in a Greenlandic perspective, you might say. And it has all these big city opportunities, which many other towns don’t have, you know cafés and public swimming pool and... cinema and shopping mall. Not because I necessarily use them, but there is something

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<sup>144</sup> IP2, Markus1

<sup>145</sup> IP5, Malena1

about the fact that I know they are there which just makes you feel sort of comfortable, in a way.”<sup>146</sup>

Nina furthermore mentions that the educational, professional and sports level is higher in Nuuk. She points at the big companies that are in Nuuk as a reason why there are more highly educated people in Nuuk.

Anonymity is a recurrent theme in interviews. Yet, there are also interviewees who mention anonymity as a positive factor. While individual freedom makes for busy friends, Markus, Bent and Malena experience the anonymity in Nuuk as a positive thing as well and an opportunity for personal development. E.g., Bent says that the Greenlandic culture in smaller towns tend to overdo spontaneous visits in people’s homes. In Bent’s words, the different social code in Nuuk is a relief because it gives people more personal freedom. As they have more things to do, they have an excuse for not having visits all the time.

For Markus, the advantage of anonymity is that he can “look the way he likes”, resulting in almost a physical liberation. For Malena too, part of the reason she moved was because she longed for the anonymity of the city, which she had gotten used to in Denmark:

“IP: (...) Also because, maybe because I was missing some anonymity.

I: Do you find that in Nuuk? Is it a place where you can be a bit more like, anonymous?

IP: Yes, it feels a bit like being in Denmark. Just with the fact that you can speak Greenlandic to everybody... but still be anonymous.”<sup>147</sup>

The mentioned motivations can be summed up in one factor which got them to move to Nuuk:

“opportunities”. Markus expresses why he thinks Greenlanders in general move: “Because of opportunities, to seek individual opportunities, that is a big part of it. It is also possible that they feel that they are trying to create their own opportunities. Today, where we can get money and opportunities is where we are going. That is what drives us now.”<sup>148</sup>

Yet, the answers to what exactly these opportunities stand for are very diverse, apart from jobs and education. They include “more things going on”, more leisure activities, as well as personal development, and anonymity. In my interpretation, these very diverse and sometimes indistinct descriptions of why the interviewee moved, are a general characteristic of the migration. Not to imply that every choice and moving is not taken by the individual considerations, but the mere fact that there is development and more people moving to Nuuk seems to create a pull effect.

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<sup>146</sup> IP12, Nina3

<sup>147</sup> IP5, Malena2

<sup>148</sup> IP2, Markus

### Part 3. Home and sense of belonging

In this part of analysis, the relevance of home is analyzed because it conveys an impression of the personal cost which some of the interviewees seem to have accepted (or are in the process of accepting), after having moved to Nuuk. It is relevant to further explore the ‘other side of the coin’ – where the interviewees have come from, and what their connection is to the hometown, to explore some of the nuances in their motivations for moving to Nuuk. Also, the permanency of the choice of migration is explored, whether people feel they have settled in Nuuk, and their thoughts about the future. The identified subgroups in the code are home, nature and environment, and identity and culture.<sup>149</sup>

What is home? Is home the place you live, including your workplace? Is it a person, a house, a town, a landscape, a country, or even Earth? *Home* is a multifaceted concept, yet home besides being a physical location, also refers to an emotional phenomenon. Implying a feeling of connectedness, the natural environment dominates in responses when interviewees talk about home. However, it is also expressed as where they *feel at home*, and where they no longer feel at home, and it reveals both what connection they have with their hometown, and whether they regard Nuuk as a new *home*. These are important notions as they give us an idea of the permanency of the choice of living in Nuuk. And how the transition has been from their hometown to Nuuk – what “pushed” them to move away, or what “pulled” them to move to Nuuk? It seems that many of the interviewees moving to Nuuk is not an irrevocable decision. It is where they are now, but most interviewees have very vague ideas about their future.

In the analysis of the interviewees’ descriptions of home, it is interesting to notice that interviewees do not simply relocate. Some interviewees identify home as where they were living before. Thus, both Maliina, Else, Dorthea, Ane and Pipaluk still consider their hometown as home. As for Maliina, Malena, Else, Dorthea, Ane, Jane and Nina, they (also) call Nuuk their new home. Whereas for Hans, Bent, Svend and Markus, they say they do not feel at home in Nuuk (yet), but they consider *Greenland* as home. Thus, for some, home is considered more than one place, often expressed with emphasis on ‘home in hometown’ or in ‘Greenland’ over ‘home in Nuuk’. E.g. Else says:

“I: Yes. Where is home to you now then? Can you kind of point it out?”

IP: Yes, it is here, of course, because... you know my family is here, and our house, and we are living here now. But... but I would still say “home to Qaqortoq” (...)<sup>150</sup>

Markus and Bent have felt very welcomed by their job. The same goes for Svend, although he finds living in Nuuk “very hectic”.

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<sup>149</sup> For an example on display within this code, see Appendix 6 Displays.

<sup>150</sup> Appendix 7, IP6, Else1

Overall, interviewees like living in Nuuk, but here again are nuances. E.g. Hans is content with living in Nuuk to some extent, but his first experience of Nuuk was homelessness, which he refers to as a big problem with long waiting lists to get accommodation. As mentioned, 4 out of 12 interviewees do refer explicitly to Nuuk as their new home (Maliina, Else, Ane and Jane). Whereas Markus, Hans, Bent and Nina do not have the same connection to their hometown as they used to have, and mention this as a reason they no longer consider it their home. Thus, to many the hometown is no longer considered as home, as Markus says:

“IP: (...) But when we had been on holiday and I was in Narsaq, I was no longer homesick.

I: Why was that?

IP: All my friends were gone, they had also moved to other places. The town was getting emptied. The blocks had been closed. Construction had stopped. People were gone. That is how it felt. So, because of that I am no longer homesick. Nuuk is nice. [laughing]”<sup>151</sup>

Markus also emphasizes that his parents had moved to Nuuk a couple of years ago, and likewise with Nina. This connection between family and home also counts for Bent, who says that home is where his wife is.

“IP: The home of my heart has for many years been Narsaq. But... in the past years the home of my heart, I... my wife. Then [pause] being in Greenland.”<sup>152</sup>

Bent says he still finds himself in a waiting-position until his wife returns from the stay in Denmark, however their plan is to grow old in Nuuk.

Regarding the permanency of the move to Nuuk, some interviewees have bought a house and plan on staying, and others have not and seem the ones living in Nuuk less permanently. In the least permanent end, Svend and his wife have chosen to rent out their house in Qaqortoq, in case they want to return. For Else, this was also part of their considerations, but they sold their house and bought a new one, because houses are expensive in Nuuk. Ane says they plan to stay for the next ten years, because they just bought a new house. As for the future plans, two interviewees are rather determined to grow old in Nuuk (Maliina and Bent). As for the rest of interviewees, the common pattern is that answers are, naturally, vague, and convey a flexibility. Some interviewees simply do not know, whereas a couple of interviewees say that they do not imagine staying in Nuuk for the rest of their lives. Some again have other dreams, e.g. Jane says:

“I: What do you think about the future, if it was up to you and your considerations about family... would you then stay in Nuuk, or would you live another place – in the future?

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<sup>151</sup> IP2, Markus3

<sup>152</sup> IP2, Bent3

IP: I... no... it is difficult. I don't mind moving away from here. It is... I would like to go faaar away. I would like to go to Aasiaat, but then I will have to do it by myself."<sup>153</sup>

When asked what would have to be changed if they were to move back to their hometowns, interviewees mention e.g. improved infrastructure (Maliina, Else, Nina and Malena), an interesting job (Dorthea, Nina and Malena), more development (Bent, Else, Malena, Ane and Nina), and more family in hometown (Hans, Nina, and Bent). But still, these "wishes" expressed in interviews are not guarantees that they would move back. Maybe with Dorthea as one exception, saying:

"I: (...) what would make you consider moving back to Sisimiut?

IP: A good work place. If I got a job which was really good, which can be part of a development, and also for me, then I would very much like to move to Sisimiut. Without doubt. [Pause] And then if KNR (Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation) say, we are going to have a KNR in Sisimiut, you shall stay in Sisimiut, then I would say yes, please. Like we have in Qaqortoq, and in Ilulissat."<sup>154</sup>

## **Nature**

Many interviewees express a strong connection to the hometown, with nature playing a major role. Hans says:

"I: (...) the connection, do you still have a connection to Ammassivik, like the feeling or?

IP: Sometimes, some days it shows. Like, maybe nature primarily. Then like, in springtime we would travel west, so when spring was coming, we would prepare to go to get food, all kinds of. It is still in there sometimes."<sup>155</sup>

Nature is what is left to miss, when both friends, family and jobs are gone. This is expressed by Markus, saying nature and Narsaq as a town are the only things he misses. Else expresses the same:

"IP: (...) So I don't know really know what should pull, the only thing I really miss a lot from down there, it is maybe my house and then... the summer, and that the climate is a bit different down there. [pause]"<sup>156</sup>

Dorthea also expresses the connection between home and use of natural surroundings:

"I: When you think about Sisimiut, what kind of feelings do you have?

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<sup>153</sup> IP10, Jane5

<sup>154</sup> IP8, Dorthea2

<sup>155</sup> IP3, Hans3

<sup>156</sup> IP6, Else5

IP: Home. My home, so holiday place now... because I go there to relax in my hometown, where we go boating in nature. We mostly go by boat in nature and just relax.”<sup>157</sup>

As for Nina, she attaches her own identity to the place she was born and knows the surroundings:

“I know the bays and the fiords in South Greenland and around Qaqortoq, I don’t know them here. I don’t know, but these things make a difference when considering whether I think you are a *Nuummioq* or a *Qaqortormioq*, or whatever you are.”<sup>158</sup> And I speak South Greenlandic, and you don’t do that here. I don’t think I will ever consider myself a *Nuummioq*.”<sup>159</sup>

The dominant aspects of the topic of nature are related to seasonal change, food resources and weather. Else feels the difference in seasons, where she describes the difference between Nuuk in North and South Greenland:

“I: Mh... are you homesick?

IP: In the beginning I did not think I was at all. Now I am a little in summertime, especially when I feel spring is coming down there, and here we still go around in snow and... there is not the same spring and fall in Nuuk, as there is in South Greenland. So here it feels like it goes directly from summer to winter in one day [laughs] and we sail a lot and these things, so we are used to the season being... a lot longer down there, or it feels longer.”<sup>160</sup>

Pipaluk mentions she gets very affected by weather conditions, and she describes weather as usually bad in Nuuk. Therefore, it is part of her homesickness.

“I: What do you also like about Uummanaq?

IP: The ice. If there is one thing, I am most homesick about it is waking up and seeing the sea, frozen.”<sup>161</sup>

Surprisingly, most interviewees do not feel they are further away from nature when in Nuuk, compared to living their hometowns.

“I: If you were to compare again Nuuk-Sisimiut, do you then use nature more or less in Nuuk, are there any differences?

IP: No, I don’t think so, not if you ask me, I don’t think so. If you ask me, then no. Nature is right in the backyard, no matter where you are.”<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> IP8, Dorthea3

<sup>158</sup> a *Nuummioq* = a person from Nuuk, a *Qaqortormioq* = a person from Qaqortoq

<sup>159</sup> IP12, Nina4

<sup>160</sup> IP6, Else6

<sup>161</sup> IP11, Pipaluk2

<sup>162</sup> Appendix 7, IP1, Maliina2

Else shares the view that there is no real difference, but their use of nature is a bit different:

I: What about, you know, the use of nature and these things, is there a difference when you live in Qaqortoq or South Greenland and then up here in Nuuk?

IP: [Thinks] No actually not, I would say we sail just as much, but we may do some other things. Here you can go hunting for reindeer a bit easier for instance, right? There is a bit... you have to go a bit further to get away from the town, or get out in the real remote areas.”<sup>163</sup>

Pipaluk states more or less the same view:

I: Are there some differences in the relation to nature, you know in Uummannaq compared to Nuuk, how you feel about nature?

IP: For me I would say, well of course the backyard, nature it is much closer in Uummannaq than it is here. But that is only because there are so many houses. It is equally accessible here, as it is in Uummannaq, but it is probably mostly the thing about going dog-sledding that influences me.”<sup>164</sup>

Interviewees regard nature as where you go to reload energy. They have different approaches, however, to how well urban life and nature go together. Maliina finds renewed energy in nature, and it was part of their decision to return to Greenland from Denmark:

I: Is it something you use a lot, do you use nature a lot – you mentioned you have a boat – what does nature mean to you as city-Nuummiut?

IP: Peace. Honestly it is the place where you retrieve renewed energy, it is food. That is also important for us that we have food in the freezer, right. So.

(...)

I: Was it also part of the reasons to move back to Nuuk, or move back to Greenland?

IP: Mhh. Move to Greenland, yes.”<sup>165</sup>

Yet, Pipaluk mentions she does not use nature as much in Nuuk. Jane, too, does not seem to find the time in Nuuk to use nature as much as she wants or needs:

IP: (...) Because there is so many stimuli here that you almost don't have free time for yourself, unless you are very steadfast and say, we are going skiing, we have to go out in nature. And rather not that big city life, you know. It... then I think you can be more relaxed and... be yourself. But because there is so much – there is cinema, there are cafes, and there are... it gives much less time to family in general, or to oneself.”<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> IP6, Else7

<sup>164</sup> IP11, Pipaluk3

<sup>165</sup> IP1, Maliina3

<sup>166</sup> IP10, Jane6

As a contrast, Bent uses nature a lot and mentions it is an advantage that Nuuk is less isolated:

“I: You like those. So, what about here in Nuuk, what do you like?

IP: Here in Nuuk I like [laughs] that there are so many fish just here outside. [Laughs] Then I can fish at least. You don’t have to go far to catch them. So that is a good weekend coziness for me to just go by boat, because the fiord is so big here. Although there are many boaters, then there is quite good opportunity to be alone in an area. But at the same time, it gives more comfort, because there are so many boaters, so if you are new then you can just call somebody. Yes, a feeling of security. It is also about, for instance in Paamiut, it is more isolated, so there are not so many people boating.”<sup>167</sup>

Summing up, nature is clearly a need for all of the interviewees.<sup>168</sup> I interpret these responses as yes, the connection to nature is a bit different in Nuuk, but overall it does not determine whether they stay in Nuuk or not. This is because most do not feel farther away from nature, although they live in a bigger town. Maybe with Pipaluk as one exception, because she *does* consider her connectedness to her hometown, including nature and weather, a motivation for her to move back as soon as she finishes her studies. Interviewees still have a connection to nature, although it might be a bit farther away. However, this does not change the fact that many of the interviewees feel homesick for the exact natural setting of their hometown. On the other hand, e.g. Else and Bent show they have adapted to a new setting with other ways of using nature.

### **Identity and culture**

In relation to the identity and cultural aspects, there are many descriptions of the differences between the more traditional Greenland in smaller towns and the modern lifestyle in Nuuk. Thus, both related to language and identity, interviewees describe Nuuk as different from the “real Greenland”. Nina says:

“I: But why would you still like it that there are some people living in the rest of Greenland?

IP: Because I don’t think Nuuk is... it is like, if there are tourists coming here, then everybody tells them, Nuuk is not the real Greenland. The real Greenland is out on the coast, and I pretty much agree, although, it is actually... You know, the ones who come from the coast are living here in Nuuk, or many of them do, right. But I still think that because out on the coast there are these smaller communities, everyone knows everyone, and there is a bit more... *kalak*<sup>169</sup> about it out there, like. You are also a bit more indifferent, and such, I think. And it is just a

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<sup>167</sup> IP4, Bent4

<sup>168</sup> All interviewees, except for Malena (IP5) mention connectedness to nature in interviews.

<sup>169</sup> A both derogatory and well-intentioned term for “Greenlander”.

charm which is no longer here in Nuuk anymore, because Nuuk has become such a... metropole. So therefore, I think it is a pity if you gather everyone in one place, in a way.”<sup>170</sup>

That society is different and, in a way, less “traditional” Greenlandic (and more Danish) is repeated by many interviewees. Thus, especially for Hans, Ane and Pipaluk, it is important for them to maintain their traditional Greenlandic identity. Hans describes the urban culture in Nuuk including alcohol consumption and partying as opposed to non-alcoholic parties with music. Pipaluk experienced a culture shock in Nuuk, which she mended by exploring her own culture.

“IP: I had my culture shock here in Nuuk, then I went home and had sort of an identity confusion. Am I a Dane, or am I a Faroese or a Greenlander? It was very confusing, so I chose to take... to learn drum singing, how it would feel, how I would feel it. It was very strong, and I had a very strong connection to it, and how to say, I was just hungry to learn more.

(...)

I: What did it give you then, you said you had an identity crisis, did it give you something then?

IP: Well, it did, I felt I knew better... I had better knowledge about my background as Inuit, *Kalaaleq*.<sup>171</sup> A better foundation, also... and just, wanted to know more. It is this that got activated, I think, before I was like a bit indifferent. More Danish, if I can say it like that. I didn’t learn to speak Greenlandic until high school. Really. It is a bit late to learn... I couldn’t write or read, but now it is all right.”<sup>172</sup>

Moreover, Ane attaches identity to her East Greenlandic language and culture:

“IP: (...) And then our boys they have learned to listen, and they understand when I speak East Greenlandic to them, and sometimes they answer, like... East Greenlandic. And it is just, *uuh*... [smiles and laughs].

I: Is it important to you that they learn something?

IP: Yes.

I: Why is that?

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<sup>170</sup> IP12, Nina5

<sup>171</sup> Greenlander

<sup>172</sup> IP11, Pipaluk4

IP: Because I want to keep my identity. Because I am an East Greenlander, and I want them to learn and know about East Greenland, or Tasiilaq. For me the mother's tongue means a lot, and I am proud to be an East Greenlander."<sup>173</sup>

Although some interviewees have experienced culture shock, interviewees have kept their identity, and some have taken the urban lifestyle upon them. E.g. Malena and Nina deliberately chose Nuuk because of the urban lifestyle, and Malena describes herself as "probably a big city person". Despite this, Nina has clearly taken her "small-town"-identity upon her, and wears it with pride.

"I: So that has also been one of the reasons you chose to move to Nuuk that you could feel that it would be a good life?

IP: Yes, I believe so. And also, I am often told, oohh you are just so... *Qaqortormiutter*, you are so villager-ish. In a way I think... and I don't know why, but I just see it as a huge strength, because the big-city mentality can also just be so narrowminded sometimes, and then where we are from, you are a bit more 'oh okay'-ish, I don't even know how to explain, just like 'all right, just do that', 'people don't mind anyway'."<sup>174</sup>

Thus, identity and culture are important aspects which the interviewees want to safeguard, as they are aware that Nuuk is different from the rest of Greenland. Yet, it is only Pipaluk who explicitly mentions this as a reason she is planning on leaving Nuuk, because it does not offer the traditional way of life she prefers.

#### **Part 4. Political views on urbanization**

The aim of conceptualizing urbanization in the everyday experiences of people in Greenland includes a political view. The data from this code represent fewer descriptions of urbanization as experienced personally and more generalized statements. Yet, there are interesting perspectives on how interviewees regard development in their country.

#### **Consequences of urban life**

In these interviews it is apparent that some consequences of urbanization are negative, while others are positive. As already mentioned, some interviewees have a positive view of anonymity, whereas others find it a negative feature of the city. Negative aspects of urban life include more cars, more time spent on transportation, more bars and partying, homelessness, a high price level, stimuli and a busy life. As an example of the busy life in Nuuk, Dorthea explains why she has considered becoming a stay-at-home mother to have more time with her children.

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<sup>173</sup> IP9, Ane2

<sup>174</sup> IP12, Nina8

“Because... my husband and I, we both work together in KNR, he is a film- and TV production technician and I am a journalist. So we are very busy, and we come home in the evening. So, it is not healthy for all of us, with all... how to say... We are away from each other more hours each day, together maybe two to three hours a day, it is not so nice. So, the perfect life would be to be closer in the family instead of contributing to society. That is what I am missing.”<sup>175</sup>

Dorthea is not the only interviewee who mentions the busy life as an urban feature. On the other hand, as mentioned, many interviewees refer to generally more things going on as a positive feature. To some (Malena and Nina) it is even a main motivation for moving to Nuuk. Also, interviewees show a general ability to adapt to the less positive features of urban life. E.g. Else mentions the busy afternoon-shopping as something she can just avoid:

I: Do you think you will adapt to it - that it is like that to live in Nuuk compared to living in Qaqortoq?

IP: Well, I think I have already adapted to it, because... it is like, not something I can change, I can just [pause] I can just choose to not shop at four in the afternoon, right... I will have to adapt right? And with time, of course you get to know more people here, but you notice a lot that there is a bigger change (of people) than we are used to at home, or have been used to... not these past couple of years.”<sup>176</sup>

Of positive aspects mentioned about Nuuk are the job opportunities, welfare service and personnel (e.g. more Greenlandic-speaking doctors and lawyers), and the bigger and more varied music and cultural scene. Aspects which can all be attributed to the concentration of more people – urbanization. Another aspect is that Nuuk has a diverse population with many nationalities. Especially Maliina, Bent, Ane and Nina regard this as positive. Maliina mentions she likes hearing different languages spoken in Nuuk. This cultural diversity is also a motivating factor for Bent, because he and his wife prefer that their three children become “world citizens”, and they regard Nuuk as the best option to achieve this goal.

“(...) our children shall have better opportunities. Yes. And they shall be world citizens. Right, something like that. In the smaller towns they are limited, so there is more and more isolated, isolated, isolated... But they should see the world as open. Foreigners, just come. Go ahead and travel.

I: Is Nuuk like that?

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<sup>175</sup> IP8, Dorthea4

<sup>176</sup> IP6, Else8

IP: Nuuk looks like that now, to me and to Makka, my wife. It opens up for, it gives some opportunities, right. It is something it gives us like that. So we are happy for the opportunities we get. Such as we have a good job, we eat well, and also that my wife will have opportunities to work in the health care system. That she can take an extra education.”<sup>177</sup>

Bent expresses a general satisfaction of the opportunities Nuuk has to offer, including an international view. Nina exemplifies that there is a self-perpetuating effect of the diversity, as she explains that the more people they have around them who they know, the less they are motivated to move back to their hometown. As she points out:

“I: And then... I think there are a lot of different Greenlanders in Nuuk. There are Nuummiut, as some call them, who are sort of a... one who does not necessarily speak Greenlandic but is a Greenlander, you know. And then there are a lot of South Greenlanders, North Greenlanders, and this good mix of all kinds of. And it is both sad and good, I think, because many South Greenlanders in Nuuk is nice for me, because then I get to see some of the people I know every day. And it is sad in a way, because it also means that they have moved away from where I come from.”<sup>178</sup>

Thus, Nina is both excited and concerned about the diversity of Greenlanders in Nuuk.

### **Development and lack of development**

Here, I include a more societal and political perspective of opportunities related to development. Interviewees, when asked, mention that they see development in Nuuk as positive. However, many also mention that they dislike the imbalance in the development of Nuuk versus the rest of the country. Thus, there is a voice resonating in interviews of “why does everything have to happen in Nuuk?” As an example, Hans mentions they have flat rate in Nuuk, while the prices of internet on the coast are high. Moreover, he points at the representation in media, stating that good news always seem to happen in Nuuk, while they mostly receive bad news from “the coast”. Dorteia, Ane and Else respectively express criticism of the development in Nuuk, versus the coast:

“I: Do you have other things to say? Is there something that... occurs to you.

IP: No, I don't think so. I just think, why... because Nuuk is going through an explosive development, so I often think about – come on, Sisimiut, get started. What are you waiting for? What are they doing here in Nuuk, what is their secret recipe of getting a fast development? So I am a bit curious to see, how the new mayor of Sisimiut, or Qeqqata

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<sup>177</sup> IP4, Bent5

<sup>178</sup> IP12, Nina6

Kommunia, will... work. Because we have had Hermann Berthelsen for how many years, 20 years? He was a mayor. And now we got Malik, he is new. So, it is exciting.”<sup>179</sup>

Else says that she used to oppose the imbalance in the development in Greenland, but now she seems to have accepted it:

“IP: (...) Well, when I didn’t live in Nuuk yet, I could get annoyed that there was so much focus on all the development happening here. That is how it felt, at least, when you were living on the coast. That everything was happening in Nuuk, and it was a bit difficult to... for instance with the conditions within the traffic in South Greenland, they are horrible, but it was impossible to make anybody aware of it... but today, I just think I have, kind of... realized that somehow that it is going that direction....”<sup>180</sup>

In Else’s view, the development is going towards less people living in the villages and the smaller towns, and more people in Nuuk. She says: “I believe that is how it will end, with Nuuk and then maybe a couple of the bigger towns.”

Also, both Hans and Malena from the South and Ane from the East are against the policy pursued by the municipality of Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq. They think resources ought to be distributed more to the rest of the country. Malena points at the municipality reform causing some inequalities between municipalities. Ane is against the municipality Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq prioritizing development in Nuuk. She suggests that small towns and settlements gather together to voice their opinion:

“I: Do you have any ideas about what could be done? To also spread some development to other parts? (...)

IP: *Iar*. And... maybe if they had a meeting, and the towns worked together.

I: The settlements?

IP: Yes, if they yell in a way, so they can become heard by the higher... well. Like Inatsisartut (the parliament) and all that.”<sup>181</sup>

Among other solutions or ideas on how to create more development are:

- Business activities (e.g. opening a mine or starting food production in South Greenland (Svend and Nina)
- Tourism development (Svend, Nina and Else)

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<sup>179</sup> IP8, Dorthea5

<sup>180</sup> IP6, Else9

<sup>181</sup> IP9, Ane4

- Airports (both in Qaqortoq in South Greenland, in Uummannaq in the North and in Tasiilaq in East Greenland) (Else, Pipaluk and Ane)
- The settlements and small towns in Greenland gathering in an assembly where they can speak with one voice (Ane)
- Distribute or relocate more public jobs from Nuuk to the coast (Hans)
- Organize all courses, workshops, etc. in the airport of Kangerlussuaq instead of Nuuk (Jane)

In relation to their general opinion about rapid development in Nuuk, interviewees differ. Jane thinks it should be possible to relax when being in Greenland, because: "... there is enough nature to find calmness. But there is no space for that in Nuuk, because we live in Nuuk." She states:

"IP: Sometimes I think it can go a little too fast. It is that thing with stimuli, you know, what is it we want? Don't we also need to be calm? Is life just a matter of getting things 120 kilometers an hour all the time, or is it maybe also an idea to just stop and feel how good life actually is, without so much happening in such short time?"<sup>182</sup>

As a contrast, Maliina thinks that Nuuk has kept its identity despite rapid development:

"(...) Development here in Nuuk, I think is really good. Because the development has happened at the same time as you have remembered who you are, and where you come from. That is the impression I have. People still know who they are. Even though there has been so much development here."<sup>183</sup>

### **Concentration and depopulation**

Interviewees voice their political opinions about urbanization and concentration in Nuuk. Especially Hans and Ane are against the tendencies to centralize. Hans stresses Nuuk as the administrative center:

"IP: I have been thinking a lot about, Nuuk being an administration. Like the Self-Government. [pause] This administration, these departments, they should move some of these to the coast... The economy can't be run 100 % from here, there are so many jobs in fishing industry. People take up so many loans because they have their jobs, and they have so many loans that they have to work."<sup>184</sup>

Likewise, Ane states:

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<sup>182</sup> IP10, Jane7

<sup>183</sup> IP1, Maliina4

<sup>184</sup> IP3, Hans4

“I don’t know if there will still be any settlements in 10 years, that is in Tasiilaq and Ittoqqortoormiit. I don’t know about Paamiut... but there have been some complaints from Tasiilaq that it is only... because they only prioritize Nuuk with, producing all sort of and you know, constructions and such. I think it is only here in Nuuk it is happening, but not in other towns. This is it.”<sup>185</sup>

She voices her criticism about the priorities of the municipality Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq, which she says “only prioritizes Nuuk, and not other towns such as Tasiilaq, Paamiut, and also Ittoqqortoormiit. And then their settlements.”

However, interviewees also mention positive aspects of centralization. It is mentioned that there are economic advantages of more people living in one place, instead of dispersed all over the World’s biggest island. E.g. Else says:

“I: (...) If slowly many people are living in bigger towns, and fewer are living in smaller towns. Is there something lost in that?

IP: There is definitely something that gets lost, it is like that with all development. But there is also something to be saved, you might say, by not having... people, so few people dispersed over such a big country. But there is definitely some things that get lost, of what we know today, like... culturally with the hunter’s life and maybe also language, well there can be many things.”<sup>186</sup>

Svend repeats this view about the settlements being costly, saying many of them are not affordable to have in function. He states: “But there is no one from the political side who dare to stand up and say, well, then we will close these settlements that are not affordable. Nobody dares to do that.”<sup>187</sup>

According to Bent, the critical issue is that the Greenlandic population has been stagnating throughout his (41-year-old) life. He thinks that you cannot development as a country if you have a decreasing population.

“(...) But if we get higher, if we can increase the population number, then we can also somehow spread the effect to the rest of the coast, then we don’t need to centralize that much. That is my opinion.  
(...)

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<sup>185</sup> IP9, Ane5

<sup>186</sup> IP6, Else10

<sup>187</sup> IP7, Svend1

But it has to be increased, and it will be a good thing, then you can decentralize again. But as long as the population number is constant for almost 30 years, there is no way around getting centralized.”<sup>188</sup>

Bent regards a concentration of the population as an advantage, as he argues that gathering the workforce in one place gives opportunities and creates growth. Bent further explains that there is a need for both a higher birth rate but also immigration from abroad if Greenland is to increase its population figures.

### **Personal decision in a political perspective**

In interviews, either the interviewee on own initiative or I, put their choices into a general, sometimes political perspective. Reflecting on this, most interviewees have expressed an acceptance of the development, although some feel a sorrow about the depopulation tendency.<sup>189</sup> I interpret more compassion than guilt from answers within this part of analysis.

Moreover, responses show a respect of the personal decision of the individual. Reflecting this, Maliina tells a story about a man who has asked her what her worst experience was about moving back to Nuuk from Denmark, because he is considering moving back to Greenland. She says she told him that she did not have any, and she adds: “So I hope he and other people will have a more open-minded approach, if they consider moving back home. If they want to. Nobody can tell anybody, now you have to go home. That is entirely up to them.”<sup>190</sup> Likewise, Dorthea says:

“IP: Development is always a good... positive thing. I don’t know, if I have an opinion about it. You just need to decide, what you want and then look at the opportunities. For instance, I really want to live in Sisimiut. Because of my family. But how will I then keep developing? When there are no big workplaces like KNR in Sisimiut. How will I then be able to develop, right?”<sup>191</sup>

Thus, a pragmatic approach to the personal choice is repeated within these world views. In general, the quotes encompass a feeling of solidarity with the rest of Greenland not experiencing the same development as Nuuk. Some even call the development “horrible”, while at the same time, most interviewees regard their own decision without regret.

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<sup>188</sup> IP4, Bent6

<sup>189</sup> For an insight into the quotes within this code, see Appendix 6 Displays, ‘personal decision in a political perspective.’

<sup>190</sup> IP1, Maliina5

<sup>191</sup> IP8, Dorthea6

## 6. Discussion of analysis results with theory

### I. Key findings

In this section, I will discuss the findings in relation to main theories. To begin with, I will summarize the findings in a discussion of the themes such as they appear in parts 1-4 of analysis. An overview is shown in the table below.

Code/Theme	Findings
1. Family and social relations	Adaptation, busy lives, togetherness, anonymity, cultural diversity, freedom, welfare services.
2. Opportunities and personal development	Job, education, personal development, activities.
3. Home and sense of belonging	Culture and identity, family bonds, different use of nature, Greenland as home, Nuuk new home/not yet home, future plans.
4. Political views on urbanization	Culture shock, against depopulation, concentration positive, accepted development, compassion with other towns.

Many interviewees mention both positive and negative experiences of living in Nuuk, and with adapting to urban life. Being far away from family “on the coast”, spending time on transportation, the busy life in the city, and the anonymity are among negative experiences. Some are now used to this new life, while others are adapting. Anonymity in Nuuk is viewed as negative compared to the togetherness in hometowns, but other interviewees mention anonymity as a positive feature, creating individual freedom. Other positive social aspects mentioned are: more family living in Nuuk, a more culturally mixed population, better welfare service, and that there is more to do.

These findings relate to the next part of analysis, because opportunities also include social aspects. Examples of the

opportunities offered in Nuuk both include job, education, personal development and activities.

“Opportunities” thus include economic factors, but also “more things going on”, leisure activities, as well as personal development, and anonymity.

While some chose Nuuk because of opportunities, the relation to the hometown is still important for most interviewees. Yet, some interviewees have lost their connection to their hometown and express the view that Greenland is their home. Thus, one of the consequences of the rapid urbanization is that some interviewees no longer feel at home in their former hometowns. Nuuk has become their new home physically, and they do not plan on returning to their hometown, where family and friends are no longer living, and there is a lack of development and opportunities. Markus, Hans and Bent mention “Greenland”, when they refer to where their home is now. They neither feel at home in their former hometown, nor in Nuuk. One may express this paradox as a kind of “emotional homelessness.” Both Bent and Hans say explicitly that it is less important which town they live in, the important thing is that they live in Greenland, showing also a strong national identity.

Some have created a new home in Nuuk, while others have not felt at home yet. Also, some plan on staying, while others want to move, and most again have not yet decided. For the ones considering moving back, the personal and social connection to hometown is the main factor, including economy (job). In Nuuk, the connection to nature is a bit different, but most don't feel farther away from nature, although they live in a bigger town. Yet, Pipaluk will move back as soon as she finishes her studies, due to factors such as traditional culture and nature. Identity and culture are important aspects, and some find Nuuk more "Danish", e.g. because of language and anonymity.

Moving on to the fourth part of analysis where a political level is assessed, consequences of urban life are mentioned, e.g. in relation to identity crises. Most interviewees note that Nuuk is different in comparison with the rest of Greenland. To some, this is a reason why they are against depopulation, because they wish to keep Greenlandic culture alive in the rest of Greenland. Within opinions about development, centralization and urbanization, interviewees differ in their views. Some regard development as positive, while others are critical, others again are more passive and have accepted that smaller towns are becoming more depopulated and Greenland becoming urbanized. Personal choices are respected, and there is a feeling of compassion with the towns in Greenland not experiencing the same rapid development as Nuuk.

## **II. Motivations of urbanization**

The main reasons for moving to Nuuk were economic, social and personal. The economic reasons for not returning to the hometown were almost always due to not enough (job) activities and better opportunities in Nuuk. Furthermore, there were several interview persons who mentioned the social and health aspects. A couple of interviewees mentioned that Nuuk was the only place where he or she had received psychological help and rehab. Two interviewees pointed at the better healthcare and availability of Greenlandic-speaking personnel, both within healthcare and juridical help. Also, many mention the cultural differences there are between Nuuk and rest of Greenland as a motivating factor. Within the personal dimension, the theme of urbanism encompasses the urban lifestyle with more anonymity, more opportunities and generally more things to do, attracting some interviewees to Nuuk.

Interviewees mention anonymity both as a negative and a positive urban feature. Collignon (2008) describes how the city emancipates people from the social setting in the smaller towns, and furthers personal development: "Anonymity works as a protective shield, especially from gossip. As no-one knows you, no-one cares to know what you are doing and how you are living your life. And so it can truly become your life, since no-one is trying to rule it."<sup>192</sup> Anonymity leading to personal liberation is evident in interviews, being a pull factor for some interviewees (e.g. Bent and Malena). E.g. Bent refers to the different social norms in

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<sup>192</sup> Collignon (2008), p. 14.

Nuuk as a form of personal freedom, because there are excuses for not having people over when there are more activities.

Within the political dimension, examples appear in data of how political development shapes interviewees' lives. As an example, Markus's story shows how the centralization of jobs from Narsaq to Nuuk motivates him to seek new opportunities. These personal stories include a contextualization within Greenlandic political development. In the case of Markus and Else, as well as for a couple of other interviewees, centralization to Nuuk is one reason why they have not stayed or moved back to their hometowns (e.g. Dorthea and Malena).

While being satisfied with their lives in Nuuk, many of the interviewees miss their hometowns, and some would consider returning if there was an interesting job position. Interviewees also mention that they would consider moving back if there were more activities such as an airport or more people in their town. The important factors they mention in relation to the relatedness to hometown are family relations and friends, a relatedness to the place and the community, a slower and more traditional lifestyle, and a feeling of responsibility in supporting their local community. Yet, part of the outspoken wish to return to the hometown is expressed as a nostalgia and might be interpreted as only wishful thinking, while the actual decision to move is less probable.

The life stories and choices of urbanization within the group of interviewees, I argue, may be interpreted within Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory.<sup>193</sup> When most basic needs are met, defined as physiological needs, the next need in the hierarchy are security needs. I interpret e.g. Ane's motivations within this need, as she chose Nuuk partly because of security. Social problems in Tasiilaq including abuse and alcohol has made her feel that moving was more important than her need for belonging in her hometown. Hans both values belongingness and esteem needs above security needs. Having no friends after having quit drinking, he was left alone, whereas, once in Nuuk, he has restored a social circle and self-esteem.

Most interviewees describe motivations within the two last levels of hierarchy, such as esteem and self-actualization needs. Thus, Maliina, Markus, Bent, Malena, Else, Svend, Dorthea, Pipaluk and Nina describe that self-actualization in terms of job or education is the main reason why they are in Nuuk. There are of course nuances and even conflicts, e.g. Dorthea is in a dilemma, as she, with Maslow's hierarchy in mind, is wavering between belongingness and self-actualization needs. She misses her family and hometown every day, but she likes her job in Nuuk. The same is true for Else, Jane and Pipaluk, who express dilemmas within their situation. One side of them would prefer to live in their hometown, while another requires them to live in Nuuk. In the case of e.g. Nina, the esteem need is also evident, as she in the end of the interview reaches

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<sup>193</sup> Recalling Maslow's hierarchy needs as physiological needs, security needs, belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization.

the conclusion that part of her motivation for moving is that she regards living in Nuuk, as linked to achieving something. This may be interpreted as a classic example of the realization of an esteem need: “Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, and adequacy, of being useful and necessary in the world.”<sup>194</sup> Another example is Markus, whose motivation for moving may be interpreted within this need. His need of “being useful and necessary” was not met when he was in Narsaq, after his job was centralized. He kept the job, but as there were no work tasks left, his feeling of being useful decreased. In Svend’s case, the same motivation for moving to Nuuk is evident, as he expresses at first: “... and you know, pure local patriotic, I did not really want to move to Nuuk...” and later in the interview expresses his motivation for moving anyway, as: “I got this damned good job frankly speaking, which I am really happy for. I feel I can, you feel you can make a difference.”<sup>195</sup>

Overall, within the hierarchy of needs theory, the motivations for moving to Nuuk can be characterized as related to personal conflicts and considerations among security, belongingness, esteem and self-actualization needs. Thus, with Maslow’s theory in mind, motivations for urbanization increase, because these needs are not met in interviewee’s hometown.

### **III. Concentration and centralization policies**

Many interviewees emphasize the lack of development as part of their motivation for moving to Nuuk. Especially Ane’s story puts a perspective on the social factors. She is one of the East Greenlanders who have taken the consequence of social problems and chosen a life in Nuuk, partly because she could get help here. The dilemma of the concentration to Nuuk is that as the educated part of the population prefer to settle down in Nuuk, it eventually leaves other parts of the country lacking in skilled employees, who are crucial for a community struggling with social problems.<sup>196</sup> This is one of the consequences within the migration and urbanization occurring in Greenland, and it emphasizes the challenging situation it puts the rest of the country into.

Sejersen (2010) mentions that the political changes have increased the role of Nuuk as an “economic power center”. He argues people “move to the places offering the best opportunities”, also in terms of social and cultural opportunities.<sup>197</sup> The political prioritization of Nuuk is apparent in the interviewees’ answers both in terms of their experience with centralization of jobs, as well as in their descriptions of insufficient welfare services (e.g. psychologists, lawyers and infrastructure). Together, these lacking opportunities in their hometowns combined with a wish for more activities (economic, leisure and cultural) create a strong push

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<sup>194</sup> Maslow (1954), p. 45

<sup>195</sup> IP7, Svend3

<sup>196</sup> The TV-documentary “Byen hvor børn forsvinder”, DR2, 06-05-2019 recently showed the difficult condition for some people living in Tasiilaq. Tasiilaq struggles with social problems related to high suicide rates, sexual abuse of children and alcohol problems, and insufficient help from authorities and no permanently based psychologist.

<sup>197</sup> Sejersen (2010), p. 180

factor. The interviewees' statements about settlements dying out (Svend, Ane and Else, among others) show that the development is evident to people in Greenland. Svend states the politicians are lacking the will and courage to address the issue of closing down depopulated settlements which are no longer affordable.

A relevant theory in relation to this development is Collignon (2008), who refers to the "hierarchy of cities".<sup>198</sup> Interviewees mention the hierarchy both as urban centers they have come from, and where they imagine to be moving to in the future. In the case of the interviewees Maliina, Jane, Nina and Malena, who have lived in Denmark, they have "stepped down" in the urban hierarchy. What has attracted them to "move back" is the pull of their Greenlandic attachment. Thus, a key to understanding their choice of moving is that Nuuk has something to offer of in terms of the 'urban life', as they know it from Denmark, as Nina puts it. The urban center of Nuuk has pulled them, although Denmark is higher up in the hierarchy. E.g. Maliina had to be convinced she could get as relevant a working experience in Greenland, as she could in Denmark. For Malena, her hometown Qaqortoq turned out to be offering her less opportunities, both in terms of urban life and job positions, and thus, she chose Nuuk. Other interviewees mention moving from Nuuk to Denmark or Scandinavia (higher up in the hierarchy due to more opportunities) in the future, because of more opportunities of a good old age (Bent), health care (Hans) and opportunities for the children (Jane and Ane). Thus, an important aspect of urbanization in Greenland is that the ties within this urban web are interlinked, and Nuuk is not necessarily the final destination in the hierarchy. Another interesting example of urban hierarchy is Ane, who describes their three generations of urbanization. Her mother grew up in a small settlement on the East Coast (Tiniteqilaaq), but she moved to Tasiilaq, where Ane grew up. Ane has now moved to Nuuk, and her sons are dreaming about moving to Denmark. This generational transition is an interesting evidence of the hierarchy of urban centers, which are relational to each other. It also exemplifies the *centre-periphery* theory described by Grydehøj (2014), of society as a whole is drawn into the urbanization-process.

In general, the interviewees have moved to Nuuk due to better opportunities and more interesting jobs and educations than may be found in their hometowns. However, the new political situation is an underlying cause of the migration. After the introduction of Self-Government and the municipality reform in 2009, the towns and municipalities "'re-experience' and 'renegotiate'" their urban relations.<sup>199</sup> The study shows that a majority of the interviewees mention better opportunities in Nuuk as a factor of migration. Nevertheless, some mention that their hometowns offer more in terms of a social, "natural" and cultural life and of spending time with family and friends, enjoying nature such as hunting, fishing, dog-sledding, and so forth, and even culturally in terms of Greenlandic traditional culture (e.g. drum-singing and culinary traditions).

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<sup>198</sup> Collignon (2008), p. 134

<sup>199</sup> Sejersen (2010), p. 173.

#### IV. Discourses about urban Greenlanders in Nuuk

According to Sørensen & Forchhammer (2011), the city of Nuuk is traditionally viewed as less Greenlandic, and Greenlanders regarded as non-urban people. Yet, they point out that the representation of what is Greenlandic and who is Greenlandic have changed.<sup>200</sup> The discourse of Nuuk being less Greenlandic than the rest of Greenland both gets confirmed and rejected by the empirical data analysis. There are interviewees stating that Nuuk is less Greenlandic, and even one who chooses to leave Nuuk because of the lack of traditional living. Yet, the idea that Greenlanders are naturally based in a rural society is questioned in interviews. This is because they show a clear skill of adapting to urban life, and many even enjoy the urban features (e.g. Bent, Malena and Maliina). Nevertheless, several negative urban characteristics of Nuuk are also mentioned in the study. Thus, interviewees point at the social and economic differences with less close relations to their townsmen, more superficial social interaction and generally, a society based more on the making and spending of money. As an example, Hans mentions they used to have ‘family concerts’ for free and with no alcohol in Paamiut, whereas in Nuuk the concerts cost money and include alcohol consumption. This urban feature relates to what Dybbroe et. al. (2010) state: “(...) capitalist culture and ethics come together in full-fledged individualism and creativity, also harbouring oppression, loneliness and neglect of individual well-being (...)”<sup>201</sup>

In the case of Malena, urbanization involves an adaptation to a higher speed. She has realized that she can no longer fit in the setting of her former hometown, and she refers to herself as a ‘big city person’. Conversely, Pipaluk has realized she does not like living in the capital, because she feels she is another person and prefers the “traditional lifestyle”. According to Simmel, the city transforms people, and the psychological conditions here produce individuality.<sup>202</sup> In small communities, the social relations are based on togetherness and human *homogeneity*, while in a city (like Nuuk) the *heterogeneity* produces new types of relationships. As the theory describes, and as my empirical data show, this individuality both produces freedom and loneliness. One example is Nina, who describes her transformation experienced as a culture shock. In Nuuk, she did not feel it was acceptable to be part of different social groupings, as she was used to be able to join alliances with anybody in her hometown. At first, she felt she had to adapt to this heterogeneity, but later found out she could still keep some of her “small-town identity” in Nuuk.

An interpretation of this and other statements is that Nuuk benefits from the influx of people from all of Greenland, thereby maintaining its “Greenlandic” identity. The duality between urban versus rural is apparent in interviews, yet, there is also overlapping in-between this dichotomy. The interviewees express a

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<sup>200</sup> Sørensen & Forchhammer (2011), p. 560

<sup>201</sup> Georg Simmel (1903) in Dybbroe, Dahl and Müller-Wille (2010), p. 121

<sup>202</sup> Georg Simmel (1903) in Dybbroe (2008), p. 21. These urban features, according to Simmel (1903), are described as the difference between the concepts of *Gesellschaft* in the city and *Gemeinschaft* in the smaller towns.

longing towards the small community with close relations, while at the same time, they seem very adaptive and content with the freedom and anonymity of urban life in Nuuk. In general, interviewees are not caught between the contrasts or dichotomies of traditional versus modern identities. This study has found that Nuuk including its inhabitants is also considered part of “the real Greenland”, although interviewees differ in their opinions about whether the rest of Greenland is *more traditional* than Nuuk in terms of social, cultural and economic aspects.

## 7. Conclusion

In the qualitative study of this paper, the motivations of why people are moving to Nuuk have been assessed. Among the motives for moving to Nuuk, the most common are personal, social and economic ones.

While dealing with how people are coping in their new hometown Nuuk, the focus of this thesis has mainly been the past: why did people move to Nuuk? Yet, often on their own initiative, people have mentioned the future development of migration patterns in Greenland. The discussion has been going on for several decades about the balance and distribution of the population living in the settlements versus in towns, and especially the proportion of the population living in Nuuk. Literature has focused on the topic, but it seems time has come to ask more openly: why are people not staying in their hometowns?

In their explications of their experience with moving to Nuuk, interviewees contribute to conceptualizing urbanization. Overall, interviewees have a good experience with moving to the capital, as they here find personal development, more freedom in their social ties and anonymity, as well as opportunities within education and employment. As for the future, most interviewees have intentions of staying in Nuuk, while a few have thought about moving if they were offered a job in their hometowns. Others again are sure they will move back as soon as they get the chance due to job and education. This leads to the conclusion that the people in Greenland are active participants in the urbanization process. They are not victims of a development but a mobile people, who will move where they are offered the best opportunities in terms of living conditions and personal, social and economic development. At the same time, it is obvious that there is a political dimension to the push factor of the lack of development outside Nuuk.

The political aspect has been part of this study, and clearly, there is a connection to the increase in urbanization and the centralization of jobs from other towns to e.g., Nuuk. Several interviewees mention this aspect in their motivations for moving. A finding is also that the migration is not entirely motivated by this lack of opportunities as a push factor. The many opportunities in the capital places it in the very top of the “hierarchy of cities” in Greenland that no other town can compete with. Thus, the high hierarchical status implies opportunities both in terms of job, education, welfare and more activity, creating a pull factor.

However, compared with the rest of the world, Nuuk must compete with other urban centers, e.g. in Denmark.

A key finding in this study is that people do not simply migrate or relocate. In their urban transformation, people show an ability to adapt to the urban lifestyle, even interviewees who were at first reluctant about moving to Nuuk. This adaptability relates to the different social and cultural codes as well as to the urban environment. Moreover, the answers to the question of *why did you move to Nuuk*, have revealed both a nostalgia and an optimism among the interviewed people in Nuuk. Most interviewees feel no regrets about their decision of migrating; however, they still feel very connected to where they came from. Most have fulfilled their dreams: they experience Nuuk as a place of opportunities and where some plan on staying. In the future, it seems, there will still be people living outside Nuuk. However, as demonstrated in this qualitative interview study, urbanization is likely to increase as more and more social ties and opportunities are relocated in Nuuk.

## 8. Perspectivation

This thesis could also have included a questionnaire or survey with quantifiable data results within the topic of urbanization. Yet, due to the limited time, this was not considered possible. The qualitative study has provided a basis of knowledge including motivating factors of migration. These themes can be used to formulate questions when carrying out a survey among a bigger group of participants in Greenland. Thus, questions derived from this data include e.g.: “how do people relate to their hometown”, “what roles do identity and culture play within people’s decision of migrating”, “why is Nuuk viewed as a place of opportunities”, “which opportunities do people mention when they mention opportunities as motivating factors” and “what needs are deemed to be the most important”. These questions might prove useful to obtain more data in future surveys about the urban development in Greenland.

Another perspectivation is the political development scheme in Greenland. Although Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq dreams of 30,000 inhabitants living in Nuuk by 2030, it is not a political dream scenario that an increasing proportion of Greenland’s population is living in Nuuk.<sup>203</sup> This is due to the fact that in order to obtain a sustainable economy for the country as a whole, one needs an economic growth rate which can hardly be based on a decreasing number of inhabitants. It is a clear ambition in Greenland to halt out-migration to e.g. Denmark, which has been the trend for the past decade.<sup>204</sup> Yet, if the increased number of

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<sup>203</sup> Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq (2016), p. 38 and Head of Communications Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq e-mail response

<sup>204</sup> Huppert, 2016, p. 28

inhabitants of Nuuk is *not* the dream scenario, it seems sensible to have a look at what policies should be carried out in order to monitor and maybe limit the degree of centralization. If the political will is to decrease migration to Nuuk, assessing the demographic development could benefit other towns and settlements in Greenland.<sup>205</sup> Thus, future research on the development of urban versus rural settlements could include an indicator of the degree of urbanization in Greenland.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Nordic Council of Ministers (2011), p. 27

<sup>206</sup> See Appendix 9 for further perspectivation

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## Appendices

Appendix 1: Interviewees

Appendix 2: Interview contact

Appendix 3: Interview guide

Appendix 4: Thematizing

Appendix 5: Phases of the work process with interviews

Appendix 6: Example of displays

Appendix 7: Translated quotes in original language

Appendix 8: Statistics Demographic development

Appendix 9: Further perspectivation