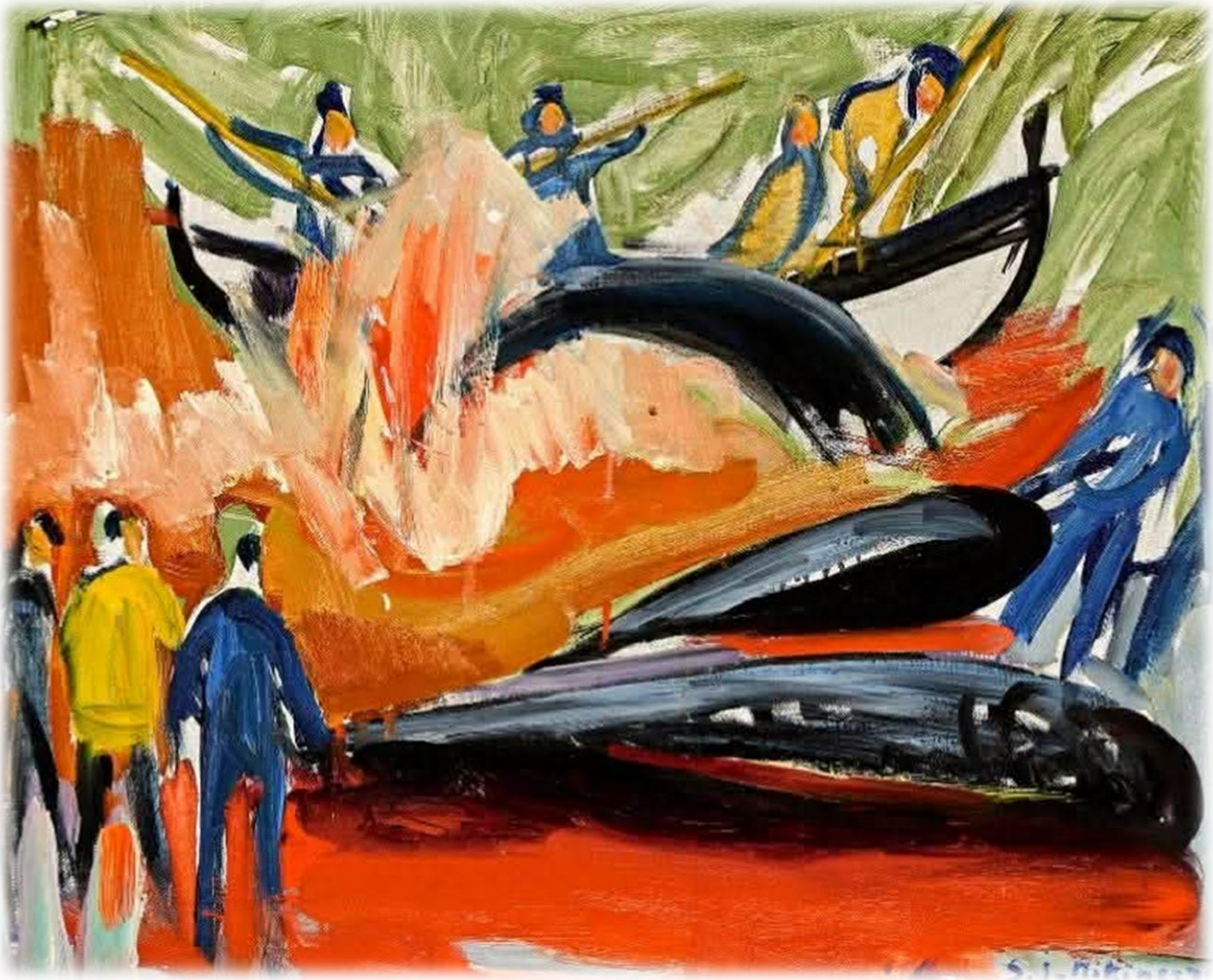
Contesting the Grindadráp

Activist Strategies and Local Legitimacy in the Faroe Islands



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Abstract

The Faroese pilot whale hunt known as the *grindadráp* has for decades attracted sustained international criticism from environmental, conservation and animal rights organizations. This thesis examines how international anti-whaling activism interacts with Faroese society and how activist strategies have and continue to shape the local debate surrounding the grindadráp. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the Faroe Islands in 2025, including semi-structured interviews and participant observation with Sea Shepherd volunteers, the study explores how different forms of activism influence the possibilities for locally driven opposition to emerge. The analysis is informed by Actor-Network Theory and postcolonial theory to examine how activist strategies, media technologies, and local actors become entangled in socio-technical networks that shape the internal debate surrounding the grindadráp. The findings show that while confrontational activist campaigns have succeeded in globalizing the controversy and bringing international attention to the grindadráp, they have also contributed to defensive reactions within Faroese society. More recent strategies have therefore shifted toward dialogue-oriented approaches aimed at encouraging internal debate. Attempts to mobilize locally rooted opposition have proven difficult, as criticism of the grindadráp is often interpreted through broader tensions between Faroese communities and foreign activists. The thesis concludes that meaningful change is unlikely to emerge through external pressure alone but would more likely depend on the emergence of locally legitimate Faroese actors capable of initiating and sustaining debate within Faroese society.

Cover image:

S.J-Mikines – *Grindadráp*, 1946.

Table of Contents

1 Introduction 1
2 State of the Art 3
3 Background 5
3.1 The Faroe Islands 5
3.2 Faroese Food, Culture & Identity 5
3.3 The Grindadráp 7
3.3.1 Conducting a Grindadráp 7
3.3.2 After the Hunt 8
3.3.3 Grindadráp and sustainability 9
3.3.4 Dietary Health Risks 9
3.4 Institutions and Local Initiatives related to the Grindadráp 10
3.4.1 Grindamannafelagið 10
3.5 The Presence of International Activists in the Faroes 11
3.5.1 Pete Bethune and Alternative forms of Activism 11
3.5.2 The Emergence and Decline of a Faroese Anti-Whaling Community 11
3.5.3 Sea Shepherd 12
3.5.4 The Captain Paul Watson Foundation 13
4 Theoretical Framework 14
4.1 Actor-Network Theory 14
4.2 Translation 14
4.2.1 Problematization 15
4.2.2 Interessement 15
4.2.3 Enrolment 15
4.2.4 Mobilization 16
4.2.5 Immutable Mobiles 16
4.3 Postcolonial Theory 16
4.4 Orientalism and the Construction of the Other 17
4.4.1 Othering 17
4.5 Theoretical Synthesis: ANT and Postcolonial Theory 17
5 Methodology 19
5.1 Research Design 19

5.2 Fieldwork 19
5.3 Interviews 20
5.3.1 Interview Guides 21
5.3.2 Transcription & Translation 22
5.4 Ethical Considerations 22
5.5 Participant Observations 22
5.6 Informal Conversations with Locals 23
5.7 Reflexivity & Positionality 24
5.7.1 Auto-Ethnography 25
6 Analysis 26
6.1 From Survival to Stabilization: The Grindadráp Before and Beyond Activism 27
6.1.1 Historical Stabilization 27
6.1.2 Network Formation 27
6.1.3 Institutionalization 28
6.1.4 Scientific Legitimacy 29
6.1.5 Stability with Declining Engagement 30
6.2 The Rupture: The Escalation of Confrontation 30
6.3 Failed Translation: When Problematization did not hold 32
6.3.1 Problematization: Importing a Proven Strategy 32
6.3.2 Interessement: Withdrawal of Potential Allies 34
6.3.3 Enrolment: The Network failed to Reassemble 35
6.3.4 Mobilization: Global Support & Local Countermobilization 36
6.4 Re-Stabilization Under Pressure: The Strengthening of the Faroese Defense 37
6.5 Postcolonial Dimensions: Representation and Moral Authority 38
6.6 From Confrontation to Silence: Strategic Disengagement 41
6.7 Declining Consumption and the Symbolic Persistence of Whale Meat 42
6.8 The Return of Debate: The 2021 Dolphin Hunt 44
6.9 Recognizing the Limits of Confrontation 47
6.10 From Confrontation to Dialogue 49
6.10.1 Rebranding the Campaign 50
6.10.2 The Split 52
6.11 Diverging Activist Strategies 54
6.11.1 The Blubber Butcher 57
6.11.2 Anonymous Mobilization Attempts 58

6.12 Local Mobilization as the Strategic End Goal 59
6.13 Attempts to Mobilize a Faroese-Anti Whaling Movement 60
6.13.1 Sofus as a Local Node in the Activist Network 63
7 Discussion 66
7.1 The Challenge of Local Legitimacy 66
7.2 Grassroots Mobilization and Social Change in the Faroe Islands 67
7.3 The Absence of a Mobilizing Faroese Spokesperson 68
7.4 The Poisoned Well 69
8 Conclusion 71

1 Introduction

The Faroe Islands, a small archipelago in the North Atlantic, have long attracted international attention because of the *grindadráp*, the communal hunting of pilot whales. For many Faroese, the grindadráp represents a longstanding cultural practice tied to food traditions, community cooperation, and maritime heritage. For international anti-whaling activists, the grindadráp has become a symbol of cruelty and an unacceptable remnant of the past. Over the past decades, this clash of perspectives has transformed the grindadráp from a local practice into a global controversy.

Since the 1980s, international activist organizations have repeatedly campaigned against the grindadráp. Among the most visible has been Sea Shepherd, whose confrontational campaigns brought significant international media attention to the Faroes. While these campaigns succeeded in placing the issue on the global agenda, they also generated strong reactions within Faroese society. Rather than producing widespread local opposition, these campaigns often appeared to strengthen defensive attitudes and reinforce the grindadráp as a symbol of Faroese identity.

In recent years, activist strategies have begun to shift. Some organizations now emphasize dialogue with Faroese locals, arguing that meaningful change can only emerge from within Faroese society itself. At the same time, divisions have emerged among activist organizations regarding how the controversy should be approached, resulting in competing strategies and continued tensions surrounding the grindadráp. This raises an important question regarding the relationship between international activism and local social dynamics in the Faroe Islands. If meaningful change ultimately depends on developments within Faroese society itself, it becomes crucial to understand how external activist interventions influence the possibilities for locally driven opposition to emerge.

The overarching research question guiding this thesis is therefore:

How have international anti-whaling activist strategies shaped the controversy surrounding the grindadráp in the Faroe Islands, and what challenges do these dynamics create for the emergence of locally driven opposition to the hunt?

To address this question, the thesis explores the following research questions:

1. **How have activist strategies employed by international organizations such as Sea Shepherd and the Captain Paul Watson Foundation evolved in the Faroe Islands?**
2. **How have these strategies influenced Faroese perceptions of anti-whaling activism and the legitimacy of opposition to the grindadráp?**
3. **What conditions would be necessary for the emergence of a locally legitimate movement capable of challenging the grindadráp within Faroese society?**

To answer these questions, this thesis draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted primarily in the Faroe Islands in 2025, including interviews with activists, journalists, and Faroese locals, as well as participant observation and analysis of public debates surrounding the grindadráp. The analysis is informed by Actor-Network Theory and postcolonial theory in order to examine how activist strategies, media technologies, and institutional actors interact within socio-technical networks that shape the controversy surrounding the grindadráp.

The thesis begins by presenting relevant literature and background on the Faroe Islands and the grindadráp, followed by the theoretical framework and methodological approach. It then turns to the empirical analysis of activist strategies and their reception within Faroese society before discussing the broader implications of these findings.

2 State of the Art

Anthropological research has long examined how traditional practices become sites of conflict when they are challenged by external actors or global ethical debates. Studies of hunting and whaling show that such practices are often embedded in broader systems of cultural identity, community relations, and local environmental knowledge. Paul Nadasdy's work on indigenous hunting practices demonstrates how conflicts emerge when external institutions attempt to regulate practices that local communities view as integral to their way of life (Nadasdy, 2003). Similarly, Mario Blaser argues that environmental conflicts often reflect fundamentally different understandings of human–nature relationships (Blaser, 2010). Disputes over traditional practices are therefore understood as struggles over cultural autonomy and political authority. Sidney Tarrow highlights how social movements bring local issues into global political arenas (Tarrow, 1998), while James Jasper emphasizes the role of symbolic actions and emotional appeals in mobilizing support (Jasper, 2014). These scholars have also noted that activist interventions can generate unintended consequences when campaigns are perceived as external interference in culturally sensitive practices.

The grindadráp in the Faroe Islands has received increasing scholarly attention. Anthropologists and social scientists have examined the hunt as a culturally embedded institution with historical importance in Faroese subsistence practices and community life. Joan Pauli Joensen's ethnographic work situates the grindadráp within broader Faroese food traditions and maritime culture (Joensen, 2009), while marine researcher Dorete Bloch has documented the historical development and regulation of the hunt within Faroese society (Bloch, 1996). Other researchers have focused on the contemporary controversies surrounding the practice. Russell Fielding analyzes how international anti-whaling activism and Faroese defenders of the grindadráp construct competing narratives about whales, nature, and cultural identity (Fielding, 2010). Benedict Singleton analyzes the encounter between Faroese communities and international activist campaigns as a cosmopolitical conflict involving competing understandings of whales, nature, and modernity (Singleton, 2016).

Faroese scholars have also contributed important perspectives to the debate. In their article *Making degrowth locally meaningful: the case of the Faroese grindadráp* (2017), Ragnheiður Bogadóttir and Elisabeth Skarðhamar Olsen analyze the practice through the lens of political ecology and degrowth. Drawing on autoethnographic perspectives, they show how Faroese narratives frame the

grindadráp as a locally meaningful alternative to industrialized food systems and global growth-oriented economies.

While these studies provide valuable insights into the cultural and political dimensions of the grindadráp controversy, relatively little research has examined how international activist organizations and their strategies shape the dynamics of the Faroese debate itself. Although the presence of international anti-whaling campaigns is frequently acknowledged, few studies examine in detail how different activist strategies interact with Faroese society and shape the dynamics of the local debate. In particular, there remains limited research exploring how forms of activism ranging from confrontational direct action to dialogue-oriented engagement influence the possibilities for locally driven opposition to emerge. This thesis addresses this gap by examining the role of international anti-whaling activism in the contemporary controversy surrounding the grindadráp. Drawing on interviews, ethnographic observations, and document analysis, the study analyzes how activist strategies attempt to mobilize actors and how these efforts are interpreted within Faroese society. As a Faroese researcher who has closely followed the public debate surrounding the grindadráp, the thesis also contributes an insider perspective on how activist campaigns are experienced and negotiated within Faroese society.

3 Background

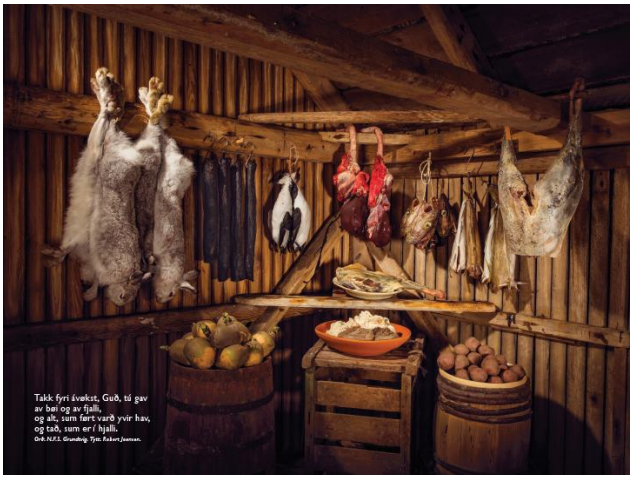
3.1 The Faroe Islands

The Faroe Islands are an archipelago consisting of 18 islands in the North Atlantic. The population is approximately 55.000 people, and they speak their own language, Faroese. Through the centuries, the islands have endured harsh living conditions due to weather and geographical remoteness. The population historically relied on the limited resources available to them. Utilizing local animals that roam in and around the islands as a source of food has been crucial for the Faroese survival. These include mainly sheep, fish, seabirds and pilot whales (Joensen, 2016).

While the islands remain part of the Danish Realm, alongside Greenland and Denmark, they have gained increasing autonomy over the past century. The islands are not part of the European Union, and political debates about full independence continue to shape Faroese identity and governance (Udenrigsministeriet, n.d.). Today The Faroes have a highly industrial economy mainly based on exporting fish to countries all around the world (The Government of the Faroe Islands, n.d.-a).

3.2 Faroese Food, Culture & Identity

Because of the Faroese harsh weather, long winters, and isolation, food preservation was historically essential for survival. Without refrigeration or regular imports, Faroese households relied on drying, fermenting, and salting to preserve fish, mutton, seabirds, and pilot whale meat. Whale meat and blubber from communal pilot whale hunts known as the *grindadráp* provided vital nutrition during periods when other food sources were limited (Joensen, 2016, p.15). The steady ocean winds made air drying and fermentation particularly effective, creating flavors still associated with Faroese cuisine today. These practices reflected both practical knowledge of local conditions and cultural adaptation to the natural environment. Much of the food was stored in a *hjallur*, a wooden structure with slatted walls that allow wind to circulate freely. The hjallur became a distinctive Faroese outbuilding, historically found in most households. Today, the hjallur continues to play a role in residential design, often connected directly to the kitchen even in modern homes (ibid.).



Figures 1. & 2. Traditional hjallur , exterior & interior (Sources: Compass+Twine 2018, Stamps.fo 2016)

In recent decades, the Faroese diet has modernized. Imports, supermarkets, and refrigeration have expanded the variety of available foods, and Faroese households today consume many of the same products found elsewhere in the Western world. Freezers now supplement the traditional hjallur, and many Faroese households store large quantities of shared meat. Yet, traditional foods like *skerpikjøt* (wind-dried mutton), *ræstur fiskur* (fermented fish), and *tvøst og spik* (pilot whale meat and blubber) remain deeply culturally symbolic. The islands' historical remoteness has shaped a strong sense of self-reliance and connection to local resources, and many Faroese value knowing where their food comes from and who provided it. Even as tastes and habits change, the act of preparing and sharing local foods continues to express belonging, resilience, and pride in Faroese identity (Svanberg, 2021). This connection to local food helps explain why the grindadráp remains deeply rooted in Faroese culture. For many Faroese, it is not only a source of food but also a social practice reflecting cooperation, tradition, and shared resources. This local understanding contrasts sharply with the way the practice has often been portrayed in international anti-whaling campaigns.

Figure 3. Pilot whale meat, Blubber and Potatoes (Source: Tyril 2022)

3.3 The Grindadráp

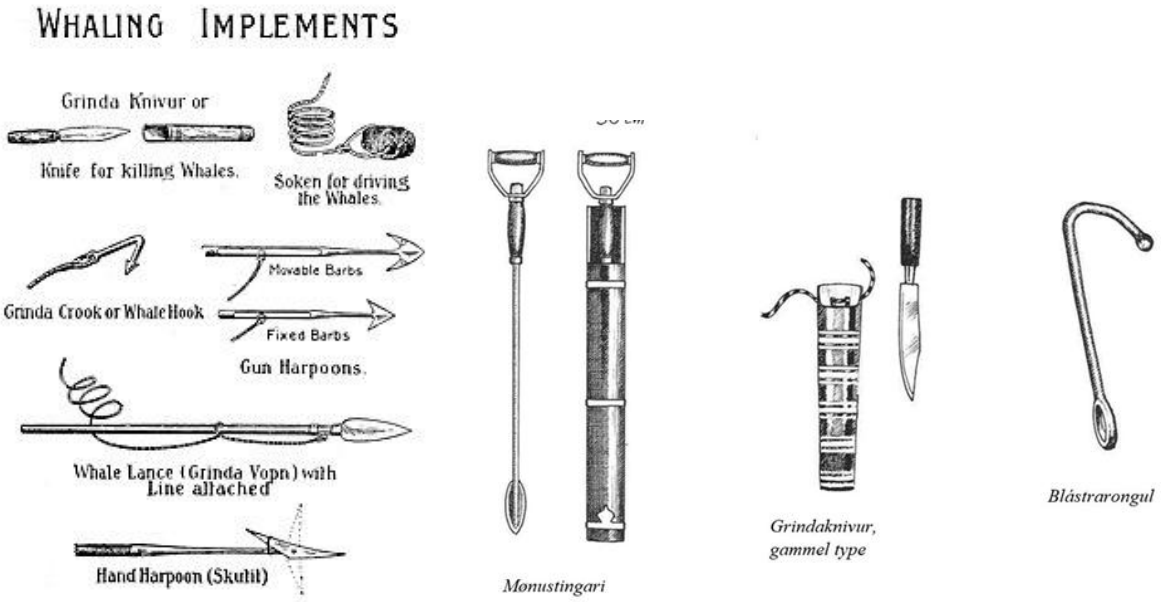
Grindadráp, which translates to "pilot whale killing", is the Faroese traditional practice of shepherding pilot whales to the beaches with boats and thereafter killing them. This tradition traces back to the 9th century, and official records of all pilot whale killings have been kept since 1584 (The Government of the Faroe Islands, n.d.-c). The grindadráp has been institutionalized over time, regulated through customary law and local norms. The method, rules, and communal responsibilities have shifted through the centuries, responding to changing technologies and external influences. While early accounts describe more informal and opportunistic drives, by the 19th and 20th centuries, the grindadráp had become a structured local institution, with established roles and expectations within the Faroese community (Joensen, 2009, p.72). Although the grindadráp primarily targets pilot whales, other small cetaceans such as Atlantic white-sided dolphins may occasionally be taken during drives (J. Olsen, 1999). In recent decades, the grindadráp has faced increasing scrutiny related to environmental concerns, animal welfare, and the presence of international activist campaigns.

Figure 4. A grindadráp (Source: Cahill 2026)

3.3.1 Conducting a Grindadráp

When a pod of pilot whales is sighted, the local sheriff and designated whaling foremen are notified. They coordinate the drive, deciding whether conditions are suitable and which bay should be used. Only certain bays that have been officially authorized and surveyed by the government can be used for strandings. Motorboats form a semicircle behind the whales and slowly drive them toward the chosen bay. Loud sounds, splashing, and lines stretched between boats help keep the whales moving in the desired direction (Joensen, 2009, p. 98; J. Olsen, 1999). Historically, whales were sometimes attacked from boats using harpoons and spears before reaching the shore. Due to concerns about animal welfare, these methods were banned in 1985, and the focus shifted toward

killing whales only once they were beached in shallow waters. Over time, new tools were introduced to improve both safety and efficiency. Today the killing is carried out using a spinal lance designed to sever the spinal cord quickly, alongside traditional knives used to bleed the animal. After the spinal cord is severed, the grindaknívur (Pilot Whale Knife) is still used to cut the neck, ensuring that the animal bleeds out properly to preserve the meat.



Figures 5. & 6. Traditional whaling tools (Sources: Jeaffreson 1898; Joensen 2009)

Today the hunt is regulated, and participants must complete training and obtain licenses to use the approved tools, reflecting the Faroese authorities' emphasis on safety and animal welfare (Hoydal, 2022).

3.3.2 After the Hunt

Once the whales have been killed and hauled ashore, the process of butchering and distribution begins. The meat and blubber are cut into large sections and divided among the local community. Unlike commercial whaling, the grindadráp is based on communal sharing rather than profit. The meat and blubber are distributed free of charge according to established customs. Those wishing to receive a share can register on a distribution list, and participants are generally expected to contribute labor such as cutting or carrying the meat. Distribution is overseen by local whaling officials, who ensure that shares are fairly divided among households. Families then bring the meat home, where it is preserved by drying, fermenting, or freezing. The grindadráp continues to bind

together whalers as well as the wider community, symbolizing cooperation and mutual reliance (Joensen, 2009, p.170).

Figure 7. Distribution and processing of pilot whale meat and blubber (Source: Cromley 2024)

3.3.3 Grindadráp and sustainability

For many Faroese, the sustainability of the grindadráp lies in its local and communal nature. The hunt provides food sourced directly from the surrounding seas and distributed freely among households without commercial sale. Sustainability is therefore understood not only ecologically but also socially, emphasizing fairness, self-reliance, and a direct connection between resource and consumption. Eating pilot whale meat is often seen as more sustainable than importing industrially produced meat. Organizations such as NAMMCO (the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission) have stated that the Faroese catch, averaging around 600–700 pilot whales annually, remains within sustainable limits based on current population estimates. However, the last full stock assessment was conducted in 1997, and a new reassessment of both Faroese and Greenlandic hunts was scheduled for 2025 but has not yet been released (NAMMCO, 2023). The Faroese government likewise states that pilot whale populations in the North-East Atlantic are considered abundant according to current scientific estimates (The Government of the Faroe Islands, n.d.-b).

3.3.4 Dietary Health Risks

Scientific studies since the 1980s, led by Chief Medical Officer Pál Weihe and colleagues, have documented high levels of methylmercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and other

contaminants in pilot whale meat and blubber. These toxins accumulate through the marine food chain and pose health risks for people who consume pilot whale meat. Research has linked consumption of pilot whale meat to several health risks, including impaired fetal neurodevelopment and cardiovascular disease (Weihe et al., 1996). In response, Faroese health authorities issued dietary recommendations limiting consumption, and advising pregnant women, nursing mothers, and children to avoid pilot whale products. In 2012, Pál Weihe and the chief scientist of the Faroese Food and Veterinary Authority recommended that pilot whale meat and blubber should no longer be considered fit for human consumption (Weihe & Debes Joensen, 2012). Despite this, some Faroese families continue to eat whale meat occasionally. Survey data shows how health concerns have influenced consumption patterns. In 1982, Faroese people ate on average 4.4 kilograms of pilot whale meat per capita each year (Vestergaard & Zachariassen, 1985). By 2024, this figure had fallen to just 1 kilogram per capita, illustrating a significant decline within a single generation (F. Helmsdal, 2025). This decline reflects how medical advisories and changing food habits have reshaped the role of pilot whale meat in Faroese diets. Although some families still serve pilot whale meat regularly, it is increasingly treated as a delicacy eaten on special occasions rather than a daily staple.

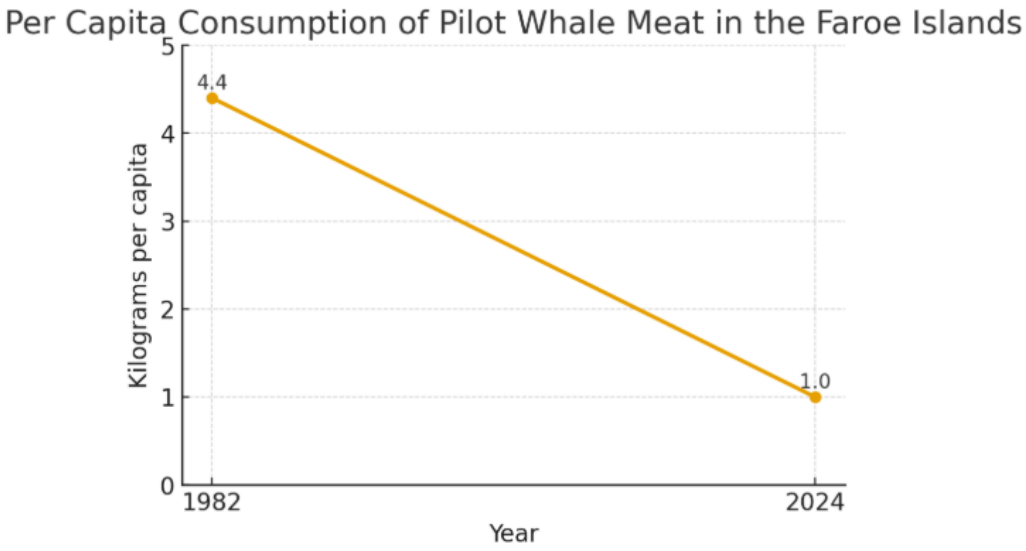


Figure 8. Per Capita Consumption of Pilot Whale Meat in the Faroe Islands (Made by author)

3.4 Institutions and Local Initiatives related to the Grindadráp

3.4.1 Grindamannafelagið

In 1993, *Grindamannafelagið* (The Pilot Whalers' Association) was founded by Hans J. Hermansen together with other whalers. As a non-profit organization, its purpose is to safeguard and regulate

the grindadráp. The association contributed to formalizing the hunt and ensuring that it follows evolving standards of safety and animal welfare. The association represents Faroese whalers in public debates and contributes to regulatory processes concerning the hunt. It also emphasizes the communal and non-commercial character of the hunt (Grindamannafelagið, n.d.).

3.5 The Presence of International Activists in the Faroes

International activism around the grindadráp began in the 1980s (Joensen, 2009, p.36), when environmental and animal rights organizations first identified the Faroes as a site of marine conservation concern. Since then, a range of activists have engaged with the grindadráp using different strategies, from confrontational direct action to dialogue-oriented approaches. The most prominent and enduring international presence has been the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (Sea Shepherd), whose campaigns have significantly shaped both local perceptions and the international image of the grindadráp.

3.5.1 Pete Bethune and Alternative forms of Activism

In the early 2010s the New Zealand conservationist Pete Bethune, founder of Earthrace Conservation and former Sea Shepherd member, arrived in the Faroe Islands with the goal of helping end the grindadráp. After engaging with Faroese locals, Bethune began advocating a dialogue-oriented approach, arguing that meaningful change would only occur if it emerged from within Faroese society, rather than through external pressure (Workman, 2014). As part of this strategy, a Faroese branch of Earthrace Conservation was established to encourage locally led discussion about the future of the practice (Bethune, 2011). Bethune's involvement represents an early attempt to engage with the grindadráp through collaboration rather than confrontation.

3.5.2 The Emergence and Decline of a Faroese Anti-Whaling Community

Bethune's presence coincided with the emergence of a small but visible Faroese anti-whaling community. This included the establishment of a Faroese branch of Bethune's Earthrace Conservation and the creation of Faroese-only online forums like the Facebook group *Faroese in Favour of Protecting Pilot Whales* (Bethune, 2014), which encouraged debate about the future of the grindadráp. The most organized initiative emerged in 2016 with the founding of *Grindahvalur*, a Faroese-British organization led by Rúni Nielsen and Andy Ottaway (Nielsen & Ottaway, 2016). The organization sought to encourage public discussion about ending the grindadráp through locally grounded arguments, particularly focusing on public health concerns related to toxic pollutants in

pilot whale meat. Through public campaigns (Nielsen & Ottaway, 2018a) and a documentary film narrated by David Attenborough (Sutton & Ottoway, 2015), the group argued that criticism of the grindadráp could be expressed without rejecting Faroese culture. The organization also proposed redefining the Faroese relationship with pilot whales through whale watching. Importantly, these efforts consistently emphasized that they were independent of Sea Shepherd and other international activist organizations.

Despite periods of public visibility, these initiatives gradually lost momentum toward the end of the 2010s. By the early 2020s most had ceased public activity, leaving only a small number of Faroese individuals openly critical of the grindadráp.

3.5.3 Sea Shepherd

Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (Sea Shepherd) is an international marine conservation organization founded in 1977 by Paul Watson. The organization is historically known for its use of *aggressive non-violent direct action* to oppose activities such as whaling, seal hunting, and dolphin drives. Its campaigns often combine physical intervention with media strategies aimed at raising global awareness and pressuring governments (Sea Shepherd Global, n.d.-a).

Sea Shepherd first arrived in the Faroes in the early 1980s and has returned periodically since then (Sea Shepherd Global, n.d.-a). In 2011, Sea Shepherd launched *Operation Ferocious Isles*, which was filmed for the television series *Whale Wars: Viking Shores* (Animal Planet, 2012). While the program drew global attention to the grindadráp, many Faroese felt misrepresented by its portrayal of the practice. Large-scale campaigns in 2014 and 2015 involved several hundred activists attempting to disrupt hunts at sea, leading to confrontations with locals and multiple arrests (Andrew, 2014). In response, Faroese authorities introduced legislation restricting interference with the hunt and limiting activist vessels in Faroese waters (Grindalógin, 2020). Since 2016 Sea Shepherd has maintained a smaller annual presence focused primarily on documenting hunts from shore. In recent years the organization has also signaled a shift toward dialogue-oriented engagement with Faroese society. In 2025, the campaign lead for Sea Shepherd's work in the Faroes, Valentina Crast, stated that lasting change would require cooperation with Faroese actors

rather than confrontational campaigns (Crast, 2025).

Figure 9. Sea Shepherd logo (Source: Sea Shepherd 1977)

3.5.4 The Captain Paul Watson Foundation

In 2022 founder Paul Watson was removed from Sea Shepherd following internal disagreements about the organization's direction (Grimm, 2022). Watson subsequently founded the Captain Paul Watson Foundation (CPWF) to continue his original activist vision. Several national Sea Shepherd chapters aligned themselves with Watson following the split, including Sea Shepherd UK, while others remained independent but supportive of Watson (Sea Shepherd Brazil, n.d.). Since then, CPWF has conducted its own campaigns in the Faroe Islands, operating separately from Sea Shepherd. Today, the two organizations pursue the same goal through different activist strategies.

Figure 10. Captain Paul Watson Foundation logo (Source: Captain Paul Watson Foundation 2022)

4 Theoretical Framework

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework that informs the analytical approach of the thesis. It begins by introducing key concepts from Actor-Network Theory (ANT), with particular emphasis on Michael Callon's seminal text *Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay* (1984). The chapter then turns to postcolonial theory, focusing on Edward Said's concept of *Orientalism*, alongside the broader social science concept of *Othering*. Finally, the chapter discusses how these perspectives can be combined to analyze interactions between international activists and the Faroese community.

4.1 Actor-Network Theory

Actor-Network Theory (ANT) examines how networks of human and non-human actors form and stabilize to produce coordinated action. Rather than assuming fixed social structures, ANT focuses on the relational connections between actors such as people, technologies, animals, and ideas. ANT also highlights how actors pursue programs that may encounter resistance from competing anti-programs. The stability of a network depends on the successful alignment of actors around these programs (Elgaard Jensen, 2005). Actors may stabilize networks through *inscriptions* such as documents, images, or statistics that make knowledge portable and persuasive across contexts (Latour, 1986).

A key concept in ANT is *translation*, which refers to the ongoing processes through which actors align others with their goals, reinterpreting their interests to fit within the network. Translation describes how power is not imposed from above but generated through successful negotiation and enrolment of allies (Elgaard Jensen, 2005). The following section elaborates on translation through Michel Callon's influential work on scallops and fishermen.

4.2 Translation

In this thesis, Callon's concept of translation is used to explore how various actors become enrolled in networks related to efforts to end the grindadráp. Callon characterizes ANT as a sociology of translation, offering a distinct approach to understanding power as something produced through the alignment of actors within networks. In this view, science and technology are not passive tools but active participants in shaping those relations of power (Callon, 1984).

At the heart of ANT is the notion of translation, which refers to the process through which actors redefine the interests of others in ways that align with their own objectives:

"*Translation is defining roles, assigning roles, describing assumptions. It speaks for other actors in its own language*" (Callon et al., 1986, 26).

A network can only achieve coherence and durability if such translations succeed in bridging the actors' diverse interests. This thesis applies Callon's framework to explore how actors such as activists, Faroese locals, whalers, and health authorities become positioned within overlapping networks. By tracing these processes of translation, it becomes possible to identify the tensions, uncertainties, and negotiations that occur as actors attempt to define the terms of engagement and align others to their cause.

4.2.1 Problematization

The first step in Callon's model of translation is problematization, where a specific issue is framed in a way that aligns the interests of various actors, making it a shared concern they all must address. This framing establishes what Callon terms an *Obligatory Passage Point* (OPP), a conceptual bottleneck through which all other actors must pass to achieve their own goals. Without engaging with the OPP, participation in the emerging network becomes impossible (Callon, 1984).

4.2.2 Interessement

Following this is the interessement phase, where efforts are made to enroll actors into the network by aligning their interests with the problem as defined. This process assigns actors specific roles, creating associations that lock them into certain positions within the network (Callon, 1984).

4.2.3 Enrolment

Once interessement succeeds, enrolment occurs. This involves the negotiation and stabilization of the roles and identities of the different actors. Callon emphasizes that enrolment depends on the success of interessement and involves a series of strategic moves, alliances, and compromises. It describes how actors are persuaded or compelled to accept their roles and cooperate in a common project. In Callon's example, the scientists' struggle to get scallop larvae to anchor in their designated beds highlights how fragile and complex enrolment can be (Callon, 1984).

4.2.4 Mobilization

The final step is mobilization, where the network's structure is solidified through the representation of its actors. This involves appointing spokespersons who claim to speak and act on behalf of broader collectives, whether human or non-human. For instance, in Callon's study, the larvae are made to stand in for all scallops, the fishermen vote on their spokesperson, and the biologists collectively represent the scientific community. However, this process is always precarious. Spokespersons can misrepresent those they speak for, face rejection, or be replaced by challengers. Therefore, even well-established networks remain vulnerable to disruption and change (Callon, 1984).

4.2.5 Immutable Mobiles

In his 1986 paper *Drawing Things Together* (1986), Latour introduces the concept of *immutable mobiles* to explain how ideas or knowledge can be transported across space and time without being altered. These take the form of visual or textual representations such as diagrams, maps, charts, or reports, that retain their structure and meaning when removed from their original context. Latour emphasizes that for an idea to circulate widely and remain consistent, it must become materialized in a stable form, often through inscription on paper or another medium. This materialization allows meaning to remain stable as it moves across settings and actors. In the context of this thesis, this concept is particularly relevant for analyzing how certain activist strategies are communicated and stabilized through visual materials. In this thesis, immutable mobiles help explain how activist campaigns communicate strategies through visual materials such as logos, images, and campaign names. Faroese actors also rely on immutable mobiles when defending the grindadráp, using scientific reports, population statistics, and health studies.

4.3 Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory examines how colonial histories continue to shape power, knowledge, and representation (Loomba, 2015). Edward Said's concept of *Orientalism* is particularly influential, demonstrating how western representations of non-western societies often reproduce unequal power relations (Said, 1979).

4.4 Orientalism and the Construction of the Other

Edward Said's book Orientalism (1979) is widely recognized as a cornerstone in postcolonial theory. In this influential work, Said critiques how Western scholars, writers, and institutions have historically constructed and represented the Orient, a term that broadly refers to regions such as the Middle East, North Africa, and parts of Asia. Said argues that these representations were not neutral or objective but rather served to legitimize and maintain Western imperial domination. The Orient was portrayed as exotic, irrational, passive, and inferior in contrast to a rational, civilized, and superior West. In this sense, Orientalism is not just a body of knowledge, but a system of meaning and power that shapes how people and cultures are perceived and governed.

"*Knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense creates the Orient, the Oriental, and his world*" (Said, 1979, p.40).

4.4.1 Othering

Othering refers to processes through which groups construct others as fundamentally different or inferior in order to reinforce their own identity (Loomba, 2015). Postcolonial scholars such as Frantz Fanon showed how colonial systems positioned colonized populations as inferior "others" in relation to European identities (Fanon, 2021). Said, following Fanon, developed this further by showing how Western knowledge production about the East constructed Orientals as fundamentally different, passive, and incapable of representing themselves.

"*The Other is not simply seen as different; they are made to embody what the Self is not — the irrational, the emotional, the primitive*" (Loomba, 2015, p.91).

Othering helps create a sense of identity for the dominant group by positioning another group as inferior, exotic, or dangerous. It is a tool of symbolic power that sustains social, political, and moral hierarchies. In this thesis, Orientalism and Othering are used not in the narrow geographic sense, but as theoretical tools to understand how dominant narratives about the grindadráp are constructed and circulated globally.

4.5 Theoretical Synthesis: ANT and Postcolonial Theory

Although ANT and Postcolonial Theory emerge from different intellectual traditions, they offer complementary insights for understanding the grindadráp controversy. ANT provides a framework for tracing how human and non-human actors such as activists, Faroese locals, whalers, and health

authorities become enrolled in networks that stabilize practices or narratives. It focuses on how agency is distributed, how interests are translated, and how networks materialize through relational processes (Callon, 1984). Postcolonial theory, particularly through Edward Said's concept of Orientalism and the broader notion of Othering, highlights the power of discourse in constructing cultural hierarchies. It draws attention to how Western actors may frame non-Western or local practices as backward, uncivilized, barbaric, or in need of change, often through moralizing narratives (Said, 1979). Together, the two approaches offer a more layered perspective. ANT helps track the formation and stabilization of actor-networks, while postcolonial theory critically examines how these networks are shaped by underlying power relations, historical inequalities, and representational practices.

5 Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach of the thesis, describing the fieldwork process and data collection used to study interactions between Faroese communities and international anti-whaling activists. It also reflects on my position as a Faroese researcher conducting short-term ethnography within a familiar yet contested setting.

5.1 Research Design

My decision to write this thesis was sparked by a 2025 press release by Sea Shepherd's campaign lead in the Faroes, Valentina Crast, announcing a shift toward dialogue with Faroese communities (Crast, 2025). I contacted Crast to request access to observe their work, and she obliged.

Before conducting fieldwork in the Faroes, I carried out preliminary research in Denmark to map the public discourse surrounding the grindadráp. This included monitoring Faroese social media groups, reviewing media coverage, and conducting preliminary interviews with a Faroese journalist and a representative from the CPWF. I spent two weeks in the Faroes in May 2025 conducting semi-structured interviews with relevant informants. I also engaged in informal conversations with locals and conducted participant observation with a group of Sea Shepherd volunteers for one week.

5.2 Fieldwork

With only two weeks in the Faroe Islands to conduct most of my fieldwork, my timeframe was limited. While long-term ethnography has traditionally been considered the gold standard within anthropology, practical constraints such as deadlines and institutional frameworks increasingly made this difficult. I therefore adopted a short-term ethnographic approach emphasizing intensity, reflexivity, and relational engagement rather than duration (Pink & Morgan, 2013). My Faroese background and cultural familiarity allowed me to move quickly and meaningfully within local contexts. I therefore used my insider position strategically. When contacting potential Faroese informants, I communicated in Faroese and clearly explained that my project aimed to explore the impact of activism on the local debate, rather than to take a moral stance for or against the grindadráp. I also emphasized that I was unaffiliated with any activist organization. This transparency helped me establish trust and rapport quickly, enabling interviews to flow naturally and conversations to unfold in a tone of mutual understanding. As James Spradley (1980) argues, rapport is not simply about friendliness but about developing a relationship of mutual respect that

allows informants to share their perspectives openly and without fear of misrepresentation. For example, Martin, a former foreman of the Pilot Whalers' Association, was initially hesitant to participate. After a short phone call in Faroese explaining my research, he agreed to an interview. Conducting interviews in Faroese and drawing on my knowledge of local norms allowed me to build trust quickly and interpret interactions within their cultural context. I maintained detailed fieldnotes and audio recordings, and I kept a reflexive diary documenting my experiences, thoughts, and emotions during the fieldwork period (Fieldnotes, Appendix 7).

5.3 Interviews

During my fieldwork, I conducted six semi-structured interviews with participants including members of Sea Shepherd and the Captain Paul Watson Foundation, a former foreman of the Pilot Whalers' Association, a Faroese journalist, a Faroese anti-whaling activist, and a former Sea Shepherd volunteer. Semi-structured interviews allowed for both structured questions and open-ended discussion, enabling participants to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring that key topics were addressed. This format was particularly valuable in this context, as the topic of the grindadráp can evoke strong emotions and moral standpoints. The interviews were conducted either in Faroese, English, or Danish depending on the participant's nationality. All interviews were recorded with prior consent and later transcribed. The duration of the interviews ranged from 45 minutes to two hours. I chose to give pseudonyms to all informants except for Valentina Crast, as she is a public figure.

Name	Role	Language	Location / Medium
Valentina Crast	Sea Shepherd campaign lead in the Faroes	Danish	In-person, Copenhagen, Denmark
Hanna	Captain Paul Watson Foundation's campaign lead in the Faroes	English	Online (Zoom)
Martin	Former foreman of the Pilot Whalers' Association	Faroese	In-person, Tórshavn, Faroe Islands
Jóhannes	Faroese journalist who has covered the grindadráp and the controversy surrounding it	Faroese	In-person, Copenhagen, Denmark
Sofus	Faroese anti-whaling activist	Faroese	In-person, Funningur, Faroe Islands
Abraham	Foreign activist who participated in previous Sea Shepherd campaigns in the Faroes	English	Online (Zoom)

Figure 11. Pseudonymized overview of informants (Made by author)

5.3.1 Interview Guides

Interview guides were prepared for each participant, outlining key themes while allowing flexibility during conversations. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2022) note, interview guides function as a compass rather than a map, providing structure without restricting dialogue.

Introduction	Can you start by introducing yourself?
The campaign work done in the Faroes historically and today	Can you explain your organization's work in the Faroe Islands through the years? How have the Faroese people responded to your work? Do you think your strategic approach has changed over the years?
Several organizations running campaigns in the Faroes with different strategies	Today there are different organizations running campaigns in the Faroes with different strategies. What do you make of that? Do you collaborate with the other organizations in any way?

Figure 12. Segment of interview guide (Made by author)

5.3.2 Transcription & Translation

Interviews were conducted in Faroese, English, and Danish. English and Danish interviews were transcribed using the GDPR-compliant tool Good Tape and then manually corrected. Faroese interviews were transcribed manually using OTranscribe and translated into English with assistance from ChatGPT, followed by careful review to ensure accuracy.

This multi-step process allowed for consistency across interviews while maintaining the integrity of the informants' original expressions.

5.4 Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitivity of the grindadráp debate and the polarized views surrounding it, ethical reflection was integral throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time. Consent was obtained before interviews and participant observations. Public figures who have participated in the debate through media appearances, public talks, or organizational statements are referenced by their real names, while interview participants and private informants are anonymized.

5.5 Participant Observations

During one week of fieldwork, I accompanied a group of Sea Shepherd volunteers in the Faroes, observing and engaging in activities such as beach clean-ups, dumpster-dives, community outreach, and informal gatherings. Observing and participating in these activities enabled me to understand how the activists navigated their presence in the Faroes, how they were received by locals, and how they internally framed their mission and identity. I participated actively when appropriate, such as joining a beach clean-up or dumpster dives, while also taking time to observe group dynamics, conversations, and interactions with the Faroese public. I took fieldnotes during and after observations, supplemented by audio reflections recorded at the end of each day. These notes included not only what I observed but also my impressions, emotions, and emerging interpretations (Appendix 7). As Spradley (1980, p. 58) emphasizes, fieldnotes are more than simple descriptions, they are "*records of experience*," capturing both the observable actions and the researcher's evolving understanding of the cultural setting (Silverman, 2017, p.331). Participant observation also offered a way to identify moments of tension and negotiation between activists and locals. I witnessed both open conversations and subtle instances of avoidance or discomfort. These

encounters revealed the complex social choreography involved when outsiders advocate for change in a small, tightly knit island community.

Figure 13. Me among Sea Shepherd volunteers during fieldwork (Authors photo)

Figure 14. Food saved by Sea Shepherd volunteers during a dumpster dive (Authors photo)

5.6 Informal Conversations with Locals

Informal conversations with Faroese locals complemented interviews and observations. These interactions often occurred spontaneously and provided insights into everyday attitudes toward the grindadráp and international activists. While I did not record these conversations, I took brief notes afterwards to capture key themes and impressions (Fieldnotes, appendix 7). Informal talk offered a more relaxed and unguarded glimpse into local attitudes, not only toward the grindadráp itself but also toward the presence of international activists in the islands. As Hammersley and Atkinson observe, much ethnographic understanding emerges from "*unplanned and everyday moments of*

interaction" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019, p. 113), where people speak more freely about sensitive or contested issues. Many of these exchanges happened naturally. Faroese locals were curious about my research and expressed interest in the angle that I was approaching the topic from (Fieldwork, appendix 7).

5.7 Reflexivity & Positionality

Throughout the ethnographic research process of this thesis, my position as a Faroese native has been both a methodological advantage and an analytical responsibility. In ethnography, reflexivity involves recognizing how the researcher's identity, experiences, and assumptions shape both access to the field and the interpretation of data (Davies, 2012). My insider status granted me access to informants and conversations that might have been closed to outsiders, particularly given the sensitivity of the topic of the grindadráp. This familiarity required continuous reflection on how my own experiences and emotions influenced the research process. When I was preparing to go and join Sea Shepherd volunteers for a week, I initially felt uneasy joining them in their daily activities, partly because of my long-held skepticism toward their work in the Faroes, and partly due to concerns about how locals might perceive my association with them. My insider status provided access to conversations that might have been difficult for an outsider to obtain, while also requiring continuous reflection on how my identity shaped interactions and interpretations (Aull Davies, 2012; Finlay, 2002).

During my fieldwork, I also noticed that despite being open about my research purpose, informants on both sides of the grindadráp debate often assumed that I shared their views. Faroese informants tended to perceive me as supportive of the tradition simply because I am Faroese, while several Sea Shepherd members seemed to interpret my engagement with them as a sign of sympathy toward their cause. These differing perceptions were revealing in themselves, highlighting how identity and belonging shape expectations in the field. As an ethnographer, I found myself navigating a shifting position. Sometimes I was seen as an ally, sometimes as an observer, and occasionally as both. This experience reinforced the importance of reflexivity as an ongoing negotiation of roles and relationships, reminding me that positionality is not fixed but continuously constructed through social interaction (ibid.).

5.7.1 Auto-Ethnography

Reflexive fieldnotes, diary entries, and voice recordings (Appendix 7) helped track how my role shifted between insider and outsider positions during fieldwork. Auto-ethnography allows researchers to situate personal experiences within broader cultural and political contexts (Ellis et al., 2010). These reflections helped contextualize interactions observed during fieldwork and informed the interpretation of tensions between activists and Faroese actors discussed in the following chapter.

6 Analysis

This chapter explores how interactions between international anti-whaling activism and Faroese society have shaped the controversy surrounding the grindadráp over time. The analysis is structured chronologically to trace how activist interventions, local responses, and shifting strategies have reshaped both the grindadráp itself and the public debate around it from the 1980s to the present day. It begins by outlining a historical baseline translation of the grindadráp prior to the intensification of international anti-whaling activism, to show how the hunt was already stabilized within Faroese society before external actors sought to re-problematize it. Rather than treating activism as an external force acting upon a static tradition, the chapter approaches the grindadráp as a practice continuously redefined through interaction, conflict, adaptation, and negotiation. Empirical material from interviews, participant observation, informal conversations, and media sources illustrates how meanings and positions have been negotiated at different moments in time.

The analysis is guided by Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and postcolonial theory, which are applied as complementary analytical lenses. ANT is used to examine how networks of human and non-human actors such as activists, whalers, social media platforms, legal frameworks, scientific reports, and symbolic representations, are assembled, challenged, and reconfigured over time. From a techno-anthropological perspective, these elements can be understood as socio-technical assemblages in which technologies and representations play an active role in shaping social relations and political debates. In particular, the chapter draws on Callon's concept of translation (1984) to explore how activist strategies have attempted, and at times failed, to enroll Faroese actors into new networks. Postcolonial theory provides tools for analyzing issues of power, representation, and othering, shedding light on how Faroese locals have been positioned within global environmental narratives and how such representations have been resisted or reappropriated.

By following this chronological trajectory, the chapter highlights both the unintended consequences of the confrontational activism in the 2010s, as well as the emergence of more dialogue-oriented strategies in recent years. This approach allows for a comparative analysis of different activist interventions and their effects, demonstrating how earlier campaigns contributed to polarization and cultural backlash, while more recent efforts attempt to reassemble relationships through engagement and mediation. The aim is not to evaluate the grindadráp as morally right or wrong, but to understand how activism, identity, and shifting power relations have become entangled within evolving socio-material networks.

6.1 From Survival to Stabilization: The Grindadráp Before and Beyond Activism

6.1.1 Historical Stabilization

Through most of its modern history, the grindadráp was a largely uncontested tradition within Faroese society. It remained relatively unchallenged until the 1980s, when the practice began to attract sustained attention from international anti-whaling activists. As Joensen (2009, p.29) notes:

"As recently as in 1970 and in 1976 it was legitimate to perceive the pilot whale hunt as an exotic feature of Faroese folk culture, with no hint of the hot potato that the whale hunt was subsequently to become from a global perspective […] there was not any real confrontation between differing perceptions of nature and the environment until around 25–35 years ago".

The grindadráp was thus not historically experienced as a moral battleground but as a normalized feature of everyday life. To understand how the practice became so deeply embedded and endured for centuries, the analysis will delve into the historical grindadráp from a Faroese focal point through Callon's moments of translation. Before the intensification of international activism in the late twentieth century, the grindadráp could be understood as the outcome of a historically successful translation. Geographical isolation, limited agricultural potential, harsh climatic conditions and securing reliable food sources constituted a persistent collective problem. Pilot whales, migrating close to shore in predictable patterns and appearing in large numbers, were identified as a viable solution. The Faroese population effectively positioned the grindadráp as an OPP. Survival, food distribution, and communal cohesion became achievable through coordinated whale drives. The grindadráp was framed as a material necessity.

6.1.2 Network Formation

Interessement operated through the alignment of both human and non-human actors. Community members participated by driving whales, assisting in the hunt, processing meat, or distributing shares (Joensen, 2009, p.170). Coastal landscapes, boats, tools, local ecological knowledge, and seasonal rhythms gradually stabilized into reliable roles. The whales themselves were implicated through their migratory behavior, which made the hunt possible.

Enrolment occurred as these roles were accepted and reproduced across generations. Procedures became socially codified, knowledge was transmitted, and distribution systems were normalized.

Participation fluctuated over time, and in certain periods they didn't get enough people, resulting in the whales sometimes being let go (Jóhannes, appendix 3). The network was not always maximally mobilized, yet it remained sufficiently aligned to continue functioning. The grindadráp persisted not because it was constantly defended, but because it worked. Its material outcomes, namely food security and social cohesion, worked sufficiently in stabilizing the network.

Mobilization during this period occurred less through formal spokespersons than through the material presence of whale meat distributed across households. The hunt's legitimacy was embedded in everyday life.

For much of the twentieth century, although culturally significant, the grindadráp was not a central site of political or moral controversy within Faroese society. One could be Faroese without actively positioning oneself in relation to it. The practice existed within what might be described as a layered but stable situation. The establishment of Grindamannafelagið in 1993 further strengthened this process of mobilization. Beyond organizing training and representing practical concerns, the association functioned as a spokesperson for whalers within the broader political and public sphere. Grindamannafelagið contributed to stabilizing the network not only by improving practice but by articulating and defending it within legal and institutional frameworks. The whalers were no longer only participants in a localized activity, they were represented within an organized structure capable of negotiating, responding, and adapting.

6.1.3 Institutionalization

The durability of the grindadráp cannot be attributed to repetition alone. The practice was also stabilized through inscription. Historical references to whale drives appear in old legal texts such as the Sheep Letter (Seyðabrævið) of the late thirteenth century (J. Olsen, 1999), and official records of pilot whale catches have been maintained since 1584 (Statistics Faroe Islands, 2025). These documents render the practice administratively legible across centuries. Such records function as immutable mobiles. They are inscriptions that maintain their form while traveling across time. By transforming each hunt into entries in ledgers and statistical summaries, the grindadráp became archived, countable, and governable. The practice thus accumulated historical continuity that extended beyond memory and embodied practice into administrative permanence.

6.1.4 Scientific Legitimacy

Adaptation also occurred in response to evolving concerns about safety and animal welfare. Throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, tools and procedures were modified to reduce suffering and increase efficiency. The banning of certain whaling tools in 1985, the introduction of the blásturongul (gaff-hook) and later the mønustingari (spinal lance), and the requirement of formal training and licensing for those participating in the killing all illustrate processes of internal recalibration (Joensen, 2009, p.113). Grindamannafelagið further institutionalized the hunt. As former foreman of the association, Martin, emphasizes in the early stages of the organization's inception:

"We started changing ourselves from within. That's the right way—stand together, do it right, so no one can criticize us. We have the right, but only if done properly for food. That's how we worked" (Martin, appendix 6).

Regulation emerged out of practical necessity. Proper training and coordination were needed to ensure both animal welfare and human safety. Rather than collapsing under critique, the network re-stabilized through reform.

Scientific knowledge has become another stabilizing layer in the network. Stock assessments conducted by international bodies such as ICES and NAMMCO (2025) have estimated substantial population sizes for pilot whales in the eastern North Atlantic. These figures are frequently invoked by Faroese authorities and whaling representatives to support claims of sustainability (The Government of the Faroe Islands, n.d.-c). Such assessments function as immutable mobiles in a particularly powerful way. They translate whales into quantified populations, enabling the practice to be defended within global regimes of environmental governance. As Martin notes, referencing these scientific evaluations is central when responding to accusations of unsustainability:

"The food Faroese people get from the sea is sustainable, and that's why we should carry on with the grindadráp […] we must approach grind with dignity, using correct methods and right intentions, for food. It's not about pleasure—it must make sense" (Martin, appendix 6).

The grindadráp is thus framed not solely as tradition, but as a regulated, recorded, and scientifically contextualized activity.

6.1.5 Stability with Declining Engagement

By the late twentieth century, the grindadráp existed as a layered and stabilized tradition supported by historical continuity, legal codification, institutional organization, and scientific validation. It remained embedded in Faroese society, yet it was not highly politicized internally. For many Faroese, pilot whale meat was no longer a necessity, and participation had become less central to everyday life. Several Faroese describe a gradual weakening prior to the intensification of international activism. Faroese journalist Jóhannes, who has followed the grindadráp controversy closely, recalls his father's experience:

"According to my father, he was the youngest man at the grind when he was in his 30s, and there was often a shortage of people for the grind. They didn't get enough people, and often the whales were let go" (Jóhannes, appendix 3).

While the network remained intact, it was no longer sustained by strong generational engagement. The grindadráp persisted, but it functioned quietly. It was culturally significant without being constantly defended or publicly mobilized. The network was stable but characterized by declining interessement. The OPP (Obligatory Passage Point) remained available, yet fewer actors were actively invested in reproducing it. Some Faroese locals argue that had this trajectory continued, with decreasing participation and reduced practical dependence, the practice might eventually have faded out gradually through internal transformation rather than external confrontation (Fieldnotes, May 2025, appendix 7).

6.2 The Rupture: Escalation of Confrontation

By the early 2010s, the grindadráp was no longer the central subsistence practice it had once been. Participation fluctuated, and many Faroese did not rely on whale meat in their daily lives. Sea Shepherd had carried out campaigns in the Faroes prior to this period, but these earlier interventions were sporadic and relatively limited in visibility. Social media had not yet amplified activist messaging to global audiences, and the organization was not widely perceived as a serious or sustained threat within Faroese society.

This changed dramatically in 2011. Sea Shepherd returned with renewed intensity, adopting highly visible and confrontational tactics aimed at gaining international media exposure. Through what founder Paul Watson calls "aggressive non-violent direct action", the organization sought to present the grindadráp as a morally wrong and outdated practice to a global audience. Their strategy relied

heavily on dramatic imagery, confrontation at sea and onshore, and emotionally charged rhetoric. The television series *Whale Wars: Viking Shores* (Animal Planet, 2012) further amplified these representations and brought the grindadráp into living rooms across the world. Locally, these tactics were not experienced as constructive engagement but as intrusion. Jóhannes describes how the activist presence altered participation patterns:

"There are people today who participate in the grind specifically because it has been hyped due to the activists. It's become a nationalist thing to join the grind […] Suddenly we had too many people for the grind. And this new fascination with the grind was a reaction to the activists" (Jóhannes, appendix 3).

The confrontation did not simply generate debate. It generated resistance. As Jóhannes reflects further:

"The activism has been so aggressive and demeaning—not just toward the tradition, but also toward the Faroese people and culture. Anti-Faroese rhetoric has been used […] And being called barbaric" (ibid.).

What might have been framed internationally as criticism of a traditional practice was locally perceived as condemnation of a people. The grindadráp was reframed globally as cruelty requiring intervention. In the Faroes, however, the discussion increasingly shifted from the grindadráp itself to questions of sovereignty, recognition, and who has the authority to define Faroese identity. One cultural expression of this atmosphere emerged in 2011 when the up-and-coming Faroese rap group Swangah released the song *Frá Bygd til Býr* (From Village to City). The song is a nationalist anthem celebrating Faroese pride and identity. In it appears the line: "All Faroese say Fuck Paul Watson" (Swangah, 2013). The track became extremely popular, widely played on Faroese public service radio and performed at concerts where audiences would chant the line collectively (Author's recollection). The song captured and amplified an already existing sentiment. Sea Shepherd had become a shared external opponent, not only for supporters of the grindadráp, but for many Faroese locals across political positions. Even some Faroese who were critical of the grindadráp reacted defensively to what they perceived as disrespectful external interference. At the time, the dominant sentiment among many Faroese was not necessarily being pro-whaling, but rather being pro-Faroese against external forces. As one Faroese local explained, reflecting on the tensions during the large Sea Shepherd campaigns of 2014 – 2015, "*I hated them. It had nothing to do with the grind — I don't even like it. I just didn't want these people coming here and telling us what to do"*

(Fieldnotes, May 2025, appendix 7). The campaigns were interpreted not only as criticism of a practice, but as an attack on Faroese identity. This tension was visible in everyday life. Sea Shepherd activists were easily recognizable, often dressed uniformly in black hoodies marked with campaign logos. The consistent branding created a clear visual boundary. In small communities where visibility is high, this presence became symbolically charged. Activists were noticed immediately, and their movements quickly became a topic of conversation. Their clothing became a marker of alignment. I remember a close friend being approached by Faroese locals and asked, in an antagonistic tone, whether she was "Sea Shepherd", simply because she was wearing a black hoodie (Author's recollection). What would normally have been unremarkable clothing had become politicized. Suspicion was attached not only to actions, but to appearance. The rupture did not produce a clear divide between pro- and anti-whaling positions. Instead, it consolidated sentiment around Faroese identity. Outside pressure, particularly when perceived as exaggerated or uninformed, compelled locals to take a stance. For many, that stance was less about the grindadráp and more about resisting what was experienced as foreign moral authority.

Between 2011 and 2016, the grindadráp became more than a traditional practice for sustenance. It became a symbol within a broader struggle over identity, recognition, and autonomy. International activism succeeded in making the grindadráp globally visible. Locally, however, that visibility strengthened cohesion rather than fragmentation.

6.3 Failed Translation: When Problematization did not hold

The Sea Shepherd campaigns between 2011 and 2016 need to be understood not only as a moment of confrontation, but as an attempt at translation. Sea Shepherd did not simply criticize the grindadráp. They attempted to redefine it by repositioning actors, and reorganizing the network around a new moral problem.

6.3.1 Problematization: Importing a Proven Strategy

Sea Shepherd framed the grindadráp as a moral injustice that required immediate external intervention. The problem was defined as cruelty, and the implied solution was exposure, confrontation, and international pressure. The organization positioned itself as an OPP which change had to occur. For the grindadráp to vanish, the Faroese would need to respond to global outrage and moral scrutiny. This strategy was not created specifically for the Faroese context. It had been developed and refined in earlier campaigns, particularly in international waters and in places

like Japan, where Japanese whalers were illegally killing whales in the name of scientific research (Sea Shepherd Global, n.d.-b). Crast reflects on this difference:

"The campaign in the Faroes under Sea Shepherd's umbrella is almost 43 years old — it's ancient. And for most of those years, the strategy has been aggressive non-violent direct action, with all the discomfort that comes with it. That strategy works really well in ship-based campaigns on international waters, but it doesn't produce good results in national waters governed by local laws" (Crast, appendix 1).

She further explains:

"In international waters, Sea Shepherd has been enforcing international law where no authorities were present to ensure compliance — that's been our role. But you can't just take that same approach and apply it to a national campaign where laws are already in place" (ibid.).

In earlier campaigns, such as those targeting Japanese whaling operations in the Southern Ocean, Sea Shepherd operated in contexts where they argued that international law was being violated and where enforcement mechanisms were weak or absent. Their role was framed as intervening where legal authorities failed to act. The confrontation was directed at what they understood to be illegal practices taking place in international waters. In contrast, the grindadráp takes place within a national legal framework. It is regulated by Faroese law, conducted in territorial waters, and recognized by local authorities as a lawful activity (The Government of the Faroe Islands, n.d.-c). Conservationist and former Sea Shepherd member, Pete Bethune, makes a similar comparison. Reflecting on earlier campaigns in Japan, he describes how aggressive confrontation had previously been effective:

"When we did a campaign in Japan we were aggressive and it got media coverage and it made the Japanese people question what they were doing. So there it worked to be aggressive and expose them" (Workman, 2014c, 11:00).

But upon arriving in the Faroes, he reached a different conclusion:

"When I got to the Faroes, I quickly realized that it wouldn't help the situation" (ibid.).

Abraham, an activist who has participated in Sea Shepherd campaigns in the Faroes, offers a similar reflection on the early 2014–15 campaigns:

"I saw the 2014–15 campaigns where they kind of had boats and ran into the water […] you could see it was the wrong approach for any type of activism […] I think they had the heart at the place, but I just thought it was kind of a wrong way to push forward this agenda" (Abraham, appendix 4).

A strategy that had destabilized networks elsewhere was applied to a very different context. In Japan and in international waters, Sea Shepherd had confronted what they framed as violations of international norms. In the Faroes, however, they confronted a small, self-governing society engaged in a legal and internally regulated practice. The problem framing did not align with how Faroese actors understood the grindadráp. What Sea Shepherd defined as illegitimate and urgent intervention was locally understood as lawful and culturally embedded. The problematization challenged the authority of the Faroese to regulate their own affairs. As a result, the attempt to define the grindadráp as a global legal and moral crisis did not produce the expected realignment of actors.

6.3.2 Interessement: Withdrawal of Potential Allies

Interessement is about securing actors in the roles that are assigned to them in the problematization phase. This meant persuading local actors that the grindadráp should be reconsidered and that Sea Shepherd's intervention was legitimate. Without at least partial alignment from Faroese society, the translation could not succeed. Sea Shepherd's strategy assumed that increased exposure and moral pressure would generate internal debate and eventually fragmentation. However, for many Faroese actors, alignment with Sea Shepherd came at a social cost. Instead of encouraging internal criticism, the confrontational tone often made it socially harder for Faroese actors to publicly question the grindadráp. This dynamic is particularly visible in the reflections of Rúni Nielsen, founder of the organization Grindahvalur, who has been a visible voice in the Faroese debate on the grindadráp. While he does not support the practice, he describes how the rhetoric and tone of Sea Shepherd complicated his own and people aligned with his position:

"It does make me get this feeling of instead of advocating for the whaling to stop, I want to go on the side of the whalers and help them be more clever and have more clever answers […] They are giving real environmentalists and conservationists a real hard time" (Workman, 2014d, 08:55).

Rather than being enrolled as a local ally, he experienced the activism as counterproductive and damaging to his own work. The tone of international criticism made it difficult for him and his peers to publicly engage with the Faroese locals about the controversy of the grindadráp, without

being associated with what he perceived as misinformation and disrespect. This suggests that the interessement devices did not hold. Instead of stabilizing local actors in roles as internal critics or reformers, the campaigns contributed to distancing and withdrawal. To align openly with Sea Shepherd risked being perceived as aligning with an external actor that many Faroese viewed as hostile. Jóhannes points to the same dynamic when he observes:

"I'm sure there are people who are against the grind but are even more against Sea Shepherd" (Jóhannes, appendix 3).

The activist network and the local anti-whaling position did not merge. The attempt to lock actors into predefined roles was unsuccessful. Rather than securing allies, the campaigns narrowed the range of acceptable public positions. Being against the grindadráp increasingly risked being read as being against the Faroese. Under such conditions, interessement could not stabilize. The result was not enrolment into a new network, but reinforcement of the existing one.

6.3.3 Enrolment: The Network failed to Reassemble

For Sea Shepherd's translation to succeed, Faroese actors would need to take on positions within the activist framework as challengers to the grindadráp. They did not manage this. Instead of producing a new coalition between international activists and Faroese actors, the campaigns largely reinforced existing alignments. The local network surrounding the grindadráp did not dissolve or fragment in response to pressure. On the contrary, it appeared to harden as participation increased during the height of the confrontational campaigns. A practice that had shown signs of decline became symbolically reactivated. Joining a grindadráp was no longer only about food or tradition, but about an expression of national solidarity. This dynamic indicates that enrolment occurred, but not in the direction Sea Shepherd intended. Rather than enrolling Faroese actors into an anti-whaling network, the campaigns contributed to the strengthening of the pro-whaling network. The failure of enrolment is also visible in the absence of sustained Faroese mobilization against the grind during this period. While there were individuals critical of the practice, and while some attempts at internal debate occurred, these did not develop into a stable domestic anti-whaling movement aligned with Sea Shepherd. The activist network remained externally anchored. This suggests that the translation stalled between interessement and enrolment. The problem was defined, and attention was generated, but the actors whose participation was necessary for structural change did not accept the identities or roles proposed to them. Instead of reassembling into a new configuration, the existing

network surrounding the grindadráp re-stabilized itself. The practice remained legal, regulated, and socially embedded. The attempt to reorganize the network from the outside did not hold.

6.3.4 Mobilization: Global Support & Local Countermobilization

Through social media campaigns, televised confrontations, dramatic imagery, and emotionally charged messaging, Sea Shepherd brought the grindadráp into international awareness. Images of red fjords circulated widely. Comment sections filled with condemnation. Within animal rights and marine conservation circles, the grindadráp became widely known and strongly criticized. Sea Shepherd positioned itself as a spokesperson for pilot whales and generated international outrage. The issue entered global activist discourse. The increased visibility also altered how the Faroe Islands were recognized internationally. During a conversation in a café in Tórshavn, a young Faroese local reflected on how international recognition of the islands has changed in recent years, noting that many people abroad now associate the Faroes primarily with the grindadráp. As he put it, the typical reaction today is: *"Oh, that's the place where they kill dolphins"* (Fieldnotes, May 2025, appendix 7). In this sense, Sea Shepherd succeeded in placing the Faroes on the global map. However, the visibility was strongly tied to a morally charged narrative, which reinforced international condemnation without necessarily generating the scale of political pressure required for structural change. While awareness increased significantly among audiences already engaged with marine conservation, animal rights, or vegan activism, the outrage did not reach a level of mainstream global consensus. The grindadráp did not become a controversy that generated broad diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions, or sustained international institutional action. Outside activist circles, many people remained unaware or indifferent. For external mobilization to create structural change in the Faroes, the pressure would likely need to be large-scale and politically consequential. Instead, the outrage remained concentrated within specific activist communities. It was highly visible online, but it did not translate into overwhelming global condemnation strong enough to force policy change.

Within the Faroes, the global criticism often reinforced a sense of being misrepresented or attacked. Rather than generating internal political pressure for reform, the mobilization contributed to defensive cohesion. The practice became associated with national autonomy and resistance to outside interference. The campaigns increased international visibility, but the level of mobilization was not strong enough to change the political and social situation within the Faroes. Sea Shepherd became a legitimate spokesperson for whales within global activist circles, but not within Faroese

society. The international activist network and the local anti-whaling actors remained largely disconnected. The activist framing failed in linking external mobilization with internal critique.

6.4 Re-Stabilization Under Pressure: The Strengthening of the Faroese Defense

The failure of Sea Shepherd's translation attempt did not leave the network surrounding the grindadráp unchanged. On the contrary, the external pressure contributed to a process of internal consolidation. Rather than destabilizing the practice, the confrontational campaigns of the 2010s appear to have strengthened the Faroese ability to defend it. As one Faroese acquaintance living in Copenhagen explained, discussions about the grindadráp with Danish friends often begin with criticism but shift once the Faroese perspective is explained. In his words, *"the grind is actually very easy to defend,"* because the arguments supporting it become convincing when presented in context (Fieldnotes, May 2025, appendix 7).

Under criticism, the practice became increasingly articulated, documented, and justified. One visible example of this strengthening is the development of structured and accessible argumentation in defense of the grindadráp. The official Faroese government presents detailed sections addressing common criticisms (The Government of the Faroe Islands, n.d.-c). The site outlines arguments concerning sustainability, regulation, communal distribution, legality, and the role of whale meat as food. Stock assessments from international scientific bodies are cited (NAMMCO, 2025). Legal frameworks are explained. Hunting methods and regulatory reforms are described. These materials function as inscription devices. They translate a locally embedded practice into formats that can circulate globally through statistics, reports, laws, and structured arguments. The grindadráp is no longer defended only through tradition or identity, but through quantification, regulation, and administrative transparency. Jóhannes reflects on how this shift has affected everyday debates with outsiders:

"I remember people being against the grind in the past, but nowadays the rhetoric of Faroese people is so well-trained in anti-activist arguments that it's fairly easy to talk to outsiders and get them onboard with the fact that the grindadráp is totally fine in relation to eating animals, unless they become vegan" (Jóhannes, appendix 3).

His observation points to a broader transformation. Defensive arguments have become more refined and more readily articulated. Where earlier the practice may not have required constant justification,

it is now supported by prepared responses to common critiques. The strengthening of these justificatory infrastructures can be understood as a form of network stabilization under threat. When the practice was exposed to intense external criticism, the response was clarification. This dynamic has implications beyond Faroese society. In conversations with foreigners, the presentation of structured arguments often shifts the tone of discussion. While disagreement may remain, the practice appears less chaotic or arbitrary once its regulatory and ecological dimensions are explained (Fieldnotes, May 2025, appendix 7). The Faroese defense is not based solely on emotional attachment or nationalism, but increasingly on institutionalized and documented reasoning. This does not mean that international criticism had no effect. On the contrary, the external pressure likely contributed to the sharpening of these defensive arguments. The need to respond to accusations of cruelty or illegality created incentives for clearer articulation of regulatory frameworks and scientific references. Confrontation produced rationalization. The result is that the grindadráp today is defended through a layered combination of tradition, sovereignty, legal structure, and scientific validation. Rather than remaining a loosely justified cultural practice, it has become administratively legible and rhetorically structured.

The activist pressure of the 2010s may have strengthened the network it sought to dismantle. The external challenge did not dissolve the practice, but contributed to its reassembly in a more articulated and institutionally supported form.

6.5 Postcolonial Dimensions: Representation and Moral Authority

Edward Said argues that Orientalism is not simply a matter of prejudice, but a system of representation through which knowledge about the *Other* is produced and circulated. Complex societies are reduced to simplified moral types, and this reduction creates a hierarchy in which the West appears rational and progressive while the Other is cast as irrational, backward, or barbaric. What matters in this framework is not only what is said, but who has the authority to define (Said, 1979).

During the height of Sea Shepherd's confrontational campaigns, similar mechanisms of representation became visible. Through repeated imagery of red fjords, dramatic confrontations, and strongly worded public statements, the Faroese were increasingly portrayed as a singular moral category. The diversity of positions within Faroese society, internal debates, regulatory frameworks, and historical context were largely absent from the global narrative. In many international circles, the Faroese became reduced to the act of killing whales unnecessarily. This reduction operated not

only through imagery, but through language. In several public statements, Paul Watson described the Faroese in explicitly dehumanizing terms, referring to them as monstrous barbarians and embarrassments to humanity. Such language does not merely criticize the grindadráp. It frames an entire population as morally corrupt. The distinction between condemning the grindadráp and condemning a people becomes blurred.

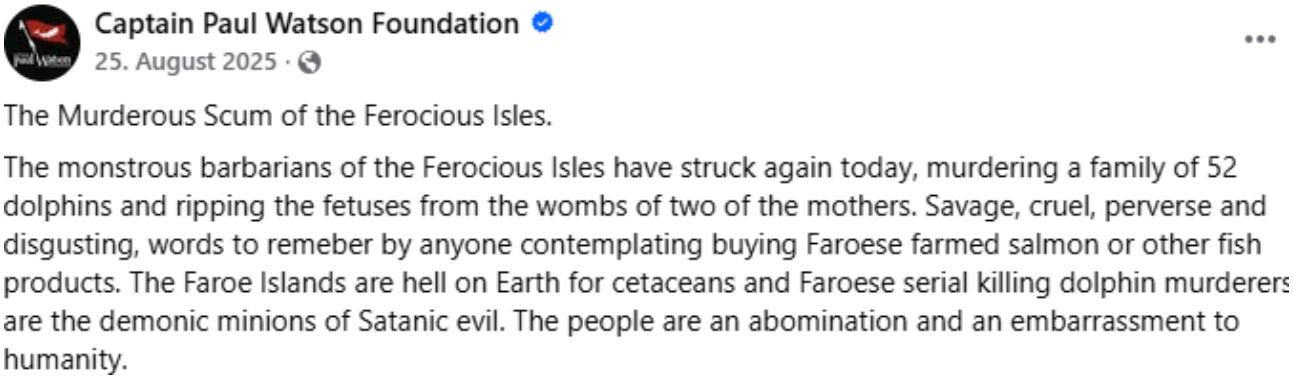


Figure 15. Social Media Post by Paul Watson condemning the Faroese (Authors screenshot)

These representations did not remain confined to official statements. They circulated rapidly across digital platforms. Abraham recalls how campaign videos were often followed by comment sections filled with hostility from individuals who had never visited the Faroes:

"We would look at the comment sections and see people from all around the world who never went to the Faroes […] 'Oh, these fucking bastards, these barbarians.' […] 'oh, I hope a nuclear bomb just blows up the entire country.' […] And I would continuously try to use my own platform and say, 'hey, this language doesn't help. It makes it harder for us who are on the ground'" (Abraham, appendix 4).

He explains how some comments escalated into extreme expressions of anger toward the country as a whole. For some activists attempting to engage Faroese communities locally, this created a contradiction. While they tried to communicate respectfully on the ground, the broader discourse surrounding the campaigns often positioned the Faroese collectively as immoral and deserving of condemnation. Once such representations entered global circulation, they became difficult to manage. The local campaign operated within a global narrative it could not fully control.

This tension became particularly visible during a press conference in September 2014 at the conclusion of the GrindStop campaign. A Sea Shepherd representative spoke about the importance of dialogue, understanding, and mutual respect between activists and Faroese locals. Several Faroese attendees immediately pointed to the contradiction between these words and the online

statements made by Watson. One attendee, who identified as vegan and opposed the grindadráp, stated that she would support efforts to end the hunt if misinformation and personal attacks ceased. Another attendee questioned how calls for respect could be taken seriously when Watson had compared Faroese whalers to pedophiles and made repeated claims that locals considered false. The activist present responded that he could not answer for Watson, suggesting that different individuals communicate differently (Workman, 2014a). For the Faroese present, this exchange confirmed a broader concern. Appeals to dialogue were difficult to take seriously when the organization's most visible leader continued to portray them in dehumanizing terms. If respect and understanding were demanded from the Faroese, but not extended toward them in return, it would be hard to see why they should engage. The inconsistency weakened the credibility of the local outreach efforts.

The activists on the ground could not fully represent or control the discourse of the broader organization. The attempt at interessement was undermined by the simultaneous production of hostility. This disrupted the possibility of enrolment.

From a postcolonial perspective, the controversy extended beyond tone. Said emphasizes that Orientalist discourse positions the West as the knowing subject who defines the Other. In the Faroese context, activist rhetoric sometimes implied that the Faroese either did not understand the moral implications of their practice or were incapable of governing themselves ethically. This created a subtle hierarchy which presented activists as enlightened moral actors, and Faroese as subjects in need of correction. Martin captures how this was experienced locally:

"But what has happened to the Faroese people, it wasn't about the grindadráp itself but the idea of being governed from Paris, London, and New York — dictated in what we must do in the Faroe Islands by outsiders […] who would accept being governed by a foreign group that doesn't understand?".

The reaction was a defense of autonomy and authority. The question was not only whether the grindadráp should continue, but who had the right to define what Faroese society ought to be. The contradictions that surfaced in 2014 did not disappear. They accumulated over time. The gap between dialogue-oriented rhetoric on the ground and hostile representation online continued to shape local perceptions of the campaigns. The failure of translation was not only strategic but discursive. The way the Faroese were produced within global activist narratives limited the possibility of reciprocal engagement and foreshadowed tensions that would later contribute to the split within Sea Shepherd.

6.6 From Confrontation to Silence: Strategic Disengagement

By the mid-2010s, the confrontation between activists and Faroese society had begun to lose intensity. By around 2015, many Faroese appeared to have grown tired of the confrontation and responded with disengagement and silence. Rather than continuing to engage publicly with activists, an informal norm emerged not to give Sea Shepherd a platform. Attendance at press conferences declined, and the activists gradually disappeared from daily news coverage. Nielsen reflects on this shift in public perception:

"The show Whale Wars: Viking Shores […] was ridiculed by Faroese people because of its inaccuracy and the built up and often made up drama. It was fake and everybody saw this […] After it came out they are not scared of Sea Shepherd because they see how powerless they are. They have no pull in the media. Their lack of integrity is making them look stupid in a media sense. So that is the general opinion that Sea Shepherd is 'not so dangerous anymore'" (Workman, 2014b, 11:20).

This withdrawal of attention also affected internal discussion of the grindadráp. As Jóhannes observes:

"Internally, no one really talks about the grind. When the grind happens, people talk about that, but it's about the event — not whether we should do it at all […] If a Faroese person hears someone start to say, 'We shouldn't kill whales because…' then I think they just shut down a bit. They've heard it so many times. People are tired of it. I also think that's made our arguments fall behind" (Jóhannes, appendix 3).

Rather than intensifying internal reflection, the years of confrontation may have closed off space for discussion. According to Hanna, Campaign lead for the Captain Paul Watson Foundation in the Faroes, the Faroese responses to tourists often feel rehearsed:

"The Faroese often say exactly the same things. It's almost like there's a briefing sheet of what to say to tourists about the grind […] but I personally always have the feeling that those conversations aren't happening within the families as much as they could be" (Hanna, appendix 2).

In this phase, defensive mobilization gradually solidified into a discursive routine. Arguments in favor of the grindadráp were frequently repeated in external contexts, while internal discussion became more difficult. Crast reflects on the difficulty of breaking through this silence:

"If we had access to Faroese media — if they didn't ghost us, which they largely do — I think we'd be much further ahead […] The resistance is strong because a war-like atmosphere has been created — and you can't just turn that off by declaring it over" (Crast, appendix 1).

During fieldwork, a Faroese man I encountered during a beach clean-up with Sea Shepherd volunteers expressed this sentiment directly, stating that Faroese people should simply ignore the activists rather than engage with them (Fieldnotes, May 2025, appendix 7).

Analytically, this marks a shift from controversy to disengagement. Rather than continuing to respond publicly to activist interventions, Faroese actors reduced the interactional space available to them. Media exposure declined, and the broader moral debate receded from everyday discourse. In Callon's terms, this can be understood as a form of defensive stabilization. By limiting engagement, Faroese actors reduced the opportunities for activists to reassert problematization. Paradoxically, activism not only strengthened defensive identity formation but also contributed to discursive fatigue. Rather than becoming an open moral debate, the grindadráp increasingly became a topic many Faroese preferred not to revisit. What had become a symbolic site of identity defense was now also difficult to reopen for discussion.

6.7 Declining Consumption and the Symbolic Persistence of Whale Meat

Although public debate around the grindadráp has largely subsided, Faroese society has not remained unchanged. One important development concerns the role of pilot whale meat in the Faroese diet. While the practice continues to be widely defended culturally, the actual consumption of whale meat has declined significantly over the past decades (F. Helmsdal, 2025). Already in the 2010s, some Faroese commentators predicted that declining consumption might eventually lead to the disappearance of the grindadráp (Workman, 2014b). However, surveys from 2014 and 2024 show that public support for the grindadráp has remained relatively stable, with roughly 12 percent supporting an end to the hunt while the majority continues to support it (F. Helmsdal, 2025). Furthermore, when examining consumption rather than attitudes, a different picture emerges. Historical estimates suggest that Faroese people consumed around 4.4 kilograms of pilot whale meat per person annually in the early 1980s (Vestergård & Zachariassen, 1985). More recent surveys indicate that this figure has dropped to around 1 kilogram per capita per year, largely attributed to the long-running debate about contamination in whale meat.

For decades, medical researchers in the Faroes have warned that pilot whale meat contains high levels of mercury and other environmental pollutants. Beginning in the 1980s, the Chief Medical Officer, Pál Weihe, advised the Faroese population to limit consumption (Weihe et al., 1996), and in later years stronger recommendations followed suggesting that whale meat and blubber should ideally not be eaten at all (Weihe & Debes Joensen, 2008). These warnings have remained controversial within Faroese society. Several interviewees described how the actors behind these recommendations, particularly Pál Weihe, have sometimes been met with skepticism. Faroese anti-whaling activist, Sofus, explained this reaction in the following way:

"People have laughed at Pál Weihe and said he's biased. 'Damn it, there's so much mercury in it.' Then you can't eat tuna either, they just say" (Sofus, appendix 5).

Despite these controversies, the long-term effect of the health debate appears to have been a gradual decline in everyday consumption. Survey data suggests that most Faroese today eat whale meat only occasionally, often once or twice a year (F. Helmsdal, 2025). In interviews, several participants described how whale meat today often appears in specific social contexts rather than as a regular part of everyday meals. Abraham summarized this development in the following way:

"The grind is not a major food source for the Faroes. It shouldn't be either. It is a snack for parties and for festivities" (Abraham, appendix 4).

These observations suggest that pilot whale meat increasingly functions as a culturally meaningful food served during celebrations or social gatherings rather than as a staple part of everyday diets. Several Faroese locals described receiving whale meat at birthdays, graduations, or during ólavsøka, the Faroese national holiday (Fieldnotes, May 2025, appendix 7). In these contexts, the meat carries social and symbolic meaning beyond its nutritional value.

As Sahlins (1978) notes, foods can shift from everyday subsistence items to symbolic cultural markers. Pilot whale meat appears increasingly to occupy this symbolic role in Faroese society. Activists have argued that much of the meat taken during hunts is not consumed at all (Hanna, appendix 2). Available data makes it difficult to confirm how widespread this phenomenon actually is. Research from the Department of Research at the National Hospital suggests that around 3.5 kilograms of whale meat per person should have been available in recent years, according to the official whaling statistics. Since surveys indicate that the Faroese people consume roughly 1 kilogram per person annually, this suggests that some portion of the meat may indeed go uneaten. A

2022 survey also found that a minority of respondents reported throwing whale meat away (Dahl, 2025). What is particularly striking in this context is that the decline in consumption has not been accompanied by a comparable decline in support for the grindadráp itself. The hunt continues to be widely defended as part of Faroese culture and identity. As Eric Hobsbawm notes, traditions are often defended more strongly when they are perceived to be under threat (Hobsbawm, 2012). International criticism may therefore have strengthened the symbolic importance of the grindadráp even as its role in everyday diets has declined. In this sense, the grindadráp appears to have undergone a gradual shift in meaning. While pilot whale meat was historically an important subsistence resource, it increasingly functions today as a symbolic cultural food and as a marker of Faroese identity. This distinction between symbolic value and practical consumption helps explain why support for the practice has remained stable even as fewer Faroese rely on whale meat as part of their daily diet. Yet while these changes were taking place gradually and largely outside the public spotlight, moments of controversy could still bring the issue abruptly back into national debate. One such moment occurred in September 2021 as the following section describes in further details.

6.8 The Return of Debate: The 2021 Dolphin Hunt

Although debate around the grindadráp had largely subsided, it could re-emerge when particular hunts were perceived as problematic. In September 2021, more than 1,400 Atlantic white-sided dolphins were killed in Skálafjørður, triggering one of the most intense public debates about whaling in recent Faroese history (Nevett, 2021). Although the grindadráp primarily targets pilot whales, dolphins may occasionally be caught when they accompany whale pods, though dedicated dolphin hunts are rare in the Faroes (J. Olsen, 1999). Faroese hunters have less experience with dolphin hunts, and dolphin populations are less well documented than pilot whales. Because of this, many Faroese felt uneasy about the scale and circumstances of the 2021 hunt. The event unfolded under unusual and poorly coordinated circumstances. A large pod of dolphins was eventually driven into Skálafjørður, where the situation quickly became difficult to control. Observers reported that too few trained participants were present and that the killing process took significantly longer than typical pilot whale hunts. Video footage showing large numbers of dolphins struggling on the beach generated strong reactions both internationally and within the Faroe Islands (Kvf.fo, 2021). Several whalers reportedly left the hunt without taking any catch when they realized how the situation was unfolding. For many observers, the issue was not the hunt itself but the perception that the hunt had

not been conducted according to the standards normally associated with the grindadráp (Av Rana, 2022).

Martin, representing the Pilot Whalers' Association and normally a defender of the practice, also criticized the hunt:

"We can justify it all if it's done properly […] But if we can't manage it better than this and the group is too large, then I start to question my stance" (Martin, appendix 6).

He further reflected on the botched killing and reactions:

"I spoke out strongly then and received criticism. But I think it was unlike anything before—it was unusual […] killing Atlantic white-sided dolphins isn't common, but not unheard of […] But driving 1,500 dolphins into Skálafjørð when there are many other more suitable beaches around—it was provocative. It badly damaged our reputation there. I don't think anyone will do that again" (ibid.).

Nielsen described a similar reaction:

"It's very strange for me to be agreeing with the outsiders who are attacking me online […] this time it was just like, 'yes, you're right'"(Workman, 2021, 15:20).

Unlike earlier controversies where criticism from abroad triggered defensive reactions among Faroese locals, the 2021 dolphin hunt produced widespread domestic criticism. Many Faroese who normally defend the grindadráp felt that this hunt had crossed a line. The debate also reached the political arena. Faroese politician Sjúrður Skaale argued that the hunt undermined the arguments normally used to defend whaling internationally, particularly claims that Faroese hunts are sustainable, regulated, and humane (Skaale, 2021). Concerns were also raised about economic consequences. Representatives of the Faroese aquaculture industry warned that the hunt could damage the reputation of Faroese seafood exports following the international media coverage (Av Rana, 2022).

Public surveys done shortly after the dolphin hunt highlighted an important distinction between dolphins and pilot whales. They showed that 53 % of Faroese locals opposed killing dolphins, while only 8 % opposed killing pilot whales. Similar numbers had already appeared in earlier surveys, suggesting that opposition to dolphin hunts existed before the 2021 event but had rarely been discussed publicly (Jákupsson & Egholm, 2018). The dolphin hunt debate illustrates a recurring pattern within Faroese discussions about whaling. Public debate rarely emerges simply because the

practice exists. Instead, discussion tends to surface when a particular hunt is perceived to have gone wrong. When the hunt is conducted according to established expectations, it remains largely uncontroversial within Faroese society. When those expectations appear to be violated, however, the practice quickly becomes a subject of intense discussion.

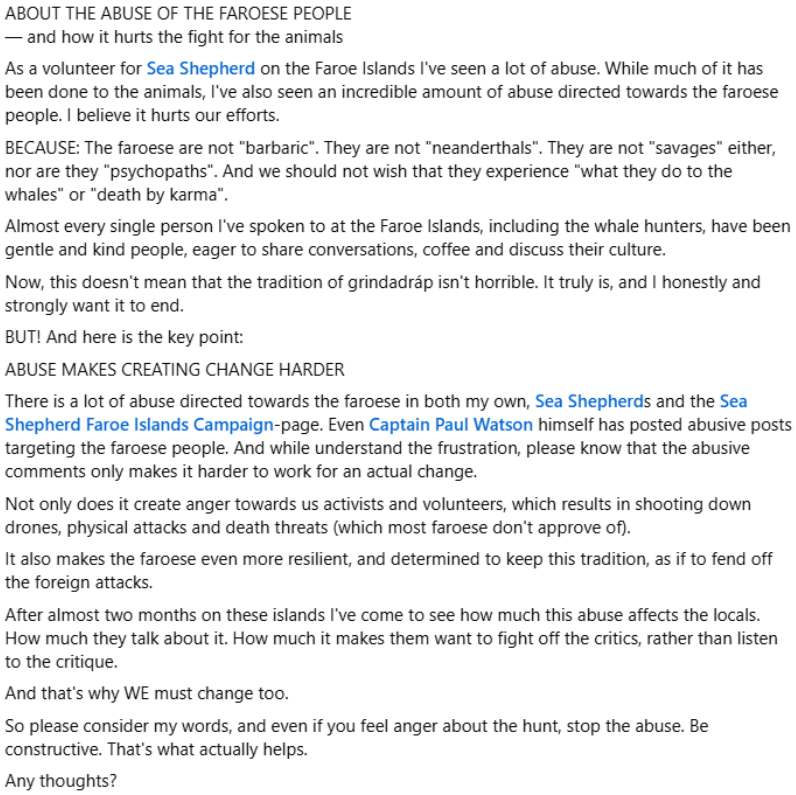
Following the controversy, Faroese authorities introduced new measures. A quota for Atlantic white-sided dolphins was introduced, and the Pilot Whalers' Association began developing a specialized spinal lance designed for dolphin hunts (BBC, 2022; Hvidtfeldt, 2022). These measures were presented as ways of ensuring that future hunts could be conducted more efficiently and within clearer limits. Later stock assessments by the Faroese Marine Life Institute concluded that the population of Atlantic white-sided dolphins in the North Atlantic is large and stable. Based on these assessments, the institute recommended a quota of 650 dolphins annually for the coming years, which the government adopted from 2025 (Bertholdsen, 2025). Activist organizations criticized these measures, arguing that the quota functioned primarily as a political gesture rather than a meaningful restriction (Sea Shepherd Global, 2022). The number of dolphins killed after the 2021 event remained relatively low. In 2022 no dolphins were killed, in 2023 ten dolphins were killed, and in 2024 approximately 150 dolphins were killed (Statistics Faroe Islands, 2025). As the immediate controversy faded and regulatory adjustments were introduced, the debate gradually disappeared again from everyday public debate in the Faroes. Much like before the incident, the grindadráp returned to being a practice that is rarely discussed internally unless something goes wrong.

In ANT terms, the 2021 dolphin hunt temporarily destabilized the network by challenging expectations about how the practice should be conducted. The event briefly reopened a debate that had otherwise become largely dormant. It demonstrated that internal criticism of whaling does exist within Faroese society, but that such criticism often emerges only when the practice is seen as deviating from its own standards.

Figure 16. The infamous dolphin hunt from 2021 (Source: Sea Shepherd 2021)

6.9 Recognizing the Limits of Confrontation

The years following the confrontational campaigns of the early and mid-2010s gradually revealed their limitations. While Sea Shepherd succeeded in bringing global attention to the grindadráp, the strategy failed to generate meaningful local change and instead strengthened defensive alignment around Faroese identity. Abraham, who later campaigned with Sea Shepherd in the Faroes, publicly reflected on how abusive rhetoric directed at Faroese people was harming the cause (Abraham, appendix 4). In a widely shared social media post, he emphasized that abuse of the Faroese did not advance efforts to end the grindadráp. He rejected descriptions of the Faroese as barbaric or savages, and noted that nearly everyone he had met locally had been open to conversation, including most whalers. He argued that hostile language only made locals more defensive and more determined to maintain the practice.



ABOUT THE ABUSE OF THE FAROESE PEOPLE
— and how it hurts the fight for the animals

As a volunteer for Sea Shepherd on the Faroe Islands I've seen a lot of abuse. While much of it has been done to the animals, I've also seen an incredible amount of abuse directed towards the faroese people. I believe it hurts our efforts.

BECAUSE: The faroese are not "barbaric". They are not "neanderthals". They are not "savages" either, nor are they "psychopaths". And we should not wish that they experience "what they do to the whales" or "death by karma".

Almost every single person I've spoken to at the Faroe Islands, including the whale hunters, have been gentle and kind people, eager to share conversations, coffee and discuss their culture.

Now, this doesn't mean that the tradition of grindadráp isn't horrible. It truly is, and I honestly and strongly want it to end.

BUT! And here is the key point:

ABUSE MAKES CREATING CHANGE HARDER

There is a lot of abuse directed towards the faroese in both my own, Sea Shepherds and the Sea Shepherd Faroe Islands Campaign-page. Even Captain Paul Watson himself has posted abusive posts targeting the faroese people. And while understand the frustration, please know that the abusive comments only makes it harder to work for an actual change.

Not only does it create anger towards us activists and volunteers, which results in shooting down drones, physical attacks and death threats (which most faroese don't approve of).

It also makes the faroese even more resilient, and determined to keep this tradition, as if to fend off the foreign attacks.

After almost two months on these islands I've come to see how much this abuse affects the locals. How much they talk about it. How much it makes them want to fight off the critics, rather than listen to the critique.

And that's why WE must change too.

So please consider my words, and even if you feel anger about the hunt, stop the abuse. Be constructive. That's what actually helps.

Any thoughts?

Figure 17. Abraham's social media post about the abuse of the Faroese people (Authors own screenshot)

The post gained traction across political positions. Faroese critics of the grindadráp expressed agreement, emphasizing that opposition to the hunt did not require hostility toward the Faroese locals. Even some whalers acknowledged that constructive dialogue would likely be more effective than condemnation. The issue was no longer framed solely as moral urgency, but increasingly as a question of strategy: how can change be pursued without reinforcing resistance?

The original translation attempt had collapsed at the stages of interessement and enrolment. Rather than stabilizing a new network, the confrontational approach generated counter-networks and hardened existing alignments. Abraham's intervention reflects an awareness that the network could not be reconfigured through external pressure alone. Recognizing this limitation opened space for a new strategic approach, namely that if the Faroese themselves are the only actors capable of politically transforming the grindadráp, then any durable change must involve them rather than position them as enemies. This insight was not entirely new. As discussed earlier, Pete Bethune had made similar arguments in the early 2010s. However, by the late 2010s and early 2020s, the consequences of sustained polarization had become increasingly evident. Strategic reassessment was no longer theoretical but necessary. The question was whether Sea Shepherd could move from confrontation to dialogue without carrying the weight of its own history.

6.10 From Confrontation to Dialogue

Although Sea Shepherd publicly announced a shift in its Faroese campaign strategy in 2025 (Crast, 2025), the transformation had already begun several years earlier. From around 2020 onward, the organization gradually moved away from the confrontational tactics that had characterized earlier campaigns and toward a more dialogue-oriented approach. Central to this shift was Valentina Crast, who began taking on a larger role within the campaign that year and was eventually appointed campaign lead. Reflecting on this period, Crast describes how the campaign began experimenting with dialogue-oriented engagement:

"In 2020, I got the opportunity to take a bigger part in the campaign […] to start a conversation about the whale killings, instead of the confrontational approach that had dominated for many years. That year was a huge success — it was a great experience, and we had many good conversations. It helped shape my perspective on what the right way forward was. I had always struggled with the very aggressive approach, partly because I found it uncomfortable to be part of, but also because I couldn't see how we were going to create any real results with it. So what we were able to do in 2020 became the foundation for what has happened since" (Crast, appendix 1).

Following this shift in approach, Crast was hired to lead Sea Shepherd's work in the Faroe Islands, a position she has held since the end of 2020. The shift she describes reflects an emerging recognition among activists that earlier confrontational strategies had struggled to generate meaningful local change. Rather than relying primarily on direct confrontation with whalers and locals, the campaign increasingly emphasized conversation, documentation, and engagement with Faroese society. A similar perspective was expressed by Abraham, who joined the Faroese campaign during the same period. Describing his approach to activism, he emphasized dialogue and interpersonal engagement as central strategies:

"Ever since I began on the campaign, the approach has been that we want to have conversations and talk to people. We still document what's going on, but we are not trying to feed the anger. My entire approach when it comes to activism is to meet the people, talk to the people, and see if we can find some common ground" (Abraham, appendix 4).

The shift was also visible to observers within the Faroes. Jóhannes noted that some activists had deliberately attempted to distance themselves from earlier aggressive rhetoric:

"Valentina has been pretty good at not fostering this aggression […] that you shouldn't call people barbaric, because that doesn't help the case domestically" (Jóhannes, appendix 3).

These perspectives suggest that the shift in strategy was not merely a formal organizational decision but a broader process of internal reflection among activists involved in the Faroese campaign. Rather than positioning Faroese actors primarily as adversaries, the emerging approach sought to create space for dialogue and potential engagement with local perspectives.

From an ANT perspective, this shift can be interpreted as an attempt to reformulate the earlier failed translation. Whereas the confrontational campaigns had struggled to establish stable relations between activists and Faroese actors, the new strategy sought to reposition dialogue and local engagement as mechanisms of interessement. By attempting to meet Faroese actors in conversation rather than confrontation, activists aimed to reconfigure the network through which the grindadráp was being contested. However, this emerging strategy would soon encounter new challenges. Internal disagreements about the future direction of activism within Sea Shepherd ultimately led to a significant organizational rupture, resulting in the creation of the CPWF and the emergence of competing activist strategies in the Faroe Islands.

6.10.1 Rebranding the Campaign

Alongside the strategic shift toward dialogue, Sea Shepherd's campaign in the Faroes also underwent a gradual process of visual and symbolic rebranding. Beginning around 2020, several elements of the campaign's public identity changed, including its name, logo, and volunteer clothing. While these changes unfolded gradually, they collectively reflected an effort to distance the campaign from the confrontational imagery that had characterized earlier interventions. One of the most visible changes was the renaming of the Faroese campaign. For many years the campaign had operated under the name *Operation Bloody Fjords* (Sea Shepherd Netherlands, n.d.), a title that strongly emphasized the violent imagery associated with the grindadráp and aligned with Sea Shepherd's historically confrontational activist style. In 2022, the campaign was renamed *Operation Living Fjords* (Sea Shepherd Global, n.d.-a). The new name signaled a shift in emphasis, moving away from imagery centered on violence and toward a broader ecological framing of marine life and ocean conservation. The campaign's visual identity was also altered. The traditional Sea Shepherd "Jolly Roger" logo featuring a skull with crossed shepherd's staff and trident had long been associated with the organization's militant activist image. In the Faroese campaign, this symbol was gradually replaced with a new logo centered on the image of a whale. This change

softened the campaign's visual presentation and aligned more closely with the dialogue-oriented strategy that activists were attempting to develop. Changes were also made to the clothing worn by volunteers during the campaign. In earlier years, activists commonly wore black hoodies featuring the Jolly Roger logo, reinforcing the movement's more confrontational branding. In preparation for the 2025 campaign, new clothing was introduced featuring blue hoodies with the updated Sea Shepherd logo and the Faroese text *Sea Shepherd Sjálvboðin* (Sea Shepherd Volunteer). According to Crast, these changes were intended to help reduce tensions with local communities and present volunteers in a way that was less confrontational and more approachable (Crast, Pers.Comm.). The shift toward dialogue was therefore not only expressed through activist practices but also through the campaign's visual identity. Beyond reducing the immediate potential for confrontation, these changes also served a broader strategic purpose. The rebranding was intended to reshape how Sea Shepherd was perceived within Faroese society. Rather than appearing as an external force attacking Faroese culture, the campaign sought to present itself as an organization willing to engage in dialogue and encourage internal discussion about the future of the grindadráp. In this sense, the new visual identity and messaging were not only practical adjustments but also attempts to reposition Sea Shepherd within the controversy, from an actor widely perceived as an adversary of the Faroese locals toward a more dialogue-oriented participant seeking to work with Faroese society rather than against it.

Figures 18., 19., 20. & 21. Sea Shepherds old and new campaign names and logos (Source: Sea Shepherd)

Figures 22. & 23. Sea Shepherd's old and new volunteer clothing (Source: Sea Shepherd)

These changes can be understood as material and symbolic attempts to reposition the campaign within the Faroese context. Campaign names, logos, and clothing function as visible markers through which activists present themselves to other actors within the network. By altering these visual elements, Sea Shepherd sought to distance the campaign from its earlier militant identity and instead signal a willingness to engage in dialogue. The rebranding can be interpreted as a set of inscription devices designed to support the broader strategic shift toward conversation and local engagement.

6.10.2 The Split

While Sea Shepherd's Faroese campaign was gradually shifting toward a more dialogue-oriented approach, broader tensions were simultaneously developing within the organization. Disagreements over leadership, strategy, and the future direction of the movement ultimately culminated in a major organizational rupture. In 2022, Sea Shepherd founder Paul Watson departed from the organization and established the Captain Paul Watson Foundation, creating a new activist organization dedicated to continuing anti-whaling campaigns (Kilvert, 2022). The split marked a significant turning point within the international anti-whaling movement. For decades, Paul Watson had been the central figure associated with Sea Shepherd's confrontational style of activism. The organization's reputation had been built on direct-action campaigns targeting whaling vessels, often involving high-profile confrontations at sea. However, as Sea Shepherd's Faroese campaign began experimenting with more dialogue-oriented approaches, differences in strategic outlook became increasingly visible. The creation of the CPWF effectively produced two separate activist networks operating within the broader anti-whaling movement. While both organizations shared the overarching goal of ending the grindadráp, they differed in how they envisioned achieving this

objective. The split also reshaped relationships between activists operating locally in the Faroe Islands. During my interview with Faroese anti-whaling activist Sofus, this realignment became particularly visible (Sofus, appendix 5). When we met, he was wearing a CPWF T-shirt and proudly showed me a medal he had received from Paul Watson after sharing footage from the Atlantic white-sided dolphin hunt online (Fieldnotes, May 2025, appendix 7). While Sofus emphasized that he had nothing against the people involved in Sea Shepherd, he clearly positioned himself on the side of the CPWF following the split. Reflecting on the change in his collaboration with the organizations, he explained:

"*No, now I don't have time for that anymore. I like all the people in Sea Shepherd, I have nothing against them. But those damn clowns who hijacked it from Paul… That was not a nice way to do it"* (Sofus, appendix 5).

Sofus' account illustrates how the organizational rupture extended beyond the leadership level and reshaped alliances among actors connected to the anti-whaling movement in the Faroes. The split did not simply produce two separate organizations but also redistributed relationships and loyalties within the broader activist network. Sea Shepherd increasingly emphasized dialogue, documentation, and engagement with Faroese society, whereas the CPWF signaled a willingness to return to more confrontational forms of activism. While Sea Shepherd replaced the old campaign name, the CPWF adopted the earlier campaign and continues to run Operation Bloody Fjords today.

Figure 24. CPWF's current campaign in the Faroes (Captain Paul Watson Foundation 2022)

From an Actor-Network Theory perspective, the split can be understood as the fragmentation of a previously unified activist network. Rather than a single network attempting to translate the grindadráp into a global animal rights issue, two separate networks began pursuing different strategies for problematizing the practice and enrolling supporters. Although both organizations sought to influence the same issue, they attempted to do so through different configurations of

actors, strategies, and forms of engagement. This development had important implications for the dynamics of anti-whaling activism in the Faroes. Instead of facing a single coordinated campaign, Faroese actors were now confronted with multiple activist groups pursuing similar goals through different approaches. As the following section will explore, these diverging strategies introduced new complexities into the relationship between international anti-whaling activists and Faroese society.

6.11 Diverging Activist Strategies

Following the organizational split between Sea Shepherd and the CPWF, two activist organizations began operating in the Faroes with the shared goal of ending the grindadráp. Despite their common objective, the two organizations increasingly pursued different strategies for how this change should be achieved. While Sea Shepherd emphasized dialogue, documentation, and engagement with Faroese society, the CPWF maintained a stronger focus on visibility, pressure, and confrontation surrounding the hunts. Sea Shepherd's strategy in the Faroes increasingly focused on dialogue-oriented engagement and attempts to rebuild trust with Faroese communities. Crast described the shift as a recognition that confrontational tactics had been ineffective in producing meaningful change within Faroese society.

As Crast explained:

"Personally, I believe that the whale hunts will never end unless the Faroese people themselves decide to stop them. But what we can do is help create public conversations — both in the Faroes and in Denmark. So that's the goal: to end the hunts. The goal is the same, only the strategy has changed" (Crast, appendix 1).

Volunteers spent time engaging with local communities, speaking with tourists about the controversy, and participating in environmental activities such as beach clean-ups. During fieldwork conducted alongside Sea Shepherd volunteers in the Faroes, I observed that much of their daily activity consisted of ordinary social interactions with Faroese locals (Fieldwork, May 2025, appendix 7). Volunteers frequently engaged in casual conversations with Faroese locals in supermarkets, cafés, and during environmental activities, often discussing everyday life rather than immediately focusing on the grindadráp. These interactions appeared intended to gradually reshape how the organization was perceived locally and create opportunities for dialogue.

CPWF, by contrast, pursued a somewhat different approach. While CPWF also engaged in conversations and outreach, the organization placed greater emphasis on maintaining a visible activist presence and publicly documenting the hunts to generate pressure on Faroese authorities and international audiences. Hanna described the reasoning behind this approach:

"This year we want to have a bit more of a profile in the Faroes […] we want people to know we are there. We don't see any real drop in the numbers being killed. We don't see any improvements in the animal welfare standards that are meant to be implemented" (Hanna, appendix 2).

From this perspective, maintaining visibility and international attention was considered necessary to ensure that the controversy remained publicly contested. Documentation of grindadráp events was therefore framed not only as monitoring local practices but also as a way of influencing global opinion and maintaining pressure on Faroese institutions. The strategic differences between the organizations are also recognized by activists themselves. Crast described the emergence of separate factions within the movement as something that potentially undermines the broader objective of ending the grindadráp:

"If I thought the aggressive, non-violent, loud approach could achieve the goal, I wouldn't be working under a different strategy. It's really unfortunate that these factions have formed […] I'm quite convinced it slows down the process significantly — probably by several years" (Crast, appendix 1).

For Crast, the problem is not simply that multiple organizations exist, but that their strategies are fundamentally incompatible. While she emphasized that dialogue should remain possible, she noted that cooperation between the organizations is difficult as long as their approaches remain opposed. Keen observers in the Faroes have also noted the differences between the activist approaches. Jóhannes described encountering several activist groups during a grindadráp where the contrast between their strategies became particularly visible. While some activists positioned themselves as observers documenting the event, others discussed the possibility of physically intervening in the grindadráp. As he recalled:

"I remember seeing members of the two groups there at the same time. One group was just standing and watching the hunt, documenting what was happening. The other group was talking about running down and interfering with it" (Jóhannes, appendix 3).

For Jóhannes, this situation illustrated how two activist strategies could unfold simultaneously in the same setting. While some activists focused on observation and documentation, others appeared more willing to engage in direct intervention. However, these distinctions are not always clearly recognized within Faroese society. According to Jóhannes, many Faroese locals continue to perceive the various activist organizations as part of the same broader movement:

"When you try to explain to people that it wasn't Sea Shepherd, it was actually Captain Paul Watson Foundation, it kind of falls flat. In people's minds, it's all 'Sea Shepherd,' but it's not that simple" (ibid.).

Sofus echoes this observation:

"People don't even know they are not the same. Saying Sea Shepherd is the same as Paul Watson" (Sofus, appendix 5).

This perception complicates attempts by activists to differentiate their strategies. Even when organizations attempt to distance themselves from one another, historical associations and public perceptions often merge them into a single category of foreign anti-whaling activism. Jóhannes also pointed to differences in the rhetoric used by the organizations. In his view, Sea Shepherd's newer strategy has attempted to avoid the kind of aggressive language that historically characterized anti-whaling campaigns in the Faroes:

"Valentina has been pretty good at not fostering this aggression… you shouldn't call people barbaric, because that doesn't help the case domestically" (Jóhannes, appendix 3).

According to Jóhannes, more confrontational rhetoric directed toward the Faroese population often reinforces defensive reactions rather than encouraging discussion. Communication style becomes an important component of how activist strategies are received within the Faroese context. The simultaneous presence of both organizations in the Faroes complicates Sea Shepherd's attempt to reposition itself as a dialogue-oriented actor. Although the organization has made deliberate efforts to distance its current campaign from earlier confrontational tactics, Faroese observers often perceive the various anti-whaling groups as part of the same broader movement. This means that actions carried out by one organization can influence how the other is interpreted. In practice, the continued presence of CPWF using more confrontational tactics may therefore make it more difficult for Sea Shepherd to demonstrate that its strategy has changed. Even if the organizations pursue different approaches, they remain entangled in the same controversy and are often

interpreted through the same historical lens of international anti-whaling activism. Sea Shepherd's earlier campaigns continue to shape how the organization is perceived, making it difficult to separate past and present strategies in the eyes of Faroese audiences.

6.11.1 The Blubber Butcher

The differences in activist strategies also become visible in the types of tactics employed during campaigns in the Faroes. While Sea Shepherd's recent activities have focused on documentation, dialogue, and attempts to engage Faroese communities, CPWF has continued to employ more theatrical and confrontational forms of protest designed to attract attention on social media. One example observed during fieldwork involved a campaign in which an activist dressed as a "blubber butcher" appeared at a grindadráp and in public spaces in the Faroes, as part of a performance intended to highlight the brutality of the hunts (Neptune's Pirates, 2024). The character appeared in videos and photographs circulating on social media platforms. The tactic illustrates how CPWF seeks to generate visibility and emotional impact through symbolic performances. Such actions can also be perceived as provocative or absurd by local observers. Faroese anti-whaling activist Sofus, who has documented several hunts, described how he was invited to photograph one of these performances but declined when he realized what the campaign involved:

"That 'blubber butcher' guy. The butcher. The blubber butcher. That was a bit strange. They asked me to come and take pictures for it […] But when I saw what it was about, I said no. I didn't want to be seen taking pictures of that" (Sofus, appendix 5).

This example illustrates the broader divergence between activist strategies in the Faroes. While some actors attempt to reduce confrontation and encourage dialogue with Faroese communities, others continue to rely on highly visible and provocative actions aimed primarily at international audiences.

Figure 25. The "Blubber Butcher" during CPWF campaigns (Source: Neptune's Pirates 2024)

6.11.2 Anonymous Mobilization Attempts

Another example illustrating the differing activist approaches emerged during fieldwork through an anonymous campaign that appeared in Tórshavn in the form of stickers featuring a black sheep and the Faroese question: *"Are you the black sheep in your family?"* The stickers included a QR code linking to the website *svartalambi.fo*. When I first interviewed Hanna from the CPWF, she asked whether I had seen the stickers, explaining that she had heard about the website and that it seemed to function as a platform where Faroese locals opposed to the grindadráp could express support anonymously (Fieldnotes, appendix 7). The website presented itself as a grassroots Faroese initiative encouraging reflection on the future of the grindadráp and inviting visitors to sign a petition calling for political discussion of the practice. The text emphasized love for Faroese culture while questioning whether the grindadráp should continue in the future. Visitors were invited to sign the appeal by submitting their name, address, and Faroese personal identification number, with the option of remaining anonymous unless a certain number of signatures were reached. During fieldwork I attempted to identify the individuals behind the website but was unable to find any information about its organizers (Fieldnotes, appendix 7). Neither activists nor Faroese interviewees I spoke with knew who had created the campaign. When I later showed the website to Sea Shepherd, they reacted with enthusiasm, interpreting it as a potential sign that Faroese actors themselves were beginning to mobilize around the controversy (Fieldwork, appendix 7). However, the anonymity surrounding the campaign also generated skepticism. The Faroese public broadcaster (Kvf) later aired a segment discussing the website in which the director of the Faroese Data Protection Authority advised citizens not to submit personal information through the site (Tróndason, 2025). The segment noted that the text appeared linguistically unusual and that the domain registration could be traced to an American hosting service rather than a Faroese individual.

During an interview with Sofus (appendix 5), I unexpectedly encountered further information about the campaign. When visiting his home, I noticed the black sheep sticker on his laptop and mentioned that I had been trying to determine who had created the website. Sofus responded that the campaign had been initiated by Hanna from the CPWF, before quickly adding that he "*was not supposed to say that*" (Fieldnotes, May 2025, Appendix 7). Although Sofus did not elaborate further, the remark suggested a possible connection between the anonymous campaign and CPWF. The campaign can be interpreted as an attempt to mobilize support by presenting opposition to the grindadráp as originating from within Faroese society itself. By framing the initiative as a grassroots Faroese appeal, the campaign sought to enroll potential supporters while avoiding the stigma often associated with foreign anti-whaling activism. The ambiguity surrounding the campaign's origins illustrates the challenges activist organizations face when attempting to generate locally legitimate opposition within a historically polarized debate. Presenting opposition to the grindadráp as originating from within Faroese society can potentially make the issue more legitimate in a context where international activism has historically been met with resistance. These dynamics point to a broader realization increasingly acknowledged by activists themselves, namely that lasting change can only occur if Faroese actors take up the debate within Faroese society. The following section therefore examines how international activists have attempted to encourage such local mobilization.

6.12 Local Mobilization as the Strategic End Goal

Although international anti-whaling activist organizations have played a central role in bringing global attention to the grindadráp, several activists involved in the Faroese campaigns emphasize that long-term change must ultimately emerge from within Faroese society itself. Rather than acting as the primary driver of change, Sea Shepherd's current strategy increasingly focuses on facilitating local debate and encouraging Faroese locals to take ownership of the issue. The long-term goal is not to maintain a permanent activist presence in the Faroes, but to support a locally driven movement capable of sustaining public debate about the grindadráp. In this scenario, Sea Shepherd would gradually transition from a visible campaigning role to a supporting role operating largely in the background. Crast described this objective as fundamentally dependent on Faroese locals themselves initiating the debate:

"One person just needs to do it. I think once one, two, or three people take the first step, the whole thing will start moving. It takes one person others can relate to and respect — even if they disagree

— so dialogue can begin. Right now, there's no one in Faroese society who's seen as someone worth having that serious discussion with or joining forces with. But I think it's only a matter of time before a small group of people decides it's something they want to talk about. Once that starts, it will grow on its own" (Crast, appendix 1).

This perspective reflects the belief that meaningful political change regarding the grindadráp must ultimately occur within Faroese political institutions. For the issue to reach the Faroese parliament, activists argue that a broader debate must first emerge within Faroese society itself. A similar view was expressed by Abraham, who emphasized that the ideal outcome for international anti-whaling activists would be the emergence of a locally led movement capable of continuing the debate independently:

"Our ideal situation would be that a local group of Faroese people take over the baton and we just simply move away. And we fund them. If they need funds, we could fund them. We can send them equipment or help them with technology […] but in the background because they would be the driving force. That would be the ideal solution" (Abraham, appendix 4).

He noted that the absence of visible Faroese anti-whaling activists has made it difficult for international organizations to withdraw from the issue entirely. When activists leave the islands, the public discussion surrounding the grindadráp often diminishes, which reinforces the continued presence of international activists.

This strategic vision reflects an attempt to shift the center of the anti-whaling network from foreign anti-whaling activists to Faroese actors themselves. Rather than attempting to directly impose change through external pressure, the strategy seeks to enroll local actors who could act as legitimate spokespersons within Faroese society. Yet, as the following section will explore, the emergence of such a Faroese anti-whaling movement has proven difficult. Social pressure, historical controversies between activists and Faroese communities, and the politicization of the grindadráp have all complicated attempts to establish locally driven opposition to the hunts.

6.13 Attempts to Mobilize a Faroese-Anti Whaling Movement

Although international activist organizations have played a central role in bringing global attention to the grindadráp, several attempts have also been made to mobilize opposition from within Faroese society itself. These initiatives emphasized dialogue, local legitimacy, and internal debate rather than external pressure. While such efforts briefly succeeded in mobilizing Faroese actors, they

ultimately struggled to stabilize a durable network capable of sustaining the debate over time. One of the earliest attempts to pursue this approach emerged through the work of Pete Bethune, a former Sea Shepherd member who founded the conservation organization Earthrace Conservation in 2011. After spending time in the Faroes, Bethune began to develop a strategy that differed significantly from the confrontational campaigns that had characterized much of the international activism surrounding the grindadráp. Reflecting on his experiences in the islands, he emphasized that the grindadráp could not simply be understood as an act of whale hunting, but also as a deeply embedded social practice within Faroese communities:

"It is quite brutal what happens to the whales. But if you take that element out of it, in all other regards it is an amazing social event. It really unites people […] the food is distributed to the people. Poor and elderly people get food. I changed my view on it after my first and second trip there" (Workman, 2014c, 04:10).

Bethune argued that meaningful change could only emerge through debate within Faroese society itself:

"In my opinion the only way to get this stopped is to encourage debate about it within the Faroese community. They are the only ones that can stop it […] and by getting in their faces and telling them what to do, that is not going to help. In fact I think it's going to hinder the process" (ibid.).

Bethune therefore attempted to translate opposition to the grindadráp into a locally anchored issue by enrolling Faroese actors who could question the practice from within Faroese society. This represented an attempt to shift the center of the network from foreign anti-whaling activists toward local spokespersons capable of engaging in domestic debate. To some extent, this strategy initially showed signs of success. In 2012 Earthrace Conservation established a Faroese branch composed of local volunteers working toward a domestic ban on the hunts (Bethune, 2011), and a Faroese Facebook group titled *Faroese in Favour of Protecting Pilot Whales* gathered around 300 members (Bethune, 2014). These developments suggested that a small Faroese anti-whaling network was beginning to emerge. Rather than positioning the issue as a controversy between foreign anti-whaling activists and Faroese traditions, these initiatives attempted to frame the debate around questions of public health, environmental responsibility, and the future of Faroese society. A similar approach was later pursued by the Faroese organization *Grindahvalur*, founded in 2016 by conservationist and health advisor Rúni Nielsen together with British environmentalist Andy Ottaway (Nielsen & Ottaway, 2016). The group sought to reframe the debate by focusing on the

health risks associated with toxic pollutants in pilot whale meat. Their campaign included a documentary about the grindadráp introduced by David Attenborough, which suggested that the Faroese relationship with pilot whales could be redefined through whale-watching tourism rather than hunting (Sutton & Ottoway, 2015). The film featured Faroese voices discussing mercury contamination and ethical concerns surrounding the hunts, and the organization organized screenings and debates across the islands. Importantly, the organizers repeatedly emphasized that the initiative was independent of Sea Shepherd and other international activist organizations (Johannesen, 2026).

These initiatives showed that Faroese actors could engage publicly with the grindadráp and that locally grounded debate could temporarily mobilize new actors. However, the networks that emerged around these initiatives ultimately proved fragile. Despite moments of public discussion, they struggled to expand beyond small circles of activists and gradually lost visibility. Part of the explanation for this fragility lies in the broader political environment surrounding the grindadráp during the same period. As earlier sections of the analysis have shown, the confrontational campaigns conducted by international activist organizations in the early 2010s contributed to strong defensive reactions within Faroese society. These campaigns frequently framed the hunts as a moral outrage and characterized the Faroese locals in derogatory terms. In response, the grindadráp increasingly became entangled with questions of Faroese identity, autonomy, and resistance to external interference. Within this polarized environment, attempts by Faroese locals to question the hunts risked being interpreted as aligning with foreign activists. Even initiatives that explicitly distanced themselves from international organizations could therefore become entangled in the broader controversy between activists and Faroese communities. The translation initiated by Bethune and later Faroese initiatives was disrupted by competing networks that had already framed the controversy as a struggle between foreign anti-whaling activism and Faroese cultural identity. As a result, the emerging Faroese anti-whaling network struggled to stabilize and expand.

The eventual fate of these initiatives illustrates this instability. The Grindahvalur organization attempted to intensify its campaign in 2018 by launching a nationwide information initiative highlighting the health risks of consuming pilot whale meat (Nielsen & Ottaway, 2018b). The campaign included a large public billboard and informational brochures delivered to Faroese households (Nielsen & Ottaway, 2018a). Although the campaign attracted attention, it was widely ridiculed, and members of the organization were accused of betraying Faroese traditions (Author's recollection). Public activity from the group largely ceased shortly thereafter. Similarly, the Faroese

branch of Earthrace Conservation and the Facebook group advocating whale protection have both become inactive in recent years.

Figure 26. The organization Grindahvalur's public billboard (Source: Nielsen & Ottaway 2018)

Today, the number of Faroese locals publicly advocating the abolition of the grindadráp remains extremely limited. While these earlier initiatives briefly mobilized Faroese participants and opened spaces for discussion, they ultimately failed to stabilize a durable network capable of sustaining the debate. The collapse of these efforts highlights the difficulty of translating opposition to the grindadráp into a locally legitimate political movement within a context where the issue has become strongly tied to national identity and resistance to foreign criticism. The history of the Faroese anti-whaling movement therefore illustrates how translation attempts can be destabilized by competing networks operating within the same controversy. Although Bethune and later Faroese anti-whaling activists temporarily succeeded in enrolling local actors and initiating debate, the broader polarization surrounding the grindadráp prevented the network from consolidating into a stable movement capable of challenging the grindadráp within Faroese society.

6.13.1 Sofus as a Local Node in the Activist Network

Although most Faroese anti-whaling initiatives have gradually faded from public view, one Faroese actor continues to play a visible role in documenting the grindadráp. Sofus, a Faroese anti-whaling activist who has long been personally opposed to the hunts, began actively filming and sharing footage of hunts in 2021 (Sofus, appendix 5). Through social media, these recordings reached international activist networks and brought Sofus into contact with prominent anti-whaling figures. One of the most significant connections that emerged was with Paul Watson. After Sofus shared

footage from the hunts online, Watson contacted him directly and later sent him a medal recognizing his contribution to documenting the killings (ibid.). This gesture can be understood as an attempt to enroll Sofus within Watson's activist network. The medal functions as a symbolic artifact acknowledging Sofus' work and reinforcing his position as a valued contributor to the movement. Sofus' involvement gradually expanded beyond documentation. In addition to sharing photos and video footage with CPWF, he was eventually named the Faroese ambassador for the organization (Captain Paul Watson Foundation, 2025). Sofus also maintained contact with activists from Sea Shepherd who were present in the Faroe Islands during the summer campaigns. He described occasionally joining activists when they documented hunts and being invited to dinners and social gatherings organized by visiting campaign groups (Sofus, appendix 5). These interactions positioned Sofus as a rare Faroese participant within activist circles that were otherwise largely composed of international volunteers. However, Sofus' position within Faroese society remains complex. In his interview he described receiving significant criticism from Faroese locals for publicly opposing the grindadráp. According to Sofus, he has been ridiculed online, labeled a traitor, and even received death threats because of his activities documenting the hunts. The social pressure surrounding the grindadráp also affects how others interact with him. As Sofus explained:

"Sometimes people come up to talk to me. They look around before and make sure no one sees them talking to me" (ibid.).

While some Faroese may privately share similar concerns, openly engaging in the debate can carry social consequences. The relationship between Sofus and international activist organizations has also been interpreted differently by Faroese observers. Jóhannes described how activist groups sometimes attempt to involve local actors like Sofus in ways that strengthen their own legitimacy. In his view, the presence of a Faroese participant within activist circles can function as a form of validation for international campaigns.

He explained:

"Oh yes, absolutely. I've also been at dinners where he was present. And I think we both get something out of it […] What they get when we're there is a Faroese perspective […] What I think Sofus gets out of it is companionship" (Jóhannes, appendix 3).

Jóhannes further noted that Sofus often becomes a central Faroese figure within activist circles during the summer campaigns, when international volunteers are present in the islands. Outside of

these campaign periods, this network connection becomes less visible. Sofus represents an example of how international activist organizations attempt to enroll local actors into their networks. His experience illustrates the difficulties involved in translating international activist networks into locally rooted movements within Faroese society.

Taken together, the cases presented in this chapter illustrate the difficulty of mobilizing sustained opposition to the grindadráp from within Faroese society. While international activist organizations have repeatedly challenged the practice through strategies ranging from confrontation to dialogue, locally rooted initiatives have struggled to stabilize into durable networks capable of sustaining debate. The experiences of actors such as Sofus and the organizers behind Grindahvalur show that attempts to enroll Faroese participants can open new spaces for discussion, but also expose them to significant social pressure. These dynamics raise a broader question that extends beyond the individual campaigns examined here: under what conditions could a locally legitimate movement capable of challenging the grindadráp emerge within Faroese society?

7 Discussion

The analysis demonstrates the significant role international activist organizations have played in bringing global attention to the grindadráp. Through highly visible campaigns, particularly those conducted by Sea Shepherd in the early 2010s, the practice became an internationally debated issue. While these campaigns succeeded in mobilizing global awareness and placing the hunts under sustained international scrutiny, the findings highlight the limitations of external activism in generating change within Faroese society itself. Confrontational campaigns often triggered defensive reactions among Faroese communities, where criticism of the hunts was frequently interpreted as an attack on Faroese culture and autonomy. As a result, the controversy surrounding the grindadráp became increasingly intertwined with questions of identity and sovereignty. In response, activist strategies gradually shifted toward more dialogue-oriented approaches aimed at encouraging internal debate within the Faroes. This shift reflects a broader recognition that lasting change cannot be imposed from the outside but must ultimately emerge from within Faroese society. Attempts to stimulate such local mobilization have proven difficult, particularly when initiatives are perceived as connected to international activism. These dynamics point to a central challenge: while international campaigns have successfully globalized the controversy, meaningful change would likely depend on the emergence of locally legitimate actors capable of sustaining the debate within Faroese society itself.

This chapter explores what conditions would need to be present for such local mobilization to occur and how questions of legitimacy, identity, and social belonging shape the possibilities for Faroese actors to publicly challenge the grindadráp.

7.1 The Challenge of Local Legitimacy

A central finding of this thesis is that opposition to the grindadráp within the Faroes faces a significant challenge of legitimacy. While international activist organizations have played a major role in bringing global attention to the hunts, the findings suggest that meaningful change would likely require Faroese actors who are able to challenge the practice from within Faroese society itself. However, occupying such a position is socially and politically difficult. Several attempts have been made to mobilize Faroese opposition in ways that sought to distance the debate from international activism. One early example was the approach taken by Pete Bethune, who arrived in the Faroes in 2011 with the intention of encouraging dialogue with Faroese communities rather than

confronting them directly. His strategy closely resembles the approach later articulated by Crast, emphasizing that the Faroese themselves must ultimately decide whether the grindadráp should continue. Although Bethune's efforts initially gained some momentum, they did not develop into a sustained movement. As the broader controversy between Faroese communities and international activist organizations intensified during the same period, the possibility of mobilizing Faroese actors became increasingly complicated. A similar pattern can be observed in the case of the organization Grindahvalur, which attempted to stimulate public debate by focusing on the health risks associated with consuming pilot whale meat. Despite considerable efforts, the campaign struggled to generate significant public support. Reactions on social media often framed the initiative as another example of foreign interference. Even though the campaign emphasized Faroese participation, the involvement of foreign collaborators was frequently cited as evidence that the initiative was connected to the broader anti-whaling activism associated with figures such as Paul Watson. These reactions highlight how criticism of the grindadráp can quickly become entangled with questions of identity and external influence. Initiatives that are even partially connected to foreign actors' risk being interpreted as extensions of international campaigns rather than expressions of internal Faroese debate. As a result, the legitimacy of the actors raising the issue becomes central to how their message is received. The experiences of individual actors further illustrate this dynamic. Sofus, one of the few Faroese locals who publicly criticizes the grindadráp, has faced significant criticism and social pressure for doing so.

The difficulty of mobilizing Faroese opposition is not simply a matter of finding persuasive arguments against the grindadráp. Rather, it is closely tied to questions of legitimacy and belonging. In small and closely connected communities, criticism of widely supported cultural practices can carry significant social consequences. Individuals who raise such criticisms may therefore risk being positioned outside the moral community they are attempting to influence. These dynamics help explain why efforts to stimulate local mobilization have struggled to gain momentum despite growing recognition that Faroese actors must play a central role in any potential change.

7.2 Grassroots Mobilization and Social Change in the Faroe Islands

Significant social and political change has occurred within Faroese society in recent decades. Examining how such changes unfold provides insight into how controversial issues move from social taboo to political debate. One example is the debate surrounding abortion legislation. For many years, abortion was rarely discussed publicly in Faroese society, and politicians were reluctant

to address the issue due to its perceived sensitivity (Author's recollection). This situation began to shift in 2017 with the emergence of the grassroots movement Frítt Val (Free Choice) (Frítt Val, n.d.). Initiated by a group of Faroese women, the movement sought to open public discussion about abortion rights through advocacy, media engagement, and political campaigning. Over time, these efforts helped bring the issue into national debate. Although a bill to liberalize abortion laws initially failed in the parliament in 2024, continued mobilization led to the legislation being passed in 2025 (Murray, 2025).

The abortion debate and the grindadráp are clearly very different issues. However, the trajectory of the abortion debate illustrates an important characteristic of social change in the Faroese context. Rather than emerging through external pressure, the shift was driven by locally rooted actors who were able to initiate and sustain discussion within Faroese society. Because these actors were embedded within the local social and cultural context, their advocacy could not easily be dismissed as external interference. This example highlights the importance of locally legitimate actors in shaping controversial debates in the Faroes. Grassroots initiatives such as Frítt Val were able to mobilize public discussion by framing the issue in ways that resonated with Faroese experiences and values. In relation to the grindadráp, this suggests that meaningful change is unlikely to result from external activism alone but would more likely depend on the emergence of locally legitimate Faroese actors, capable of initiating and sustaining debate within Faroese society.

7.3 The Absence of a Mobilizing Faroese Spokesperson

If meaningful change regarding the grindadráp depends on locally rooted actors capable of initiating and sustaining debate, an important question becomes whether such actors currently exist within Faroese society. While a small number of Faroese individuals publicly criticize the grindadráp, the findings from this thesis suggest that these voices have so far struggled to mobilize broader support.

One of the most visible Faroese critics of the grindadráp today is Sofus, who has become a recognizable figure within anti-whaling activist networks. However, Sofus has not succeeded in mobilizing a broader Faroese movement opposing the hunts. Several factors appear to contribute to this limitation. Sofus largely operates as an individual actor rather than as the leader of an organized grassroots initiative. His activities primarily consist of documenting hunts and sharing information rather than organizing collective action within Faroese society. While this documentation contributes to international awareness, it does not necessarily translate into local mobilization. Sofus' association with international activist networks appears to influence how he is perceived

within Faroese communities. As discussed earlier in the analysis, criticism of the grindadráp is often interpreted through the broader controversy between Faroese communities and foreign activists. Sofus' collaboration with figures such as Paul Watson may reinforce the perception that his activism is connected to external campaigns rather than representing a locally driven initiative. Interviews conducted during this thesis also suggest that Sofus himself does not necessarily position himself as the leader of a broader movement. For instance, he declined opportunities to participate in public media discussions about the grindadráp, indicating a reluctance to take on the role of a public spokesperson. As Jóhannes observed:

"Then you're not really the figurehead for Faroese people who want to stop the grindadráp" (Jóhannes, appendix 3).

For a spokesperson to successfully mobilize others, they must be able to represent a collective whose interests are recognized as legitimate by the actors they seek to enroll. In the case of the grindadráp, no Faroese actor has yet managed to occupy such a position. Sofus remains an important voice documenting the practice, but he has not become the type of spokesperson capable of mobilizing a broader network of Faroese actors willing to challenge the grindadráp. This absence of a mobilizing spokesperson helps explain why opposition to the grindadráp has struggled to develop into a sustained grassroots movement. Without actors capable of initiating and maintaining internal debate, the issue remains largely framed through the controversy between Faroese communities and international activists.

Sofus himself offered an important reflection on what might be required for such mobilization:

"Maybe we need someone totally different to come in. A completely different name than Sea Shepherd or Paul Watson […] Yes, if some young Faroese did that, I think they'd get some support. When you're young, you're braver. You listen better. It can't be someone from outside" (Sofus, appendix 5).

In his view, local actors would be better positioned to initiate conversations that could gradually shift public attitudes toward the practice.

7.4 The Poisoned Well

The findings of this thesis suggest that the long history of confrontation between Faroese communities and international anti-whaling activists complicates the emergence of locally rooted

opposition. As several of the cases discussed in this thesis illustrate, criticism of the grindadráp is frequently interpreted through the broader controversy between Faroese communities and foreign activist organizations. Initiatives associated with actors such as Pete Bethune, Grindahvalur, and individuals like Sofus demonstrate how locally oriented criticism can quickly become entangled with this wider controversy. Jóhannes described this dynamic by suggesting that the debate surrounding the grindadráp has become a *"poisoned well"* (appendix 3) by years of controversy between Faroese communities and international activists. Within this context, the legitimacy of the messenger becomes just as important as the content of the message. Faroese individuals who publicly criticize the grindadráp risk being associated with foreign campaigns, which can undermine their ability to mobilize broader support within Faroese society.

The strategic shift within Sea Shepherd's Faroese campaign can be understood as an attempt to address precisely this challenge. By moving away from confrontational tactics and toward dialogue-oriented engagement, the organization has sought to reposition itself as an actor encouraging internal discussion rather than imposing change from the outside. Several activists involved in the campaigns acknowledge that the long-term goal is not for foreign organizations to lead the movement themselves, but for Faroese actors to eventually take on that role. These dynamics raise a difficult question about the future role of international anti-whaling activism in the Faroese debate surrounding the grindadráp. If locally legitimate opposition is essential for meaningful change, and if the history of foreign activism complicates the credibility of local critics, continued external involvement may unintentionally delay the emergence of a Faroese embedded movement. International activists therefore face a strategic dilemma: whether their continued presence helps sustain the conversation, or whether stepping back could create space for Faroese actors to raise the issue on their own terms. While international campaigns have played an important role in globalizing the controversy and bringing attention to the grindadráp, the findings of this thesis suggest that any lasting transformation would ultimately depend on Faroese actors themselves initiating and sustaining the debate within Faroese society.

8 Conclusion

This thesis has examined how international anti-whaling activism interacts with Faroese society in the controversy surrounding the grindadráp. Through campaigns conducted by organizations such as Sea Shepherd and the Captain Paul Watson Foundation, the pilot whale hunt has become a globally visible environmental and ethical issue. The aim of this thesis has been to explore how these activist strategies have shaped the controversy within the Faroese context and what challenges they create for the emergence of locally driven opposition to the practice.

The findings highlight several key dynamics shaping the contemporary debate. Activist strategies in the Faroes have evolved significantly over time. Early campaigns relied heavily on confrontational tactics that succeeded in attracting international attention but also contributed to strong defensive reactions within Faroese society. In response, activist approaches have gradually shifted toward more dialogue-oriented strategies aimed at encouraging internal debate. The split between Sea Shepherd and the Captain Paul Watson Foundation has resulted in multiple activist networks operating in the Faroes, while pursuing different approaches. Despite these shifts, the long-standing controversy between Faroese communities and international activists continues to shape how anti-whaling campaigns are perceived locally. Criticism of the grindadráp is frequently interpreted through questions of identity and cultural autonomy, which complicates the legitimacy of Faroese locals who publicly oppose the hunts.

The controversy surrounding the grindadráp can be understood as a series of competing attempts to mobilize and stabilize networks of actors with different interests and forms of legitimacy. Actor-Network Theory highlights how activists, whalers, media technologies, scientific knowledge, and symbolic representations become enrolled in these networks and contribute to shaping the debate. Postcolonial theory further illuminate why foreign activist interventions are often interpreted as external impositions within Faroese society.

From a techno-anthropological perspective, the grindadráp controversy can be understood as a socio-technical network in which technologies, media representations, activist strategies, and local cultural identities become deeply entangled. International campaigns rely heavily on technological mediation through social media, documentary footage, and digital platforms to mobilize global audiences and construct narratives about the hunt. These mediated representations function as

powerful inscription devices that circulate internationally and shape how the practice is understood both within and outside the Faroes.

Overall, the findings suggest that the central challenge facing anti-whaling activism in the Faroe Islands is not simply how to increase international pressure, but how space can be created for Faroese actors to articulate and develop their own positions on the future of the grindadráp. Meaningful change, if it occurs, will likely depend on the emergence of locally legitimate voices capable of initiating and sustaining debate within Faroese society. The future of the grindadráp may therefore depend less on the actions of international activists, than on whether Faroese actors themselves are able to open and sustain discussions about the practice within their own society.

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