

Village-dwelling

Understanding young people's reasons for settling in Faroese villages.

Bygdadvøl – hví ungfólk búsetast í føroyskum bygdum

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Úrtak

Leikluturin hjá bygdunum í føroyska samfelagnum broytist alsamt. Fyrr vóru bygdinrar rættiliga fjarskotnar, men nú eru tær mobilt samantvinnaðar við hvørja aðra. Hetta merkir í fyrstu syftu, at bústaðarsíðvenjan, ið er knýtt at tí at búgva á bygd, broytist. Men harnæst er tað eisini við til at máa støði undan vanligu fatanini av tí at búgva á bygd. Sum ung fólk gerast sera mobil – og noyðast at gerast sera mobil fyri ikki at verða aftúrúrsigld – verða partar av síðbundnu bygdafatanini varðveittir í ímyndunum hjá unga fólkinum. Sæð úr hesum sjónarhorni verður bygdin eitt sera tvígilt og enntá tvørsagt fyrbrigdi, ið javnvigar millum síðbundni og modernitet; millum staðbundinskap og flytføri. Í greinini vísi eg eisini á at tað er hópisleyst at skilja millum býar- og bygdalívsformar í eini mobilari øld.

Abstract

The role of the villages in the Faroes society is rapidly changing. Whereas the villages used to be quite isolated they are now mobilely integrated with each others. This means firstly that the dwelling-practices connected to living in a village are changing, but secondly it also undermines the common perception of the village-dwelling. As young people become – and have to become so in order to not being left behind – very mobile, parts of the traditional village-perception still remain in the imaginations of the young people. Seen

from this point of view the village becomes a very ambivalent and even paradoxical phenomenon that balances between tradition and modernity; between place-tiedness and mobility. In the article I also discuss the lack of meaning in distinguishing between urban and rural life-modes in an age of mobility.

Introduction

People are imagining their settlement in the villages according to the territorial qualities of the villages, but are at the same time determined by the phenomena of modernity and mobility.

This can be stated as the essence of this article that investigates a range of aspects of young people's reasons for settling in Faroese villages. The article is based on the findings of the master thesis "The Imagination on the Dwelling" (Kristiansen, 2005, title in Danish: "Forestillingen om Bostedet") where I investigate the subjective reasons for settlement based on a case study of the Faroese village Gøta, which is mentioned several times in this article.

This article starts with a historical intro-

duction to the Faroese village which turns into a discussion of the village as a concept.

Thereafter I present four central discussions of my thesis. These discussions are:

1. “Identity and the obligation to move back home” which discusses the changes of the “home” and the change in the relationship towards the “place” of dwelling.
2. “Dwelling myths” which discusses the importance of a discursive production of the place of dwelling in order to (re)produce the place of dwelling.
3. “Imagination on the future dwelling” which discusses how dwelling-practices become both segregated through space and globalized through mobility.
4. “Traffic and mobility, distance and proximity” which discusses a range of effects that traffic and mobility pose on to the relationship between distance and proximity.

The article ends with a conclusion that includes some views on the threats and opportunities that modernity and mobility pose to “village-dwelling”.

The village – reality and concept

“The village” has for a long time been one of the ground-pillars of the Faroese society, constituting the bulk of the social and economic structures of the country, as opposed to many other industrialized countries that experienced a massive urbanization of the society.

In the Faroes, the development of industrial capitalism has been based only partially on emerging urban areas, as the villages – in large – have managed to enter the

industrial age through an economic mixture of agriculture, fisheries and – later – community-supported fishing-industry. This has – in turn – meant that the vast majority of the traditional Faroese villages (“markatalsbygdur”) have sustained a relative autonomy from the centres, which has again sustained the reasons for living in these villages. Even some of the newer villages (“niðurseftubygdur”) have achieved a status as production-entities during the 20th century, and especially the village of Skopun on the northern tip of Sandoy, is significant on this account (Finnsson, 2005: 85). Most other newer villages have been subordinated to some larger settlement.

“The village” – both the traditional and the newly settled villages – has been understood largely as a community, or what sociologists use to term “Gemeinschaft” (Hovgaard, 2001: 78-79). This means that “the village” is frequently seen as the scenery of reciprocal social relations constituting the life in the villages and the production of these villages. This does by no means give justice to the complexity of the traditional village that many historians and anthropologists have pointed out during the last many decades. (Very differing aspects of the Faroese villages are discussed in Joensen, 1987; Andreassen, 1992; Bærenholdt, 1991; 1993: 143-54; Haldrup and Hoydal, 1993; Haldrup, 1996; Finnsson, 2005; Finnsson and Kristiansen, 2006). This is the reason why I consequently put the concept of “the village” in quotation marks.

Perhaps we ought to talk about “the village” in two ways: on the one hand “the-village-as-it-really-is” and on the other hand

the imagination of “the-village-as-it-is-supposed-to-be”. The actual “lived” village is not necessarily identical to the imagined village, i.e. the “perceived” and the “conceived” village – for completing the spatial triade of Henri Lefebvre (1991: 33-46).

“The village” has in a strange way become a myth, but a myth that is co-present in the contemporary reality, and therefore an aesthetic part of reality. What is important to state, is that even though “the village” can no longer be analyzed as a clearly demarcated entity, it is nevertheless semiotically demarcated in contrast to other villages – or in contrast to other “non-villageous” spaces such as the outfield (“hagi”) and the sea (“hav”). The village is in other words very related to concepts like “home” and “security”.

But even if “the village” as a concept still exists in people’s minds, it is important to state that the real villages of the Faroes are developing very differently in these years: First there are the villages of the periphery that are supposedly being extincted within a few decades, or at best will be transformed into part-time residential areas or vacational-areas, and thereby in many ways function as “heterotopias” or “places of otherness” (as e.g. in Foucault, 1986: 22-27), or places where escaping the modern is possible to a certain degree.

Second there are villages that still contain a lot of activity in both the agricultural, industrial and service-sector and can therefore fairly be regarded as communities of their own.

Third there are villages that are having success in attracting settlers because of their

relative proximity to other (“urban”) places, but that are largely emptied out of industries and services. These villages I prefer to refer to as “sleeping-villages” and they are fully dependent on their inhabitants traveling to other places in order to work and consume. The Faroese folklorist Eyðun Andreassen has put it this way:

“In the very past years [i.e. in the eighties] there has been a new tendency, as some of the villages that are situated in the immediate proximity of a larger village or town starts to grow. People settle in the home-village instead of moving and new [i.e. foreign] settlers move in that are otherwise not tied to the place. This is among others because of fair taxation, a more simple bureaucracy in the municipal administration, easy access to goods of the nature and the sea and cheaper building-plots, which by the way can be a scarcity in the larger plotting-municipalities; a problem that the small village can solve for the time being.” (Andreassen, 1992: 287-288, translated from Danish into English; my comments in parantheses)

This passage was written in the beginning of the nineties, and now – in 2006 – we see that this practice of people moving out to the proximate villages, but still interacting with the urban areas, has stretched its locale to cover most of the Faroese mainland. A locale is “[a] physical region involved as part of the setting of interaction, having definite boundaries which help to concentrate interaction in one way or another”. (Giddens, 1984: 375, see also 118-24, 164-5). When a locale is stretched, this also means that interactions is less concentrated than in traditional communities as e.g. the old Faroese villages.

An interesting fact is that the third type

of Faroese villages mentioned above is in fact very popular amongst settlers and should be seen as a high-quality alternative to living in the town; not necessarily as a second choice. Although the Faroes are increasingly urbanizing, as people tend to move into the towns, especially Tórshavn and Runavík, there is also (still) an “anti-urbanization” and – more important – a “counter-urbanization” going on. The anti-urbanization trend can be seen as a resistance towards urbanization and perhaps also as a “loyalty” towards the “home-village”. The counter-urbanization is – on the other hand – a transposing of the urban into the rural (or a “rural restructuring” as in Marsden *et al.*, 1993); a strategy for escaping the town-life in favour of the peaceful village-life without abandoning the functional belongingness to the town or the towns that the respective village is referring to and subordinated to. Naturally counter-urbanization is – as in the surrounding countries – primarily localizing in the relative proximity of the town(s). Counter-urbanization is – functionally spoken – a dispersed kind of urban sprawl creating a special kind of suburbs that maintain the charming village-morphology that thereby offer an authenticity that the newly developed suburbs (e.g. Hoyvík or Norðasta Horn in the outskirts of the capital Tórshavn) are not yet quite able to provide.

The interesting point is that the counter-urbanization is a phenomenon very much filled with paradoxes and ambivalences. The main two paradoxes, that are related to each other, are, firstly, that people settle in the villages because of qualities like peace, open-space and friendliness, but that at the same

time they are occupied with a post-modern “urban” life style which diminishes the possibilities (especially the time-resources) of actually utilizing the qualities of the villages, as a large part of the everyday time-resources is invested in everyday-travelling of many kinds. The other important paradox is that people settle in the villages in order to obtain peace and relaxation and a safe environment for their children, but that they at the same time become more dependent on the automobility, which is – in turn – a major source of stress in the everyday. This latter paradox is a very commonly studied problematic in countries such as England and Denmark, where mobility is in fact a necessity to the life of many modern people but at the same time a huge social and environmental problem, both in urban and rural areas (Uth Thomsen *et al.*, 2005). Summing up, therefore, the “village-dwelling” is compromised by a change in both lifestyles and daily routines and practices (e.g. commuting), which is putting the semiotic structures under pressure. The subjective dwelling-imaginings are not necessarily corresponding to the objective reality, and the result is that understanding young people’s reasons for settling in the Faroese villages becomes very complicated.

Counter-urbanization can not be explained solely through practical terms as e.g. “cost-benefit”. Of course the prices of petrol, the prices of land (or built houses) and the length of the distances are important when explaining the counter-urbanization. But there is much more to it than only economies.

The main idea is that the qualities of the

Faroese villages are in fact much more complex than they may seem at the first glance. The Faroese villages are not a bunch of houses “containing” similar people living in similar houses, as one might at first suppose. The socially coherent village is history, if it ever has been a fact. The village is increasingly a part of a larger context, and the increasing mobility in the society (and between societies) enables the village to extend its locale.

Following a Castells-inspired terminology, the Faroese villages are increasingly hatched on to the flows of the “Network Societies” (Castells, 2000) which in turn makes mobility (both corporeal, cyberreal and cognitive) a much more common strategy of life. From this perspective we also may be forced to operate with differential life-strategies or “coping-strategies” that go beyond the common territory-bound coping strategies and create an understanding of the interconnection and interdependence of the territory and the mobilities in modern societies. (Bærenholdt and Aarsæther, 2002)

Identity and the the obligation to move back home

It has been a common proposition that Faroese youth is very eager to “move back home” after e.g. studies abroad (Arge, 2000: 37). The problem with this statement is that “moving away” and “moving back home” does not in every case oppose each other semiotically, especially not when we talk about youth from the rural areas. When people move away from a village there are three possibilities: they may move to another village or town in the region; they may move

to a village or town far from home; or they may even move abroad. In any case, if they have moved abroad they will have left the “home-village” and may consider moving back home. But now home is no longer necessarily the “home-village” but is often considered as the “home-land” (or even “the nation”). If a young couple starts talking about “moving back home” – i.e. from abroad – one can therefore not be sure that they want to move back to the home-village or the home-region. Very often they choose to move back to the capital Tórshavn, that is if they are able to enter the complicated and hugely expensive housing market in the capital.

Nevertheless there are also young people that choose to move back to the home-village. This can be explained both by socio-functional reasons like the family and the access to the reciprocal and socially based housing market that is so common in the Faroese villages, meaning that phenomena like relatives, religion etc. play a large role to one’s housing-chances.

The socially based housing market; i.e. the fact that that social bonds are crucial in order to enter the housing market, are in fact one of the elements of the popular governance (in Danish: folkelig forvaltning; in Faroese: fólkslig fyrisiting) in many Faroese villages. But another reason is that people really feel connected to the home-village through their identity.

In order to be attracted by the identity of a place, the place needs not only to have a recognizable identity; it also needs a positive identity. Following this notion a sustainable identity-formation needs a “real”

counterpart in order to survive the various tests that are posed by the critics and self-critics (external vs internal critics); the individuals that do not agree on the particular identity-formation but would like to modify the identity for what ever reason. Identity must be somewhat waterproof in order not to seem silly or anacronistic, but then again, identity is something that can be used as a strategic mean for obtaining a goal, e.g. a positive image or a good reputation. Identity is surely productive, but may under certain circumstances be “unrealistic” (as opposed to “realistic”) and may become a kind of “cultural makeup” instead of a productive counterpart of the dialectic of local development.

But even if settlers are attracted to places there are still very different ways of being attracted. There is an enormous difference between being forced to dwell in a place and to choose to dwell in a place. Theoretically – therefore – I have proposed to distinguish between a person being “place-tied” and being “place-connected”. (In Danish I use the words “stedsbundet” and “stedstilknytet” and in Faroese I would propose words like “staðbundin” and “staðknýttur”.) When one is place-tied one is determined to belong to the given place “in eternity”. On the other hand, when one is place-connected one does not have to stay or move back but may keep up a belongingness from the distance or one may even patch together an everyday that is based on many different places that thereby become functionally integrated i.e. by commuting. As I mentioned earlier in this article, this latter strategy is very common in the Faroes today (see also: Holm, 2004).

This means that a community does not necessarily need to “tie” people’s loyalties in order to become a succesful place. The success of a village can also be ensured by “connecting” people to the village and drawing upon their resources for shorter or longer periods of time; more or less intensively.

Another important aspect is that “home” is not necessarily the place where one dwells. Home and dwelling are not necessarily the same in a rural Faroese context. “Home” is not always semiotically referring to the “place of dwelling”, but may in some cases be the “place of growing up”. In this way the concept of home may “stay” at the parents’ house even when the youth has moved into a new building. Off course the new house will transform into a home when the young people’s children start to talk about their home in a reflexive manner, but even then the grandparents’ house will function as “another home” or a secondary home, which also refers to the institutional importance of the grandmother or aunt for raising the children. Home should not be understood as a house, but rather as the practices that surround the dwelling; i.e. the dwelling practices which refers not only to “being permanently in a place” but also to the continuous “building of the home”, both physically and symbolically. There are a huge range of other practices than just “being in the house” that constitute the significance of dwelling in a Faroese village. A real village-home needs more than just the space within the four walls to become a “full home”. If we follow the german existential philosopher, Martin Heideggers notion on dwelling, we can state that dwelling in fact means

“taking care of” (Heidegger, 2000: 33-54), and if we should stay with Heidegger for a moment, this should mean that a home that isn’t taken care of is not an authentic home. Semiotically there is therefore some reason in drawing up a continuum on the “most authentic home”:

“Childhood-home > Selfbuilt home > Bought home > Rented home”

This continuum expresses that the childhood-home is more authentic than the self-built home, which is more authentic than the bought home etc. When moving out of the parents’ house the selfbuilt home is clearly characterized as the first priority, but circumstances may force one to buy a house instead – which is “good enough” – or even to accept living in a rented home, which is definitely not an acceptable permanent solution for an ambitious young rural family. In a strange way the rented home signals that one is permanently thinking of “moving away” and that one is therefore less loyal towards one’s community. Owning one’s own home is in deed a quite place-tying practice – if we were to follow the concepts presented above. Thereby the demand for home-ownership could easily be seen as a demand for settlers to become place-tied; to “settle”.

The generational shift – i.e. growing up and entering parenthood – is one of the major identity-projects of Faroese rural youth, but another important identity-project is the reflexive restructuration of the locale – e.g. village. This does not necessarily mean that the locale has to be extended geographically, even if this is very much the

case in the Faroes today – especially through commuting, but that e.g. the village needs to be re-understood and re-thought, following a notion similar to the “rural restructuring” as presented in e.g. Marsden *et al.* (1993).

The most common re-thinking of the village is that it shifts from a production-unity to a “coherent set of dwelling-relevant features”. Another possible re-thinking of the village is to de-construct the village and re-think it as a larger unity – or locale. In the introduction I presented this as a “stretch” of the locale made possible by automobility. But stretching locales has always been an issue, limited only by the available mobility-technologies. Historically most of the economic booms in the Faroes have resulted in (or have been a result of?) a construction of regional towns, where the most important cases are Klaksvík that was originally four small agricultural villages (Guttesen, 1996: 52-55; Nielung, 1968: 175-83); Tvøroyri, that is a unity of all the small villages around the Trongisvág-firth (Jóan Pauli Joensen in Guttesen, 1996: 92-3; Nielung, 1968: 174-5) and Runavík that is a unity of several of the small villages around the eastern side of the Skála-firth (Finnsson, 2005). Later we have also seen conglomerations of villages in Hvannasund (Bærenholdt, 1991; Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt in Guttesen, 1996: 56-9), around Sundalagið (Guttesen, 1996: 66-7) and in Gøta (Kristiansen, 2005). In this last case there has obviously been a clear shift from the old village-identity based on one of the three markatals-villages towards a united identity for Gøta as a whole. Today young people hardly speak about respec-

tively Norðragøta or Syðrugøta, as they are identifying themselves as “Gøtufólk” (people from Gøta). From this perspective Gøta has in many ways transformed into a minor town.

Theroretical extract: Traditionally “home” was a very located place, but in an age of mobility “home” is extending its locale, as dwelling-relevant elements of the everyday have become reachable especially through automobility. This also means that one is not tied to the dwelling-place but connected to the dwelling-place or rather: connected to a whole range of everyday-places, the dwelling-place being only one of several.

Dwelling myths

Identifying oneself to a place or – for sticking to the subject of this article – a village, means that one engages in a semiotic play that seeks to position the place in a positive manner. The most obvious semiotic tactic in this game is off course distinguishing one’s own place or village as opposite to some other place(s) or village(s). Most often it is one’s own place that “acts” (i.e. “is being put in action”) as the protagonist in this tactic and the “other” place that somehow is not quite as good as “us” or perhaps even “bad” (in some way or another). This kind of “village-nationalism” is very common, but comparisons with other places may even function as a kind of self-critique of one’s own village. If one feels that one’s own village is perhaps too conservative or too religious – or even too little religious – one may point to another village that does certain things better, meaning: “if they can, we also can”,

and – in turn – “we ought to do it too”. This quite simple distinguishing between different places is also followed by an institutionalizing of the “local virtues”. In this case people from Gøta (gøtufólk) are quite aware that they are friendlier and more open-minded than most other people in the region, but in order to be able to state that, it is also necessary that people in Gøta are in fact friendly and open-minded. There has to be a correspondence between practice and discourse, at least in the long turn. This means that one has to demonstrate through everyday-practice that one is friendly and open-minded, which off course – in turn – produces Gøta as friendly and open-minded, both practically and discursively. We might even want to conceptualize this as an interesting place-specific village-ideology of “cognitive goodness” which also has had the effect of people (so is said) drinking less than in other places and being more industrial than in other places. The myth further goes that this is the reason why Gøta is one of the richest municipalities in the Faroes, which then again is a proveable fact.

This is not just a specific phenomenon. Friendliness is in fact a part of the “brand” of many Faroese villages. Reciprocal friendliness is one of the main qualities one can utilize – and/or co-produce – when one lives in a village. This is off course more true in some villages than in others, but in a socially balanced village this is at least a virtue one may foster. At least there seems to be a need to explain the qualities of the village as opposed to the qualities of the town. The myth goes that people are much more friendly in the villages whereas in the towns people just

work all day long and hardly ever “mingle”. How true this myth is, is hard to estimate, but I have talked to a young woman from another region settled in Gøta who pointed out that people in Gøta are actually too occupied, and it isn’t possible just to walk into each other’s houses as they do in her homevillage (a more peripheral village outside the Mainland) where it isn’t as normal that women work a lot outside the house. Seen from this perspective Gøta may not be that “villageous” anyway. The friendliness and openness is not that authentic and reciprocal as it may seem at first glance; it has become aesthetic. Friendliness and openness should be seen as a part of the symbolic capital of the village; a part of the brand of Gøta and thereby of being from Gøta, being from Gøta in turn meaning that one is friendly and openminded and perhaps even “cosmopolitan”.

The mega-event of the G!festival; a large music festival situated in Gøta is – seen from this perspective – a “spectacle” (a concept that could partially be explained as an “eye-catcher”; something that is deliberately posed in order to attract attention) one can build one’s identity on, both by referring to it, but also by being a part of the social co-operation that makes such a mega-event possible in such a relatively small place. Furthermore Gøta has a fine recent history of relatively high-quality bands, including the national super-star Eivør Pálsdóttir.

The blooming cultural life is remarkable considering the smallness of the community. The greatness of the cultural life of Gøta and the smallness of the community is really an extreme semiotic reflection that cre-

ates an impressive image. One really gets the impression of a community that exposes everything it has in order to satisfy the spectator.

One important aspect of the dwelling is that it is indeed a place, but then again: a very special place. This does not mean that the dwelling is the only special place, but it is commonly one of a person’s special places. The Danish geographer Ole B. Jensen has conceptualized the importance of “place-images”, meaning both imaginations on the place – e.g. dwelling, but also the image of the place (Jensen, 1999: 25). What happens when a place is sufficiently packed with images in a coherent manner, they might even be constituted as a “place-myth”. In other words, in order to create a myth on one’s dwelling means that one has to engage in a collective imaging of the “dwelling-place” (in Danish: *bosted*). This is off course not necessarily a cognitive action, but will tend to become so as people become more reflexive (as theorized in: Beck *et al.*, 1994). Creating images, myths, discourses and narratives on the village where one already lives is just a start.

Myths can also be created on one’s home, even if it isn’t built yet. It is important when building a house that the place where one builds it is positively discoursivized. A positive discourse can be construed from whatever quality there may be available, but one frequent quality is off course the social community aspect, i.e. that the social coherence can be stated positively in one way or another. This both refers to the social quality of the people that already live there, but also to the people that are going to settle there in

the near future. In a Faroese village one will always be able to know (by gossip) which people will become one's neighbours, and as many of these people may originate from the same village that they settle in, they will naturally start to construe myths on their future neighbourship when meeting at the supermarket, at the kindergarden (if they already have children of their own), at birthday-parties or in the sports- or knitting-clubs. It is interesting to see that young people start to engage in symbolic investments in their future home; an investment that may in turn yield social capital that can become useful in the future, both for practical reasons but also in order to sustain an ontological security.

Theoretical extract: The discursive production of dwelling-myths is an important part of the (re)production of the dwelling-place. Not only is it a way to rationalize one's own settlement; it is also an important identity-strategy. As mentioned in an earlier section settlement is an important part of the identity-formation. This is not necessarily something new, but in a mobile age it becomes an increasingly aesthetic and reflexive practice that is not only mediated through corporeal relations but also through myths and images that are reflected in e.g. the media.

Imaginations on the future dwelling

One thing is mythologizing a place or a village; another thing is what the concrete imaginations on the future dwelling might be. It is interesting to observe that one of the core imaginations is that it will become a good and safe place for the children. At

first this may seem obvious, as one should assume that a core element of (future) parenthood is taking care of the offspring. Nevertheless, looking at the reasons for this, one finds out that this seemingly altruistic rationale on giving the children a good and safe childhood is actually also an aesthetic quality of the (future) dwelling. It is not just the fact that the young settlers will be able to give their children a good and safe childhood that matters; it is also the embedding into an "aesthetic community" that matters, watching happy, playing children being one of the important aesthetic moments of a beautiful evening.

This aesthetic community is a guarantee that one will not experience social extravaganza that might jeopardize the coherent mythology of the place or even become an everyday-practical burden (dysfunctional neighbours etc.), i.e. not only an aesthetic problem, but even a practical problem. One often supposes that youth seeks social extravaganza and new social fields that are exciting and potentially emancipatory, but this is not the case for those who want to live in the village. For those young people that decide *not* to move away, settlement in a Faroese village is in many ways an investment in the safety of social conformity. Not because this is existentially necessary, but because it is "funny". "Funny" (in vulgar-Faroese: "skeg") may seem as a funny word to use in this context, but this is actually the term being used to describe the relevance and significance of the imagined reciprocal sociality, that has been ripped off from its origin of mutual dependency and distilled into imagination. This means that the social

conformity is most of all a positive quality of the (imagined) place and not an existential quality of everyday life.

What is at stake here is the entire concept of a village life-mode as proposed by e.g. Bærenholdt (1991: e.g. 345) who has defined four different village life-modes: “caring-peasant” (omsorgsbonde), “fisher-peasant” (fiskerbonde), “fish-worker” (firkerarbejder) and “caring-wage-earner” (omsorgslønarbejder). These life-forms were thematically typologized by empirical studies in the distant village-conglomerate Hvan-nasund/Norðdepil. I am heavily in doubt whether these life-modes can be transposed to the mobile reality of the mainland of today, where the villages are automobilely in access to the towns. When (or if) living in the village is only differing from living in the town from an aesthetic or/and a formative point of view, but is functionally integrated with the “surrounding” society (or societies), we should perhaps no longer keep up the distinction between village and town, that has been constituted as a major “social faultline” in the Faroes for several decades. The linguistic distinctions “town><village”, “new><old”, “modern><traditional”, “progressive><reactive” etc. that have been so predominant in the Faroese society – as in many other comparable societies – are perhaps loosing their substantial counterparts. There is no obvious reason why youth from a rural village should necessarily be more “conservative” than youth from the town. In practice most youth does share a similar set of cultural references, because of the nationwidening of youth-culture (e.g. through large festivals in stead of the old local fairs

and gatherings) and youth-education (as a large part of the young generations are now able to meet young people from other regions on a daily base, creating new networks that transcend the villages).

It seems to me quite clear that Faroese youth to day has – in large – escaped from the village-ties and is now acting on inter-regional, national or even international scales. If we accept the notion of the Faroese mainland constituting a network-city in the making, then the rural youth is in fact being integrated into the general life-mode of this network-city. Whether this should be seen as a rural or an urban life-mode (as distinguished by Thomas Højrup, 1989: 65-72) could be discussed for ages, but perhaps one should rather abandon any such “rural><urban”-distinctions and accept that the globalization is now reembedding the social structures of societies, hereby integrating most social contexts on a broader level.

From this point of view, living in a Faroese village today should therefore rather be seen as an aesthetic project, which allows us to talk about a “rural life-style”, being only one of many possible life-styles in the of society. Living in the village is most of all a result of dwelling-preferences (a concept borrowed from Ærø 2002). One chooses to live in the village, because one wants and/or likes to live in the village (aesthetically); not because one has to (existentially). One is connected to the village; not tied to the village. The village is a chosen (or imagined) community; not a community of destiny.

This does *not* mean that this chosen community is solely aesthetic or symbolic. Ac-

tually it is also quite practical, as the sameness enables people to ask each other for services and recognition, even if it might be in quite symbolic ways like lending sugar or eggs or doing minor practical favours: all things that are not existentially necessary to life, but are nevertheless “nice” or “funny” and therefore also increase the subjective everydaylife-quality.

Theoretical extract: When young people talk about their future dwelling they are at the same time reflecting on their life-styles and life-modes. But as the existential and the aesthetic dwelling-practices are being segregated spatially as an effect of the increasing mobility, the rural life-modes are losing their significance. Instead the young people now become a part of a globalizing life-mode which is segregated into several life-styles, e.g. a rural life-style. Dwelling practices then become an aesthetic choice and are no longer an effect of existential necessity.

Traffic and mobility, distance and proximity

The safety for the children is a very common argument for dwelling in a Faroese village. One of the main reasons why the village is suitable for raising children is that there exists (or there is an imagination on the existence of) a reciprocal sociality that thereby creates a social environment that may be both secure and hopefully also stimulating for the children. One central part of this sociality is off course the “grananny-institution” (“gra-nanny” is a compound developed for this article by the words “granny” and “nanny”, signifying that the

granny-role often correlates with the nanny-role) which functions as an extension of the core family, that becomes more important when the mother is being more and more integrated in the employment-market. The “grananny” is very often an older woman that has acted as a housewife most of her life and still does. The problem in all this is that as time goes by the grandmothers are also being integrated into the employment-market, as it is the children of the women that went working in the sixties and seventies that now are settling and having children of their own. The new grandmothers are therefore frequently employed and do not have time for taking care of children. This means that the gra-nanny-institution is no longer available to all young settlers, and therefore external child-care becomes more and more a necessary institution. Most larger and medium-sized municipalities have understood this functional shift and have given higher priorities to child-care (“dagrøkt”) or even kindergartens (“barnagarður”) on the municipal budget; some municipalities offering no less than child-care-guarantee to all citizens. The quality of the school is also a very important aspect when young people choose where to settle. Andrias Petersen, former member of the municipal board of Gøta has formulated this policy-complex like this:

It must be a guarantee that – if you live in Gøta – you will have your children taken care of. We have also done an incredible lot to the school. Now there is only a one-pathed school up to 7th grade, and there has been aimed at having a school with a good reputation where the children thrive and learn something and the physical

frames are good. Because this is also what modern families look at. It is one of the criteria... The criteria for settling, what are they? It is child-care, plots, the school and then the environment for the children to grow up in. That is what people look at when they are settling.

He proposes the concept of “modern families” – probably as a social opposition to the traditional family – and thereby builds his argument on a social change that is now demanding a change in municipal policies. One could say that in the Faroese mainland, where the municipalities are heavily intertwined – both functionally and cognitively – a high-quality child policy becomes an increasingly important competition-parameter in order to attract young settlers that have ambitions for having children – which should probably include the vast majority of the whole population of Faroese youth, even though there is no quantitative data available on this.

Another aspect that underpins the fact that the village is losing its functional importance on behalf of an aesthetic significance, is that functions like shops, service and employment lose their relevance. If you have good access to the “space of flows” (as in Castells, 2000: 404-408), as for instance the main traffic-ore, then you are functionally integrated to the extended region if you have access to the relevant “mobility-capital” (Urry, 2004; Kristiansen, 2005) as for instance the car.

When I was interviewing the young people settling in “Uppi við Garðagøtu” in Syðrugøta it struck me that it was not a problem that their village was virtually emptied out of functions. There is nothing you can

do in Syðrugøta but being there and enjoying your neighbourhood. One interviewee mentioned that it would be nice with a little store around the corner, but that it isn't really necessary as they usually buy what they need in the regional town Runavík.

Functions such as shops, service and employment have been distanced from the dwelling, whereas functions as child-care and the good local school are still relevant to be situated in the proximity of the dwelling-place. What we see is that distances are becoming a central part of many peoples' everyday-life, but that people are also able to cope with distances technologically and cognitively. Mobility becomes a central part of the structural reflexivity of people as the structures are geographically extended (Drewes Nielsen, 2005).

I would propose that we try to understand automobility not only as a mean for getting from A to B, but also as an extended part of dwelling. Automobility becomes an everyday practice, something that is totally routinized and filled with rituals and repeating every-day situations. Dwelling is not necessarily a territorial practice but may also be a mobile practice. One has to understand, that it is exactly these young people that are most competent to cope with distances as they have grown up with driving between places. Even the current youths' parents were used to automobility, as this technology became common already during the 70'ies and 80'ies (Kristiansen, 2005: 4, 85-7). On the other hand, the logic of mobility must be regarded as a problem for less-mobile people like children or elderly women that never obtained a drivers-license. These

elderly people are also cognitively used to be able to demand services within the locality, but nowadays these services are moving away from the villages and into the towns, or – as something new – become situated along the main-roads in "malls" or service-clusters. Young people are able to reach these places, but children and elderly are quite dependent on either public transport or a relative that drives them from one location to another. One could say, nevertheless, that this is in many ways just another way of reembedding the social ties in the villages, as the different generations may no longer be productively dependent on each other, but are instead mobilely dependent on each other. It seems even to be the case that the new major social faultline of the rural areas in the Faroes is now drawn according to the access to mobility capital and not according to the access to production means. To be succesful in todays society does not only mean that you are good at your job (degree of professionalization and/or skills) but that you are mobile – both physically and cognitively – and are therefore able – if necessary – to pull up the stakes and search for new hunting grounds (for using two indian-metaphors).

Under all circumstances young people settle in the village because they have a "mobile life-style". If these people did not fancy the automobile culture, they would not be able to live in a village like Syðrugøta; or rather: they would, but only if they were apt to adapt to this mobile culture. Living in the village and not being mobile might otherwise even result in social isolation and/or stigmatization.

Another aspect that should be mentioned is that this mobile culture is not only a commuting-culture, but also a leisure-culture. Even in the evenings the car functions as a space of leisure amongst young people that "cruise" (or "slice" – if it is in the Northern Islands) towards the various meeting points on the mainland. These meeting-points may vary over time, but the grill-house, the kiosk, the petrol-station or the central parking-lots are typical spaces for automobile social activities.

The question is whether such a mobile culture is sustainable over time. Research has shown that mobility surely is a central part of today's societies, but that mobility also is a source of economic and social stress (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2005; Uth Thomsen, 2005). The question is whether people will afford to use several hours each day on commuting. A germ for an answer can be found in a polemic between two interviewees that did not agree on the centrality of Gøta in the mainland:

It [i.e. Gøta] is well situated. You can get anywhere. Fast to Tórshavn, fast to Fuglafjørð, now it will soon be [fast to] Klaksvík too. It is quite central compared to living in Fuglafjørð or Skáli.

Now I mentioned yesterday that they build row-houses in Hósvík, so one ought to live there. From there it is much faster to travel to Tórshavn, and seen from that perspective we [in Gøta] live almost as far away from Tórshavn as possible; you'll just go to Fuglafjørð, then you are as far away as you can get, or perhaps Selatrað. So we are quite far away [from Tórshavn]. It takes twenty minutes longer to drive from Gøta [than from Hósvík, smk]. One will always want to avoid driving as far as

possible; when you say that Gøta is well positioned; I don't think it is well positioned, it isn't."

This ambivalency shows that the distance can become a problem over time, at least if you work in Tórshavn each and every day, as the latter interviewee does. At least it leads one to consider the alternative settling-possibilities in areas that are better positioned. On the other hand, if one's locale is within the region, this is not articulated as a problem, and there is surely a cognitive difference between fifteen minutes commuting within the region and fifty minutes commuting between or across regions. This leads directly to a hypothesis that will not be investigated in this article, but will be commented on in the conclusion, namely that an increasing centralization of service and business will – over time – mean that also the settlement-structures will centralize. There will surely be an adjustment period, but the question is for how long people in the rural areas will manage to cope with the mobility-stress.

Theoretical extract: Quite a lot of the features of "the village" have totally changed their functional relevance. It is no longer necessary to live in the proximity of everyday functions as the increasing mobility has made it possible to extend the everyday-locale. But this also means that less-mobile people living in a village become dependent on their mobile relatives or friends. Furthermore mobility causes a functional segregation of the different villages, some villages hereby becoming "sleeping-villages".

Perspectives on village-dwelling in the future

In this article I have presented some of the main imaginations on the dwelling amongst young people settling in the Faroese rural-ity. I have summed the discussions up in four theoretical extracts:

Traditionally "home" was a very located place, but in an age of mobility "home" is extending its locale, as dwelling-relevant elements of the everyday have become reachable especially through automobility. This also means that one is not tied to the dwelling-place but connected to the dwelling-place or rather: connected to a whole range of everyday-places, the dwelling-place being only one of several.

The discursive production of dwelling-myths is an important part of the (re)production of the dwelling-place. Not only is it a way to rationalize one's own settlement; it is also an important identity-strategy. As mentioned in an earlier section settlement is an important part of the identity-formation. This is not necessarily something new, but in a mobile age it becomes an increasingly aesthetic and reflexive practice that is not only mediated through corporeal relations but also through myths and images that are reflected in e.g. the media.

When young people talk about their future dwelling they are at the same time reflecting on their life-styles and life-modes. But as the existential and the aesthetic dwelling-practices are being segregated spatially as an effect of the increasing mobility, the rural life-modes are losing their significance. Instead the young people now become a part of a globalizing life-mode which

is segregated into several life-styles, e.g. a rural life-style. Dwelling practices then become an aesthetic choice and are no longer an effect of existential necessity.

Quite a lot of the features of “the village” have totally changed their functional relevance. It is no longer necessary to live in the proximity of everyday functions as the increasing mobility has made it possible to extend the everyday-locale. But this also means that less-mobile people living in a village become dependent on their mobile relatives or friends. Furthermore mobility causes a functional segregation of the different villages, some villages hereby becoming “sleeping-villages”.

These are all effects of mobility and modernity. The technologies of modernity allow an ever growing degree of mobility which “shortens distances”, thereby creating new everyday spaces and therefore also new everyday places.

In a strange way, therefore, “the Faroese village” is becoming an optional dwelling-community, and is no longer a community of destiny. What is interesting to state is that even if young settlers today are functionally independent of their extended family (or at least would be able to become independent, if they really wanted to), the extended family is still a quality that is lucrative. Even though there are surely many young people that “move away”, there are also young people who simply want to stay, even if they are working in some other town or even in some other region. It isn’t possible to state exhaustively why this is the case, but my empirical material suggest that the reason is aesthetic or that it simply is “funny” (I

have explained the complexity of this word earlier in this article) to be together with the people one knows and is comfortable with. In other words, what matters is that one can “feel” comfortable and self-affirmed by the village-dwelling.

“The village” is not a necessity, but a possibility. But this does not mean that the village is only aesthetic and not practical. In the beginning of this article I stated a range of aspects that make settlement in a Faroese village on the mainland a very practical phenomenon, such as cheap housing- and plot-prizes, the proximity of the extended family etc. Without these practical aspects, the village would probably not be chosen in favour of the town to the same significant degree as it is being chosen today. The fact is – to a certain degree – that the villages are a valid alternative to the town, but for how long they will sustain the population is hard to say. One thing is for sure: the village is no longer a phenomenon that can be understood as a separate production entity. Definitely not. Even though this is still a common perception of “the Faroese village”, any such understanding becomes more and more absurd as time passes by. It is necessary to understand the villages’ functional integration to the surrounding regions, and it will also be necessary to develop municipal policies that acknowledge the new role of “the village”. The work that needs to be done is both complicated and even paradoxical, as people are imagining their settlement in the villages according to the territorial qualities of the villages, but are at the same time determined by the phenomena of modernity and mobility. Therefore politi-

cians will need to understand both the aesthetic side and the practical side of “the village” and acknowledge that these are in fact co-productive.

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