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The student experience: sameness, difference, and (in)equality in Norwegian folk high school education

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PhD Social Anthropology

The University of Edinburgh

2024

DECLARATION.

I declare that, except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is entirely my own work, and that no part of it has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Jamie Glisson

August 2024

All genuine education comes about through experience.

-John Dewey[1]

ABSTRACT AND LAY SUMMARY.

This thesis explores how Norwegian students interact with sameness, difference and (in)equality in folk high school education. Drawing upon fifteen months of ethnographic work living at a Christian Norwegian folk high school campus I call Grøndal, I explore how the school's experiential and values-based learning strategies contributed to perceptions of equality in students' local and global relationships. Usually attended after high school, folk high schools offer students "gap year" programs where they can engage with their interests through ungraded coursework while experiencing the social aspects of dormitory life. Funded in part by the state, most of these schools also offer short-term study trips to locations like Moldova, Kenya, or the Philippines that coincide with school-wide community projects that raise funds for NGOs in the locations the schools visit each year. These trips are designed to give students global perspectives while also problematizing the "sameness" Marianne Gullestad argues is a characteristic of Norwegian egalitarianism, by positioning good forms of difference as essential for true equality to flourish. By examining the varying registers of sameness and difference that emerged through the folk high school's religious services, sleeping and eating arrangements, study trips, and fundraising initiatives, I suggest that the folk high school succeeded in shaping a social world where an equality beyond sameness was realized for students living there together. When students and staff left the folk high school and ventured into Norway or the world more broadly, however, the project of equality disintegrated as they confronted the social, political, and economic inequalities that existed between themselves and the people they met outside their relational, institutional, and national borders. By assessing how bad forms of difference relating to global poverty, colonization, and climate change were addressed during folk high school programming, I argue that these schools largely reflect the Norwegian state's commitment to maintaining its status quo through its dependence on oil, wealth

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[1] Dewey, J. (1938). Experience and Education. New York: Macmillan Company.

accumulation, and isolationist immigration policies. At the same time, I suggest that the folk high school's embodied value-making strategies offer critical insights into the role experiential learning can play in education and explore how problems and possibilities that emerged in these pedagogical aims reflect similar tensions in academia for students seeking to develop equality in an inequitable world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

It's difficult to describe in words how generous the Grøndal community was to me during my time on campus. *Rakel,[2] in particular, you became one of my dearest friends and I am in awe of the wealth of knowledge, care, and motivation you've provided to me, your students, and the Grøndal community at large. You remain one of the single most inspiring people I have ever met and I consider myself very lucky to have known you and to have been in the radiance of your fierce light for the time that I did. Thank you.

I am forever indebted to *Jens, too, for your zeal in opening Grøndal to me and for illuminating the spiritual world for me in ways I have yet to fully understand. I am convinced that you leave a piece of yourself with everyone you meet and I am lucky to carry your wisdom, intellect, and pastoral care with me for the rest of my life. Thank you.

*Lisa, you will forever hold a very dear place in my heart. In addition to being one of the most positive, joy-filled people I have ever known, you are also a deeply devoted friend and mother, extending your nurturance to not only your own children, but to your students, your colleagues, and to me. You are the epitome of "life" itself and I am deeply grateful for the tears, smiles, and cups of coffee we shared together. Thank you.

*Marta, you were a constant source of respite, insight, and laughter to me during my fieldwork. You gave me a picture of what health can mean in a world that doesn't prioritize it and were an emblem of quietly sticking to one's convictions even when it's not popular. Thank you.

Like so many of Grøndal's community members before me, I found a parent figure in you, *Martin, a person who embodies grace and exemplifies peace for all of those around you. Your curiosity, deep intelligence, and steadfast conviction time and time again encouraged me to keep trusting, to keep believing. Thank you.

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[2] ** Indicates a research participant whose name has been changed.*

To the rest of Grøndal's staff, those who I do not mention in as great a detail as some of the others listed here: thank you. You opened your homes, shared with me with your careful insights, and ensured that I was fed, housed, and included in everything Grøndal engages with and stands for. Thank you.

To the very many students who are mentioned here, I say with certainty that you are among the most caring, interesting, and reflective young people I have had the pleasure of knowing. It was a privilege to hear your thoughts and see you grow and you have each given me hope that the future will be good and the world will be bright. For tipping my kayak, for inviting me to your dance parties, and for holding my hand in the darkness: thank you.

To my uncle and aunt, Jan and Tak, who quarantined both me and Buddy when we first arrived in Norway, took care of our cat Freyja when we were traveling, and provided a second home to us both physically and metaphorically: Thank you.

To the very many scholars who contributed their insights to this project from The University of Agder, The University of Bergen, The University of Oslo, The University of Southeastern Norway, the Society for the Anthropology of Religion, the Royal Anthropological Institute, Edinburgh's Anthropology of Christianity Working Group, and Edinburgh's Substantiable Development Association: thank you. It's been deeply invigorating to work with so many world-class academics and I'm grateful for your attention, direction, and care.

To my Edinburgh PhD cohort, Tara, Iona, Madeleine, Patricia, Aphaluck, Neerja, Zafar, Lee, Ellis, and Neelabh: thank you. Your feedback on my work, your steadfast encouragement, and your endless warmth and good cheer are gifts that I will never be able to repay. You are among the most brilliant, kind, and exemplary scholars I have ever met and I consider my intellect and my capacity to be human expanded because of each of you.

To Gregory, the finest chaplain and spiritual director a student could ever hope to have: for walking alongside me during my years at Edinburgh as I processed, dreamed, and wept through figuring out the kind of scholar I want to be and the values I intend to bring forth in my life. Thank you.

To my wonderful supervisors, Naomi, Guy, and at turns, Rachel and Maya: I would not be the academic, or person, I am without your guidance, care, and intellectual direction and I am forever grateful for the amount of yourselves you poured into my work and my life. I can only try to emulate the spirit of goodwill and excellence you have shown me to my own students someday and I am cognizant that I will have to work very hard to do so. Thank you.

To Buddy, my greatest love, my dearest friend, and my de facto research assistant: thank you. Your sacrifices in making this dream become a reality are testament to what kind of person you are and the kind of love I aspire to return to you in our partnership. For filling out the paperwork, for holding down the fort in Edinburgh for the first four months of my fieldwork, and for transporting Freyja to Norway and then all three of us back to Scotland again: thank you. I love you endlessly.

And most of all, to my beloved grandparents, Signe and Kåre, who have given me ample evidence that love is real and that people are equal in God's eyes: thank you. Your love and support have been my life's greatest constant and deepest sense of wellbeing and I am forever hopeful that I can be more like you each day. This is for you.

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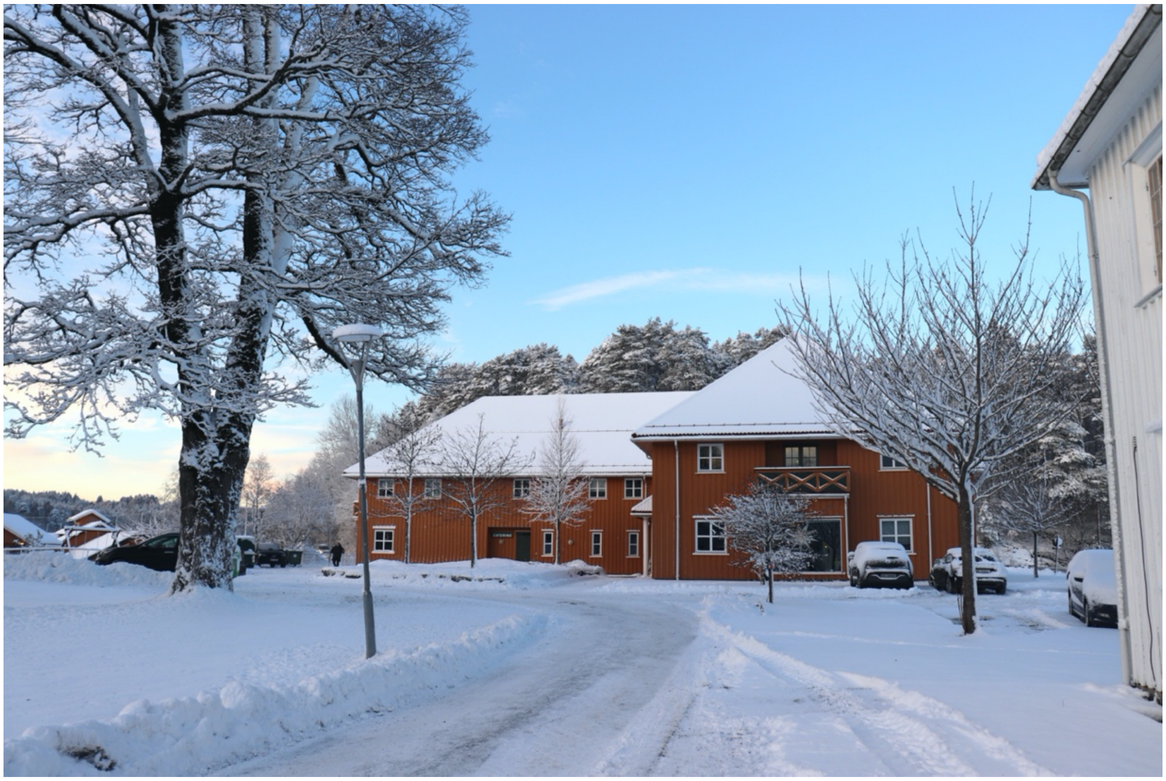

Fig. 2: The campus cloaked in snow.

PROLOGUE: ARRIVING.

When I first arrive at the *folkehøgskole* (folk high school) at the end of winter break, it is very cold. It's snowed recently and everything is coated in a frozen crust, illuminated by the golden yolk of the sun dipping behind the mountains that encircle the campus. I sense care has been taken in maintaining continuity between the folk high school's natural surroundings and the palate of paint choices selected for its primary buildings: they're mainly swathed in brushstrokes of white and yellow, with one built in naked brick and pine. All six or seven of the buildings are positioned around a central courtyard now cocooned in a thick blanket of unbroken snow, patiently waiting for students to return to campus and crush its blankness on their way to class or lunch. I phone the teacher on watch as I've been instructed to do, and he meets me in front of reception, offering to carry my suitcase or sleeping bag to my accommodations in the same building. I follow him down the dark empty corridor that will, effectually, become my suite; because enrollment is lower than usual this year due to Grøndal's[4] study trips being cancelled due to Covid-19, I'm on my own in Corridor 9. I survey my empty dorm room which is directly across from a closet with a shower, usually shared by a dozen students during normal circumstances. I unroll my sleeping bag and slide into it, cold as I am, the heat not yet turned on for the students' scheduled return the following day. I listen for any sign of life, the faintest footsteps, the slightest rustle. None come, and as I unwrap the *matpakke* (packed sandwich) my *bestemor* (grandmother) has made for me, I wonder if I am indeed on a folk high school campus, if I have finally arrived after waiting months to start fieldwork after being delayed by Covid-19 travel restrictions, if this is actually a real place, or if it's all been nothing more than a strange, cold dream.

The next day I meet Rakel, the teacher for *Action og Bistand* (Action and Aid), a class that is designed to bridge adrenaline-fueled activities like surfing, snowboarding, and motocross with volunteer work in Norway and further afield. The classroom contrasts the corridor where I slept the previous night in every way; it is warm, cozy, and bright, and each student, about a dozen or so in total, is seated in rows of desks that are arranged so closely that they must climb over their fellow students if they want to leave the room before class is over. There is a large chalkboard positioned at the front of the room surrounded by several small posters clinging to corkboards that read in English, "dreams do come true," "be the person you want to meet," and "do more of what makes you happy." Photos of last year's class cover the entire back wall of the room, while the wall to the right features a growing collection of photos this year's class has taken and pinned around the room's cheerful windows, images of students skiing, white-water rafting, and picking cherries at Rakel's family's greenhouse on Norway's west coast. Last year's photos, though, also feature images taken during their trip to East Africa, and feature students on a safari, wearing traditional Maasai clothing, holding Tanzanian children on their laps, experiences this year's class are unlikely to have themselves due to pandemic-related travel restrictions. Rakel is seated at a desk at the front of the room facing us, dressed in snow pants and a long-sleeve woolen undershirt, her blonde hair barely softening her intense blue eyes and commanding presence. Today we will be hiking not far from campus, she tells us, to an overlook that features views of the nearby fjord where we will be making small campfires in teams of two and roasting oranges and bananas stuffed with chocolate and wrapped in tin foil over the fires once they've been lit.

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[4] "Grøndal" is a pseudonym. All of the names of research participants and organizations throughout have been changed to preserve anonymity.

The walk gives me a chance to get to know several of the students. They come from all over the country and tell me that they were interested in *A og B*[5] for various reasons: one is planning a career in international development; another felt that the class had the most exciting program of any of the school's offerings; still another, named Hilde, says that this class most closely reflects her values which include "making a difference." She and I walk and chat together for several minutes along the main road before we follow the rest of the group that has turned off into the woods and is beginning its ascent. When we arrive at the overlook we pause, stopped in our tracks by the splendor of the snow-capped vista in front of us. Below us is the fjord, its waters half-frozen and reflecting the sun in various measures with the neighboring town spilling into the hills beyond it. The sky is shifting from muddled purple to crystal blue, the sun's beams reaching through the clouds and ricocheting off the snow that blankets the mountains and pine trees around us. Students begin to spill out of the forest, stomping into the clearing, laughing in delight over the perfect beauty of the fjord below.

We get to work gathering kindling for our campfires. Most of the students have not done this before which surprises me; Norwegians are usually characterized as being an "outdoorsy" kind of people, braving the elements and carving lives out of inhospitable conditions. My group is composed of six or seven young women including me. There are only two boys in the class, a student and a *stipp* (student-leader),[6] which Rakel tells me is the usual demographic for *A og B*;

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[5] *Action og Bistand* (Action and Aid) which I usually refer to as "*A og B*" from here on out.

[6] *Stipendiater,* or "*stipps"* as they were called for short, were student-leaders chosen by staff from the previous year's class to organize activities for current students meant to create a greater sense of equality on campus.

there are always more girls than boys.[7] I ask several of the students why they think that is: "Because boys don't care about making a difference," laughs Silje. "They only think about themselves."

Presently, we crouch around the modest pile of wood we've each contributed to, and Mai Kristine strikes a match, cursing when the winter wind snuffs it out almost immediately. We huddle around the next match she strikes, our hands cradled together sheltering its fragile flicker. I haven't been this close to a group of people in ten months, socially distanced as I've had to be elsewhere. Finally, our kindling lights and we erupt in a chorus of cheers. Our fledgling fire requires more tinder, and so one student fishes for something flammable in her purse, unwrapping a tampon and tossing it into the flame.

After our desserts have been cooked and eaten, a few students start a snowball fight. The two boys take this a bit more seriously than the rest of us do, and one of them, Karl, accidentally hits me on my shoulder in his haste. "Sometimes civilians get caught in the cross-fire!" he shouts over good-naturedly.

"But I'm not a civilian, I'm a double agent!"[8] I respond, laughing. I lob a small snowball his way when he isn't looking; it hits him square on the cheek, bursting into white diffused powder upon contact. "Good one!" he yells in glee. I dust the remnants of snow off my shoulder, reeling from this sort of embodied experience I have recently been conditioned to avoid. While the rest of the world remains in Covid-induced lockdown, we are free, a bunch of young adults playing like children in the snow.

---

[7] I use the terms "boys" and "girls" throughout the thesis because that's how they were referred to by teachers and staff.

[8] As being somewhat of an "insider-outsider" (Miled 2019) as a U.S. citizen with a Norwegian background, this felt apt.

CHAPTER 1/

INTRODUCTION.

ON PROCESS.

This thesis is about how values give meaning to social worlds, and the processes by which people choose, experience, and embody them. When I first began thinking about the research that supports this thesis back in 2019, I knew that I wanted to look at how embodied learning informs values in young adult populations and I knew that I wanted to conduct ethnographic work in Norway. This was, of course, just prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, a time when I was a new student myself, recently enrolled in the social anthropology doctoral program at The University of Edinburgh and eager to embark on fieldwork in Norway, the place where my mother's side of the family live, and where I, a U.S. citizen, had studied for a year just after graduating from high school. Like my grandmother and mother before me, I had attended a folk high school, where my initial interest in Norwegian education and Norwegian social life more broadly was piqued and the groundwork for my doctoral research was laid, a project I would take on fifteen or so years later. Prior to my doctoral research, I taught in various educational contexts, teaching English in Southeast Asia, volunteering in community education programs in cities in the American Northeast, and instructing political science and immigration courses at a high school and university, respectively, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Throughout my years of teaching, I regularly reflected back on my time at the folk high school and wished my students could experience the same sort of education I had received there, where freedom, friendship, and experiential learning were prioritized above academic achievement.

Norwegian folk high schools are unique; sometimes referred to as the "freest schools in the world,"[9] the best way I've found to describe them is a sort of hybrid between a university and a summer camp. Instead of following more traditional modes of pedagogical practice that privilege academic rigor, contemporary Norwegian folk high schools are designed to offer students experiences that will shape their social skills by instilling them with values meant to establish life-long learning. Usually attended after *videregående* (high school),[10] folk high schools offer one-year programs of ungraded coursework where students can engage with their interests through activities that include sports, creative projects, and international study trips all while experiencing the social aspects of dormitory life. With 85 schools composed of cohorts between 80 and 130 students scattered across Norway, folk high schools have become increasingly popular in recent years, attracting students eager to have a *pauseår* (gap year) after high school and before entering the workforce or enrolling in further studies. Students commonly attend folk high schools because of the short-term study trips most of them offer to locations like Australia, Kenya, or the Philippines, trips that usually coincide with school-wide community development projects designed to raise funds for projects established through international partnerships. Folk high schools offer more than just gap years for students, however. As long-standing "values-based institutions" (Lövgren 2018), founded by Lutheran pastor, educator, and poet N.F.S. Grundtvig in the 1840s, they also represent a historical and cultural cornerstone of Norwegian value-making, with contemporary folk high schools widely regarded as centers for enacting Nordic values for Norway's future generations.[11] While folk high schools were originally based on Christian values, many have transitioned to a secular status, with one-third of current schools, including Grøndal, remaining religiously affiliated today.[12] All folk high schools, whether Christian or secular, remain funded, in part, by the Norwegian state and represent Norway's continued commitment to values, equality, and freedom in its publicly funded educational interests.[13]

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[9] https://www.folkehogskole.no/

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[10] *Videregående skoler* (directly, "going further schools"), refer to public upper secondary education in Norway. While they're not a direct translation of a U.S. high school, my research participants usually translated *videregående* as "high school" when referring to them in English.

[11] I discuss the history of the Norwegian folk high school movement, as well as its relationships with Christianity, more fully in chapter two.

[12] https://www.folkehogskole.no/skoler

[13] While folk high school tuition is paid for by the Norwegian state, room, board, and study trips are privately funded.

Shortly after starting fieldwork, I came to view Grøndal as an embodied extension of the state, a place where flesh-and-blood actors represented the success of Norway's welfare programs in enacting the same, or at least highly similar, standards of living for the Norwegian people. I soon came to see, though, that these forms of material sameness remained largely within what students and staff often referred to as Grøndal's "bubble," much like Norway's wealth more broadly which is usually reserved for Norwegian citizens living within its borders. Norway is often characterized as being especially proficient at delivering global aid, leading environmental initiatives both at home and elsewhere, and being generally a good global partner in international projects. Scholars, however, have argued that these characterizations subvert the reality of Norway's statecraft, where immigration is heavily regulated (Karlsen 2018), environmental initiatives do little more than greenwash Norway's lucrative oil industry (Lyngseth 2023), and Norway's engagements with global initiatives is over-promised and under-delivered (de Soya et. al., 2024). In many respects, the Norwegian state enacts policies that are good for the Norwegian people and bad for everyone else; equality as a state project, it would appear, is generally reserved for Norwegian citizens, and any sense of contributing to achieving equality on a global scale is usually at the behest of preserving national interests (Abram 2008). It would appear that Norway benefits from its position on the global periphery (Anker 2020), as its flagrant use of natural resources and exponential wealth accumulation tend to draw less attention than other rich nation-states elsewhere. This is one reason why the folk high school network is a salient field site when it comes to research in Norway: as a state-funded initiative, these schools are meant to deliver students with a national project that seeks to generate equality, both at home and abroad, all while training students in how to interact with the inequality that is inherent in Norway's consumerism and isolationism.[14] With over 35 programs that relate in one sense or another to "global solidarity," folk high schools seem to convey the message that students *should* engage with the global community, that they *can* achieve a sense of equality outside of Norway, that Norway isn't *solely* on the periphery, but also a contender in the liberal project of global solidarity. If Norway cannot solve the world's problems, at least its students can interact with these problems incrementally, by forging relationships with NGOs or local projects in the Global South.

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[14] I mean this in the sense that Norway's foreign policy operates in its own best interests. Norway is not a part of the EU, and Gullestad (2002) has argued that immigration policies in Norway reflect "equality as sameness" sentiments. She writes that an immigration ban was imposed in Norway in 1975, and since then, people have only been admitted on the basis of being experts, family members, students, or refugees seeking asylum (2002: 47).

I spent the majority of my ethnographic work following one such course, *Action og Bistand* (Action and Aid), a program composed of a dozen or so students and one that I mentioned at the start of this chapter. The course had been recommended to me by a fellow folk high school researcher who suggested that out of all of Grøndal's programs—*Action og Aid* (Action and Aid), *Backpacker* [in English], *Reiseliv* (Tourism), *Botrening* (Life Skills), *Fotball* (Football), *Håndball* (Handball), *Ball and Games* [in English], and *Sjakk* (Chess)—the students in *A og B* would be the ones most interested in talking about values with me. While I also spent a good deal of time with the *Backpacker* and *Reiseliv* classes, as both programs also focused on travel and various global partnerships, the majority of my fieldnotes center around *A og B*'s teacher, Rakel, and the programming she crafted in order for her students to "get out of their comfort zones" and be "*på*" (on, engaged) in their lives both in Norway and further afield. The sorts of activities she planned, ones that were approved by the folk high school administration, were an important part of implementing one of Grøndal's five core values, "experience," the value I heard invoked the most by students and staff during my fieldwork. Values at Grøndal, I should note, were everywhere. In order to receive state funding, all folk high schools are required by law to select their *verdigrunnlag* (core values) and draft documents outlining how they will be implemented in their pedagogical strategies.[15] I figured looking at Grøndal's value documents would be a fine place to start my ethnographic work, and I spent a good deal of time talking to students and staff about the values that staff had chosen and students had agreed to follow when they signed their codes of conduct at the start of the year. As I got to know Grøndal's community members, 30 teachers and support staff members and 80 or so students who had decided to attend the folk high school despite knowing its international trips would not go forward as planned due to the pandemic, I soon discovered that most of them could not recall the school values when asked. These values–*fellesskap* (community), *opplevelse* (experience), *kvalitet* (quality), *humør* (mood), *utvikling* (development), and *samhandling* (interaction)–had been agreed upon, printed, and hung on plaques around the school and while they were sometimes referenced in passing, they felt largely muted within the everyday contours of Grøndal's social life. Instead, these values served as a backdrop for a singular project I came to view as most central to Grøndal's pedagogical aim: developing a social world where students could make each other equal in such a way that would prepare them for being active participants in Norwegian society, and the world more broadly, after graduation.

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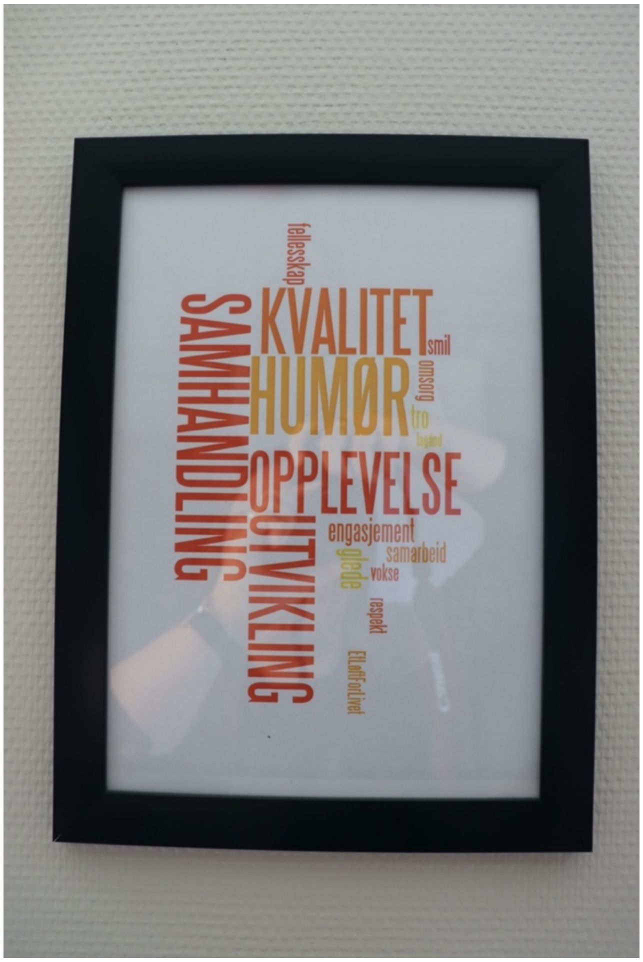
[15] The Folk High School Act stipulates that all schools must "define a value system as the basis for [their practices]" in order to receive state funding (The Folk High School Act, Section 1. www.lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2002-12-06-72, translated by me from Norwegian to English.)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SAMHANDLING
KVALITET
smil
HUMØR
omsorg
tro
lagånd
OPPLEVELSE
UTVIKLING
engasjement
samarbeid
glede
vokse
respekt
EtLøftForLivet

Fig. 3: Grøndal's core values and other key terms.

Egalitarianism, the moral philosophy that all people should be treated equally, has long been considered an immanent Scandinavian value. Marianne Gullestad, one of Norway's best known anthropologists, critiqued Norwegians' reputation for being concerned with equality, though, arguing that their goal was less about making each other equal in social relationships and more about making each other the same (1984). For my research participants, most of whom were young adults coming directly out of high school, sameness in their relating was a priority and appearing and acting alike a shared aim. The folk high school, however, served as a social milieu where equality *beyond* sameness was encouraged, where recognizing and appreciating difference was viewed as essential for true equality to be realized. As I became integrated into the social world of Grøndal, I found that difference was prioritized in a range of pedagogical and social mechanisms that staff had carefully designed to contribute to a sort of school community where equality, and not just sameness, could be achieved. Respecting difference within the context of overarching sameness was how the school conceived an egalitarian framework that would prepare students to be more compassionate, selfless, and concerned for others, both on campus and in social worlds beyond Grøndal's walls. In other words, equality was made possible through sameness *and* difference, and students would have to interact with both in order to create an egalitarian social world together.

Even so, perceived differences, both among students and in populations Grøndal interacted with outside of its campus, often brought a good deal of discomfort to Grøndal's student body. These forms of discomfort, though, were usually encouraged by school staff in an effort to provide students with the ethical questions that were necessary for them to conceive what equality in local and global contexts requires. Through religious services, study trips, and service projects, the aim of the folk high school's action-based learning model presented students with embodied possibilities for bridging the gaps in differences they perceived existing both among themselves and between them and people beyond Grøndal's community. By developing social relationships built through embodied activities, students could experience what equality could feel like, by experimenting with good difference, both among themselves and with people they interacted with off campus. Feeling equal, however, quickly collapsed outside the walls of the folk high school, where everyone had, by and large, the same access to resources, ate the same meals, engaged in the same activities, and had few limits in terms of enjoying the same high standard of living most Norwegians are used to. As students became exposed to the depth of inequality that exists on a global scale, the value of equality was challenged, made to seem impossible, given over to articulations of despair, of unfairness, of dismay over how the world "really is." When themes like climate change, poverty, or supply chains appeared in classroom materials, the truth of global inequality and how it supports Norwegian wealth became difficult for students to bear. Still, staff hoped that students would encounter these discomforts in ways that were productive rather than immobilizing, through activities that students could engage with that were generative instead of debilitating. The goal was to present students with curated experiences where they were made to feel that bridging difference was possible, where equality could become more than a concept; by focusing first on their own community, Grøndal's mission was to prepare students for bringing this sense of egalitarian relating to the rest of Norway, and in some respects, the rest of the world, after leaving the folk high school.

Most of my research participants, however, were highly aware of the contradictions inherent in Norwegian egalitarianism and were equally critical of Norway's immigration policies, dependence on oil, and lack of meaningful engagement with global poverty. The teaching staff in particular knew how difficult equality is to achieve on a global scale and believed that presenting students with information about how unfair the world is would instill in them a gratitude for how "lucky" they were to live in Norway, while also encouraging them to do the work necessary for creating equality among themselves. The task of recognizing student difference while giving each other the same sense of respect was a weighty enough project in and of itself and required careful leadership and intentional planning to see it through. As Gullestad (1984) argued, Norwegians are not especially adept at accepting difference in social relationships and I witnessed several instances where rumors and unkindness about student differentiations emerged in the student body that threatened to undo the egalitarian community the folk high school staff had worked so hard to create. Staff knew that students treating each other equally well was not a given, and the social mechanisms the folk high school put in place to achieve equality were robust and carefully monitored. In this respect, school-mandated hierarchies, like those created by the *stipps* (student-leaders) staff selected to create a good social world on campus, were made to create equality *through* social differentiation. On the other hand, I also witnessed students treating each other with deep care and establishing a sense of security in both them and each other that many of them expressed not having experienced in previous social relationships. I, too, was warmly integrated into Grøndal's community and was presented with an abundance of trust, support, and goodwill during the duration of my fieldwork. Grøndal is a special place, a social world that is designed to prioritize cooperation, unity, and generosity and I received these in full in the myriad activities I engaged with while a part of their community. Folk high schools are often regarded as places where people can make *venner for livet* (friends for life) and I very much consider several of my research participants life-long friends. Many of the moral quandaries my new friends encountered—flying during a pandemic and climate crisis, choosing to buy consumer goods knowingly made by forced labor, or engaging with tourism that reproduced colonial logics—were ethical entanglements that I also found myself in and revealed the ways in which I was very much the same as my research participants, our differences not as great as I myself may have initially believed them to be. I spent some time feeling different than my new friends, due to my crushing student debt and lack of healthcare back home, but I also realized that in many respects we were similar. We were among those who were privileged enough to afford the time to talk about these ethical questions in the first place.

ON METHODS, ETHICS, AND LANGUAGE.

Over the course of fifteen months of ethnographic work, initially online and then through twelve months of participant observation at Grøndal, I developed an ethnographic model of equality beyond sameness as I witnessed it emerge in social relationships between students, staff, and actors outside of Grøndal. During the in-person portion of my fieldwork I lived on campus, first in a dorm room and then in an apartment in the same building when my husband, Buddy, and cat, Freyja, joined me after receiving their clearances for travel which had been delayed due to the pandemic. I attended morning assemblies, ate meals in the cafeteria, observed and contributed to classroom activities and electives, and traveled on study trips throughout Norway with several of Grøndal's classes. I participated in religious services led by the school priest, both in Grøndal's chapel and in various churches in Norway, took part in *stipp*-led activities, like student competitions and game nights, hung out in dorm buildings after hours, and at turns, dressed up as a cat, a Christmas elf, and Kim Kardashian. I skied, snowmobiled, white water-rafted, surfed, and sledded by both dog and reindeer. I twisted my knee once and threw out my back twice. I did not get Covid-19.[16] This, considering how much embodied activity I engaged in during the pandemic, was no small feat.

I observed each of Grøndal's cohorts in two different school years, which meant that I was able to see how several of the folk high school's programs shifted while many others remained the same. Each folk high school program is dependent on student enrollment and so the courses that focused on travel suffered a great deal during the pandemic, with student numbers nearly half of what they had been in previous years. I became close friends with three teachers from the *Backpacker* and *Action og Aid* (Action and Aid) courses–women I call Rakel, Lisa, and Marta–and spent significant amounts of time with them traveling through Norway or drinking coffee and chatting together in their homes on, or close to, Grøndal's campus. In an effort to get a feel for the entirety of the folk high school's student body, I met all of Grøndal's students over the spring semester of one academic year and the autumn semester of the next, nearly 160 in total, following them as they played chess or football, or hiked, painted, or played music. I ended up spending the most time with the second academic year's *stipps,* as they were present for the duration of my fieldwork, both as students in the first academic year and as *stipps* in their new leadership roles when they returned to campus after the summer. In the end, the central cast of characters that emerges in this thesis is composed of dozens of staff members and students, each of whom represent a range of differences that I witnessed in the student body that came to the fore while we skied, and surfed, and traveled together. As different as they may have been from each other, however, the majority of them shared several defining characteristics:

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[16] I should say, I did not test positive for Covid-19. It's possible I had it and was asymptomatic.

most of them were Norwegian, came from middle-class homes, were at least culturally, if not practicing, Christians, were heterosexual, not disabled, and white. This was not always the case, and I have tried my best to cover my bases when it comes to describing individual students' experiences on campus, but I don't have the space, or time, to recount all of the differences that existed in Grøndal's student body here. I hope what I have produced will at least be moderately sufficient, though, in shaping the social contours of a community that demonstrated, by and large, the same social qualifiers.

Prior to beginning my data collection, I obtained clearances from The University of Edinburgh's ethics board and briefed the Grøndal community about the aims and methods of my research at a school-wide morning assembly. Because I was working with young adult students, most of whom were nineteen-year-olds and all of whom were eighteen or older, my research did not require the same ethical clearances that working with children would necessitate. Even so, I was cognizant that my student research participants were transitioning into adulthood and might be especially sensitive to questions I planned to ask about religious difference, consumerism, and climate change. This meant that I felt it was necessary to confer with Grøndal's director, Annette, about strategies we would utilize in the event that a student expressed emotional distress outside the scope of my training. While Grøndal did not have a school psychologist on campus, the school had formal partnerships with mental health professionals in the nearby vicinity, and staff were in regular contact with them when problems arose. I did not encounter any such issues during my fieldwork, but regularly spoke with teachers about their individual students and often discussed the content of our conversations in an effort to maintain transparency and shared support. I also provided an information and ethics document to Annette and received her written consent, a step I felt was best practice considering the institutional dimensions of the work I sought to conduct. I obtained verbal consent from all of my research participants, both on and off Grøndal's campus, prior to conducting interviews, filming, or taking photographs. I ensured them that their names and other defining characteristics would be anonymized, but said that their likenesses might be visible in photographs. I told them that they could always choose to withdraw their consent from the project, or ask for specific comments or photos to be redacted, at any time prior to the submission of the thesis. I also told them that their comments and likenesses might appear in journal articles, presentations, and other academic outputs, but only with their consent. Once I had drafted the thesis, I sent it to the staff and students who centrally appear in it, asking them to review how their characters were portrayed prior to submission. I did not receive any feedback from students or staff asking me to change or withdraw any details in my work, but would have done so had they asked.

In terms of language and translation, almost all of the instructional and group activities I participated in at Grøndal were conducted in Norwegian. I have translated that material here and have included what I found to be key words in Norwegian in addition to their English translations. My interviews were conducted in a blend of Norwegian and English, as most Norwegians are fluent in both, especially those from younger generations, and many of my research participants chose English when I offered interviews in either language. In terms of the direct quotes I include in the text, from both my research participants and myself, I have left the majority of them as we said them directly, which means there are some grammatical errors that appear from time to time. I have decided to keep them largely as stated, but have eliminated some word fillers or trailing sentences in an effort to produce a document that promotes a sense of readability and reflects the English language skills research participants displayed, which were highly impressive to me. In an effort to give students more internationally focused content in their classes, especially because their study trips had been mostly canceled, several teachers asked me to teach their classes about anthropology or life in the United States. I taught these in English, focusing on critical race theory, Indigeneity, and the U.S. political system and hosted a reflective session on “gratitude and mourning” when I was asked to give a lesson on Thanksgiving. In addition to my more formal teaching, I also collaborated with several teachers in activities that focused on creativity and the body and used both Norwegian and English to instruct during these activities. The Norwegian language, I should note, encompasses hundreds of different dialects and two written languages, Bokmål and Nynorsk. This meant that Grøndal’s students, who came from all over Norway, spent a good bit of time noting each other’s differences in dialects, at least at the start of the school year before eventually becoming more used to the variety of local speech patterns present on campus. I don’t spend too much time in this thesis focusing on the nuances in dialects as they appeared in my research, as there were, quite simply, too many to keep track of and their variations weren’t, to my eye, especially impactful on social relations in the student body. Still, dialects were sometimes a marker of sameness and difference for students, as some of them, at least initially, developed social ties based on their shared regions of origin.

I should add one further note on the writing style I use in this thesis. At times, I adopt the present tense in an effort to add both variance in tone to its narrative arc and to give a certain sense of immediacy to the “being there” (Watson 1999) quality that I feel the ethnographic events I experienced while in the field warrant. Anthropologists have long debated about whether the merits of writing ethnographically in the present tense outweigh its problems, with opponents suggesting that writing without a fixed sense of time dilutes the nature of the ethnographic record and obfuscates the political contexts in which this sort of research takes place (see Fabian 1983; Sanjek 1991; Willis 2010). By sometimes using the present tense here, though, I am not suggesting that temporally bound moments supersede the specificities of the time period they represent. I do, however, believe that writing about the moments in which I experienced them as being evocatively ever-present is a risk worth taking. As Pandian and McLean suggest, critical scholarship still focuses on ideas of objectivity and detachment while producing creative ethnographic writing “… that is captivated, vulnerable, and implicated… puts its authors, its readers, even itself, at risk” (2017: 14-15). Rather than being “frightened by the ‘functionalist’ bogeyman” of the ethnographic present, as Piña-Cabral suggests (347), I mobilize the concept methodologically in order to “speak of that awareness of the conjunctural nature of all ethnography” (2000: 347).

Ethnographic writing holds power in its interpretations. By virtue of creating a written record of how I perceived events in the field through my own subjective experiences, I acknowledge the ways in which my writing blurs the lines between what I experienced in the field and what was happening within the social whole of the events I describe in this thesis. As Clifford Geertz reminds us, the goal of anthropology is to catalogue others' "normalness without reducing their particularity," which produces a form of cultural translation in and of itself (1973: 14). Writing "thick descriptions" has its own challenges, as "ethnographic descriptions, like all cultural translations, necessarily involve an element of transformation or even disfiguration", ones that produce a gap between reality and the author's perceptions of it (Holbraad et al. 2018). Still, by acknowledging the "poetics of making" (McLean 2009: 215) that creative ethnography writing brings to the table, my aim is to invoke a particularity that includes my own embodied experiences as they happened in real time in an effort to invite the reader into the moments I describe. In so doing, I draw from anthropologists who are taking the "disciplinary risks" inherent in experimental ethnographic writing who utilize "fiction, memoir, experimental film, and multisensory installations" to produce literary anthropology that broadens the scope of ethnographic enterprise (Stoller 2015: 145). My hope is that this brings not only a creative style that evokes the sensorial for the reader, but also invites a deeper sense of reflexivity on my own part, wherein the lines between my roles as social scientist and creative writer, individual and community member, and student and anthropologist are blurred for the sake of writing a thick description that felt true to my experience as a doctoral field researcher operating in these various shifting and over-lapping categories.

ON VALUES, EQUALITY, AND EMBODIMENT: LITERATURE REVIEW.

Values have gained renewed attention in anthropology in recent years (see Eriksen 2012; Haynes & Hickel 2016; Howell 2016; Otto & Willerslev 2013; Rio & Smedal 2009; Robbins 2015). As values are foundational to the folk high school network, I should begin by acknowledging the various forms of value(s) that were present in the folk high school community and sketching the contours for how I assesses these specific realms of value(s) that are present in this thesis. As values were everywhere at the folk high school—written, invoked, and tacit—it's important to note here the various realms of value-making that emerged in the folk high school community in an effort to anchor what it is I mean when I write about values. I shall attempt to do so here.

Firstly, the documents. As I have mentioned, all folk high schools are required by Norwegian law to draft values documents in order to receive state funding, and Grøndal was no exception. Some years ago, Grøndal's staff met together to choose their core values, discussing how each value might steer their organizational imperatives. This is not uncommon practice in organizations in the Global North; many schools, religious institutions, and corporate entities have taken on writing values statements in the past few decades, posting their chosen values on their websites or including them in other promotional materials. What makes the values statements at Grøndal particularly potent, though, is the state-level of intervention these documents possessed. While the values were chosen at the discretion of folk high school staff, their corporate, institutional, and national relevance cannot be understated: without the values, there would be no folk high schools and vice versa. In this way, the schools are not merely "values-based" but "values-dependent", as their invocation is co-constitutive with their mobilizations, through state oversight, law, and funding. On the other hand, the folk high schools, as voluntarily attended organizations, depend on values as a corporate enterprise. By positioning the values towards prospective students in such a way that appeals to them, while also satisfying the overarching national, cultural, and state values of Norwegian society writ large, folk high schools are both the receiver and the arbiter, the beholder and the beholden. The values Grøndal chose, for example –*fellesskap* (community), *opplevelse* (experience), *kvalitet* (quality), *humør* (mood), *utvikling* (development), and *samhandling* (interaction)– held social power as both a means to satisfy national values for Norway's future generations while also remaining attractive to Norway's youth. This tension, at times, presented challenges for Grøndal's staff, a circumstance I outline at turns throughout the thesis.

Secondly, the spoken. Out of all of Grøndal's chosen values, *opplevelse* (experience) was the value I heard invoked the most by students and staff. This, to me, became the primary value mechanized to support Grøndal's paramount value of equality, and was a central reason why embodied activities were critical for Grøndal's pedagogies, a point I will return to in several paragraphs' time. "Experience" was especially referenced in its absence, as this was the value that students wanted—and expected—most from their folk high school year. This was especially the case when students could not travel on their international study trips due to the pandemic, as an integral part of the value program they had signed up for—experience—was not available in the way it had been advertised on the school's website and promotional materials. Otherwise, *utvikling* (development), *samhandlinger* (interactions), and *fellesskap* (community) were sometimes referenced and *kvalitet* (quality), *humør* (mood) almost never; when I asked students to describe the latter two to me, they usually could not. There was, I should mention, a values seminar that took place early in the academic year, in which the entire student body was organized into teams relating to their corridors and instructed to select their own chosen values, which would steer their dormitory living responsibilities. Most students had encountered similar activities in their education prior, and chose words like honesty, inclusion, and respect. Students were then instructed to create posters they would hang in their dormitory common spaces, indicating which values they had chosen and how the values would be met, i.e. through keeping things tidy and minimizing noise after quiet hours. I heard students' reference their corridor values only once, and it happened during a curious situation that involved several girls who believed an international student had stolen several of their items. When I asked them why they suspected her, one of them said, "She didn't care about our values! I showed her the posted and she acted like she didn't even know what they meant." When I noted that it was possible she effectually did not "know what they meant" due to the language barrier between them, she acquiesced, saying this could have been the case. When it eventually came to light that the student in question had not stolen the items in question after all —a girl's lost sweatshirt suddenly appeared at her boyfriend's house, another's missing soda had been drunk by a *Botrening* student— no one mentioned the values poster and no one admitted the mistake. In this way, the students' chosen values were usually only mobilized when they were perceived as under threat and never, to my ear, mentioned in any other conversation. Indeed, my interpretation of both the students' chosen values, and the instance in which they were perceived as being compromised, had to do with an afront to equality, especially when it came to believing they had not received equal treatment.

Thirdly, the historical. As I've mentioned, the original folk high schools, founded by Danish philosopher, theologian, and poet, N.F.S. Grundtvig, were designed to educate Scandinavia's farmers and peasants, and became an integral contributor to cultural and national values, particularly for Norway's developing national identity in the latter part of the 19th century. Grundtvig's alternative education system was based on his methods for lifelong learning where students developed their own concepts of *dannelse* (self-improvement, *bildning* in Swedish), which became "an emancipative instrument" for self-realization for the working class as they developed skills to communicate a social program that focused on egalitarian and worker-centred rights for the burgeoning Norwegian state (Stråth 2018: 56). Equality at folk high schools was also fundamentally supported by Grundtvig's liberal interpretation of Lutheran values; rather than establishing a theological stance where faith was dependent solely on doctrine, Grundtvig believed that Christianity should be developed through what he called "the living word" generated by congregational dialogue and decided for oneself (Eichberg 2015: 355). This focus on relational heuristics became an integral element of *dannelse*, and a common practice at folk high schools. For Grundtvig, it was critical that students engaged in dialogue and debate, practices that he felt where instrumental in placing individual differences within the shared equality of the greater folk high school communities. This precedent for self-realization, situated within the context of a collective identification, "was based on deep value patterns within the framework of a puritan and moralistic Protestant ethic" that influenced the practices of local self-governing units of working class communities (Stråth 2018: 58). In this way, Lutheran values were essential to the folk high school movement, which became a foundational social and political apparatus that contributed to the Scandinavian social democratic order, devoted to its core principles of democracy, egalitarianism, and an education system accessible to everyone.

Lastly, the theoretical. Because my analysis revealed that Grøndal's values–those written, spoken, and historically situated–each contributed to a central value of equality in their own ways, it's useful to anchor these mechanisms in place through some theoretical framing. David Graeber (2001) remarked on the slippery nature of values, writing that despite their prevalence in anthropology, an organized theory of value had been, to date, largely absent in anthropological literature. Graeber suggested that regarding value in moral, economic, and linguistic terms was a useful place to start in thinking about how value are socially conceived. In the ethical sense, Graeber wrote that value dictates what is "good, desirable, or proper," while economically speaking, things attract worth by how much people are willing to give up for them, and linguistic value refers to how language creates differences in meaning (2001: 1-2). Each of these three definitions of value, Graeber concluded, were "ultimately the same," in that they all privilege certain objects, behaviours, and social practices over others (2001: 15). For Graeber, these sorts of valuations are established through meaningful difference that is enacted relationally through social action.

Graeber's work is indebted to Clyde Kluckhohn, one of the first anthropologists concerned with establishing a theory of value within the discipline. Kluckhohn designed the "Harvard Comparative Study of Values in Five Cultures" project in in the late 1940s and early 1950s, seeking to redefine anthropology as the "comparative study of values" (Graeber 2001: 2). Kluckhohn proposed that a value constitutes a "conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action" (1951: 395). By comparatively assessing what people expect from each other in social relationships, in other words, what they *value,* Kluckhorn believed that he and his team of researchers could map value orientations by linking terms of value with human action. Despite his efforts, Kluckhohn's work with the Harvard project was ultimately deemed a failure because it was unable to offer a theoretical model for assessing how values fit together structurally (Graeber 2001: 5). Louis Dumont (1986) addressed this problem several decades later, suggesting a structural theory of value in which values become realized through hierarchical arrangements (Robbins & Sommerschuh 2016: 3). Challenging classical structuralist theories that organized values in binary oppositions, Dumont suggested that values instead correspond to each other in relationships of "encompassments" where higher ranked values include lower ranked ones, producing a singular value that is paramount to everything else (Robbins & Sommerschuh 2016: 3). These "encompassments," Dumont wrote, also include “encompassments of the contrary,” (1980: 240), an idea that echoes Max Weber’s claim that competing “value spheres” exist in value formations, wherein values contest, shift, and vie for attention (1946: 323-359.) In other words, as values move between levels, “reversals” can happen, flipping a value from being favored in a certain context to subordinated in another (Dumont 1986: 252-253). While Dumont’s framework initially produced a good deal of rumination on my behalf, I eventually came to see it as a useful tool for my task at hand, which is to outline how the values of sameness, difference, and equality corresponded with each other at Grøndal. It is also useful for thinking through a Norwegian model of equality *beyond* sameness, which I hope will contribute to broadening the scope of Gullestad’s groundbreaking analytical lens.

Placing Dumont (1986) and Gullestad (1984) into conversation is important for my task at hand for two reasons: the first is that a hierarchy of sameness, difference, and equality in Norwegian relationships makes sense to me from a structural standpoint, and the second is that hierarchy, as a social phenomenon, is also useful in thinking through how social stratifications emerged in Grøndal’s student body. I outline the first point here. At the start of my fieldwork, it was clear to me that equality was Grøndal’s paramount value, and I could also see how establishing student sameness prior to promoting difference was necessary for equality to take shape. As time went on, however, I found that sameness and difference were not unilaterally positive positions, and while it was true that they supported Grøndal’s equality project, they could, at times, also inhibit equality from happening. These sub-values, which were critical for realizing the value of equality, also represented realms of value-making that became fraught when they could not be achieved in the lower domain. In other words, when sameness and difference constituted “disvalues” (Robbins & Sommerschuh 2023: 488) that stood in opposition to Grøndal’s equality project, the structure of equality was threatened and students were left questioning its viability. These forms of sameness and difference, those which I call, simply, “bad” or “unwanted,” were ones which could not be encompassed by, or brought into the larger service of equality, and instead revealed how certain forms of sameness or difference precluded equality from being realized. It’s important to reiterate, here, that sameness and difference are not diametrically opposed social forces, as Bendixsen and Bertelsen remind us (2016), drawing on Gilles Deleuze (2004) [1968] argument that difference is not solely constituted by "regimes of similarity," but can represent a social force that relates to "singularity and becoming" in its own right (2016: 11). This point is especially useful when it comes to examining the desired forms of difference that the folk high school staff operationalized, like those relating to conscientious consuming, regular religious practice, or engaging in productive conflict, activities which were largely viewed as unusual in Norwegian society but were positioned as fruitful mechanisms for producing more equitable social worlds in Norway and elsewhere. Indeed, Joel Robbins has described Dumont's work as being a theory of "change" (Duerte 2017: 653) a point I find useful to considering how good forms of sameness and difference were positioned at the folk high school in such a way as to produce students who were actively engaged in Grøndal's equality project.

Additionally, as I have mentioned, Dumont (1980, 1977) viewed hierarchy as a social value unto itself. In his analysis of the Indian caste system, Dumont explored how hierarchy, what he viewed to be its paramount value, contrasted with what he called "equalitarianism," the primary value formation he argued was evident in so-called "modern" societies (Dumont 1977: 3). Dumont categorized "individualism" as relating to equality and "holism" as being established through hierarchy, suggesting that, ultimately, equality and hierarchy come together in some way in both individualist and holist social formations (ibid.: 5). Marianne Gullestad (1984) applied Dumont's framework to her work on "egalitarian individualism" in Norway, arguing that Norwegian society is defined by an ideology that values equality over hierarchy, but one that comes with a sense of "ambiguity" for Norwegians (Bruun et al. 2011: 6). Gullestad (1992) viewed this ambivalence as a matter of context, suggesting that "individualism" in the Norwegian view is associated with positive themes like "independence, autonomy, and freedom," while "individuality" relates to "egoism, self-assertion, and originality," qualities that are not usually highly regarded in Norwegian relationships (Bruun et al. 2011: 6). I consider these points–that equality and hierarchy co-operative within social forms and that Norwegians tend to have a certain uneasiness with egalitarian individualism–especially useful, as understanding the role context played was critical for me to untangle the many ways in which sameness, difference, and equality were interpreted at Grøndal.

I should note that several scholars in Scandinavia have challenged Gullestad's "equality as sameness" project, suggesting that is has as "a gatekeeping concept" perpetuated "the style of Scandinavian interaction par excellence that is found in some societal domains but is absent in others" (Bruun et al. 8). These assertions have reduced the "complexity" of equality in Scandinavian sociality that "intersect, clash, and are contested across different domains and institutions… [that] emerge in different spaces" (Bruun et al. 8). Halvard Vike (2001) produces an additional critique to Gullestad's work, writing that insofar as it was confined to the scope of the home, it contrasted the impersonal, bureaucratic associations of the state and market. Rather than taking equality as solely a private social value, Vike argues that equality is a defining characteristic of the Scandinavian welfare state, a political principle that operationalizes equal rights in political domains (2001). Referencing the work of British anthropologist John Barnes (1954), who assessed the more institutionalized forms of egalitarianism he observed happening in local political committees in Bremnes on the Norwegian western coastal island of Bømlo (Bendixsen et al. 2018: 1), Vike finds similar themes in his work in Norwegian local politics, tracing relationships between equality, the state and the individual. He and Christian Lo write:

> …the Nordic welfare state model as we know it has pursued in a quite radical way the idea that each individual has a right to be independent of others. In all policy areas this pattern is evident and may serve as an indication that in the Nordic region, individual autonomy is more basic than equality—or, perhaps more precisely, autonomy is the core attribute of equality" (2023: 35).

The relationships between individual autonomy and equality in state functions are especially important to consider here. While my focus is primarily on the social relationships that I believed to be happening individually on Grøndal's campus, it's important to bear in mind that these relationships also encompassed a good deal of state-authorized institutionalized influence. When I first observed friendships among students forming, I viewed these relationships as organic, made freely, but as I became more aware of the deliberateness of school-organized forms of relating, I also came to view these relationships through a process of programmatic socialization techniques. If students were meant to view each other as equally worthy, they would have to regard everyone in the student body as a potential friend, and the folk high school staff implemented a range of ways to make these friendships possible. As such, Gullestad's and Barnes' work has influenced how I assess the social ties I look at in this thesis, by shedding light on both the more casual, and curated, versions of egalitarian relating I witnessed happening on Grøndal's campus. In this way, this thesis also puts Gullestad's (1984) work in communication with Barth's (1954) and Vike's (1996), as I trace how conceptions of friendship, home, and the state intertwine and intersect with notions of equality for Norwegian youth who are developing their own social structures but within curated, institutionalized parameters.

While I agree with the critiques Vike and others have raised in Gullestad's "equality as sameness" project, I find her framework significant to my own analysis in two important ways. The first is that sameness remained a salient force at Grøndal, as I aim to demonstrate in both social and institutional realms. The second is that for Norway's young adults, tolerance is a critical aspect of how they perceive equality to take shape and a value unto itself (see Jacobsen 2018). This appears at turns throughout the thesis—in the school priests' appeals to "respect" each other's religious differences, or in the intercultural programming put forth by *Action og Bistand*—appreciating difference is key to an accepted multicultural stance in Norway. Despite this, the limits to how difference could be appreciated and mobilized were present, particularly as they related to economic differences between students on campus and more starkly, between themselves and the people they interacted with outside Norway in intercultural exchanges. By taking the folk high school as a nexus between "home" and the "state," and focusing on ethnographic material from a generation of Norwegians that exhibit an appreciate for difference in a way that varies from the people in Gullestad's study, my goal is to argue that equality as sameness has transitioned toward an equality *beyond* sameness that has emerged from contemporary views of tolerance that still holds a good deal of conformity in how accepted forms of differentiation are operationalized in broader Norwegian society today.

Equality means different things to different people. As Naomi Haynes and Jason Hickel have noted, egalitarian value orientations are not always favoured, and equality is not a given when it comes to universally desired social organizations and good forms of relating (2016: 3). For many cultural groups, hierarchy is an important tool for achieving social cohesion and a useful apparatus for people wishing to generate interdependence. Even in societies where equality *is* valued, hierarchies abound in social relationships, and Norway is no exception (ibid.: vi). As such, I write about both desired, and unwanted, hierarchies that emerged between students, students and staff, and people inside and outside of Grøndal's community at turns throughout this thesis. When confronted with unwanted hierarchies that persisted between themselves and other non-Norwegians, usually in disparities in socioeconomic or social status, students and staff often deemed these figures as "inspirational," a term that held a certain sense of value-making in and of itself. Positioning people who held less social power than them favourably, though, often reinforced the power dynamics Grøndal's students and staff sought to disrupt in the first place, as what constituted inspirational characteristics was rooted in their own culturally specified values (resiliency, hard-work, and hopefulness) and mostly lacked meaningful engagement with social justice. This was especially the case during interactions students and staff had with Indigenous Sámi or East African contacts, people who had been historically oppressed by Norway's colonial legacy (see Berg-Nordlie 2021, and Kjerland & Bertelsen 2014, respectively) and ongoing participation in neo-colonial, capitalist enterprise. By situating certain individuals from these groups as inspirational figures, social hierarchies that persisted between the Grøndal community and outsiders were superficially flipped in an effort to alleviate some of the discomfort students and staff felt in the inequality that existed between themselves and people outside of Grøndal. In other words, students and staff articulating being inspired by people who had less than them gave them a sense of equal footing, of sameness, even if they believed that socioeconomic or political equality between them was impossible to fully achieve.

Even so, students and staff often said that they hoped to create “real” or “authentic” (Handler 1986; Theodossopoulos 2013; Pierce 2015) relationships with people, which would bring forth the folk high school values I found contributed most to Grøndal’s equality project: interactions, experiences, community, and development. Each of these values were conceived as being necessarily embodied, which is one reason why the study trips were of utmost importance to Grøndal’s pedagogy, and why any virtual substitutions meant to make up for them when they were cancelled were so dissatisfying. Without “being there” in Sápmi or East Africa, students would not be able to “feel” inequality “in the body” and would not have the same opportunity as previous students had to bridge difference through relationships with Indigenous or international partners. The trips, then, were one way to move Norwegian students, and Norway more broadly, out of its perceived periphery (Anker 2020) and position them squarely as active participants in the global community. Embodiment became a social value unto itself, a critical part of contributing to the larger value of achieving equality outside of Norwegian society. The link between embodiment and value realization is a realm of anthropological work that remains under-researched. By taking the body as an analytical object, I suggest that my work brings a dimension to anthropological scholarship on value that has been absent in recent years, when most value scholars have focused more on how social action and materiality elicit values (see Nancy Munn 1992; Terence Turner 2008, 2012), rather than assessing the role embodiment plays in value-making. This could be because scholars have found these avenues more fruitful for ethnographic exploration than focusing more specifically on the body, but it could also be because describing how the body employs values is difficult: feelings, affects, and physical expression are not always readily qualifiable as they are in a constant state of flux, negotiation, and transformation at any given time. While my focus in this thesis is on how embodied expression can shape values, this is not to say that I do not also look to social action and material forms in value formation, but rather, I take both as an extension of the body, arguing that values are situated within the body before they can be translated through social or material practices. At the same time, values can *become* situated within the body through the processes of sociality and materiality, a phenomenon I describe at turns throughout this thesis.

Thinking through how values, individuals, and societies congregate within bod(ies) is useful for situating this argument. Mary Douglas (1978) identified relationships between the body as a physical object and a social construct, arguing that the body represents society and “constrains the way the physical body is perceived” in social milieus (Douglas 1978: 70). Pierre Bourdieu (1977), building on Marcel Mauss’ work on how people “use” their bodies as tools of socialization (1950: 379), suggested that habitus, or that which is “society embodied” (Bourdieu 1977: 82) constitutes how people perceive and perform shared values, beliefs, and behaviours. This “unquestioned” acceptance of the world is located within the body (Bourdieu 1980: 115), as social facts are produced through physical inscriptions and subconscious action. Michel Foucault (1977) argued that the body becomes a nexus for control through state intervention, constrained by socially organized methods of discipline mediated by prisons, hospitals, and schools. Paolo Freire (1970, 1983, 1985), too, discussed the role education plays in informing, and controlling, physical and social bodies, arguing that Western pedagogical traditions are more concerned with enforcing obedience than with instilling knowledge in students. Calling for an emancipatory form of dialogical learning, Freire argued that the body was central to the “formation and expression of collective consciousness” (Darder 2016) and a “true education incarnates the permanent search of people together with others for their becoming fully human in the world in which they exist” (1983: 96). In other words, dialogics, as Freire saw it, are the “essence of education as the practice of freedom” (2005: 87), which reflect similar ideas that N.F.S. Grundtvig, the founder of the folk high school movement, demonstrated in his writings on the role dialogue can play in achieving collective liberation through education. By invoking *det levende ord* (“the living word”) which would be constructed through conversation and dialogue (Hansen 1995: 73), Grundtvig believed that religious, civil, and personal, or “bodily,” freedoms could be realized inter-subjectively (Korsgaard 2014: 39). This is one reason why equality was contingent on embodied activity at the folk high school; by providing students with experiences that could produce interdependency and communication, collective development and freedom could also be achieved. In this way, embodied experiences would serve as the primary mechanism for equality to be realized, a realm where social, institutional, and individual bodies would be co-constituted into a collective project of nation-making built on the idea of Scandinavian egalitarianism and cooperation.

In talking about embodiment, it's important to note the specific temporal and sociocultural parameters under which this research took place. Beginning fieldwork in January of 2021 was a particularly apt time to think about the role bodies play in social and educational realms, as most schooling, in Norway and in the Global North more broadly, had moved online, with folk high schools being among the few allowed to continue in-person instruction during pandemic-related restrictions. Students who had been living under lock-down measures for several months prior to entering Grøndal's community were eager to interact with each other through their bodies, and regularly communicated to me how relieved they were to be able to relate to each other in this way. Folk high schools have a reputation for having particularly *koselig* (cozy) social worlds, where hugging, relaxing together closely in common areas, and extending physical touch through sports and other activities produce embodied forms of relating that students and staff told me are not as common in other Norwegian social arenas. Norwegians, and Scandinavians more broadly, are sometimes characterized as cold, private, or distant people (Eriksen 1993; Rygg 2017; Sener 2024) and my research participants often said that this stereotype was true; one student told me, "We social distance even though we don't have to. That's Norwegian culture." The folk high school pedagogy, however, presented a different social format, where students' bodies could mobilize values through the body, which would, in turn, bridge student difference and generate equality on campus, a phenomenon I explore through a range of strategies I describe in this thesis and outline in the section that follows.

Fig. 4: Backpacker students in repose.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW.

I have organized the chapters of this thesis in degrees of spatial, cultural, and national sameness and difference as I viewed them emerging in Grøndal's student body during the folk high school's various activities over the course of my fieldwork. I begin by describing how sameness and difference were negotiated within the Grøndal community in chapters 2-4, move to how students and staff explored national difference during a school trip to Northern Norway in chapters 5-6, and conclude with material on how Grøndal's members viewed difference on a global scale as they participated in service projects and virtual interactions with East African contacts in chapters 7-8. Throughout this trajectory of building difference, I examine how the discomfort students and staff encountered increased the less alike they became, a circumstance that problematized the school's goal of achieving equality beyond sameness. In each chapter, I have noted similar threads—how conflicts were generally avoided among students and staff, for example, as they revealed unwanted difference, or how Norwegian wealth was often understated because it sometimes made my research participants feel “ashamed” of the inequality that supported their privilege—as they emerge in each of the chapters. In the same way that difference was uncomfortable for students, Grøndal’s core values—development, interactions, experience, and community—also sometimes encompassed a sense of discomfort for students who were meant to realize them, as doing so would require effort and intentionality. This form of discomfort, though, was an important part of Grøndal’s social pedagogy, a force meant to propel students out of their “comfort zones” and place them firmly in an individual, and collective, place of security and shared worth.

In chapter 2, I assess the role Lutheran rituals played in integrating student difference into a social whole by encouraging students, irrespective of their individual faith or beliefs, to view each other as equally valued “in God’s eyes.” Even though the majority of Grøndal’s students did not self-identify as religious and told me that they had chosen the school despite its Christian status, most of them came to appreciate Grøndal’s Christian programming and attended its Lutheran masses voluntarily. In this chapter, I look closely at one particular *Thomasmesse* (Thomas’ mass) service the school priest led that focused on encouraging students to use their bodies in various rituals to reflect the vision of an embodied God who loves everyone equally. By situating the school value of *fellesskap* (community) within a shared religious experience, students were able to put aside their differences and come together as a student body, both physically and spiritually. This didn’t mean that student differentiation didn’t happen within these rituals, though, as certain *stipps* (student-leaders) were asked to lead some aspects of the *Thomasmesse* service whether they self-identified as Christian or otherwise. The practice of allowing *stipps* to lead Christian rituals without expressing faith caused some tension among staff members, and I describe how some teachers felt that accepting this form of difference in leadership was a step too far in privileging participation over belief. I also assess how differences within the student body emerged in several of the rituals, most notably, in the anonymous prayer notes students were encouraged to write that were read out loud by *stipps* afterwards. By grounding differences in beliefs, experiences, and staff, student, and *stipp* hierarchies in a shared ritual experience based on God’s love, I argue that Grøndal’s Christian status set the foundation for a unique version of egalitarian relating that permeated throughout other aspects of Grøndal's social life.

In chapter 3, I turn my attention to the social contours of boarding school life and look at the ways in which students were positioned in social formations in dormitories, classrooms, and on-campus activities. I write about students from one particular class called *Botrening* (Life Skills), a course designed for students with disabilities, and describe how they were integrated into Grøndal's community in ways that encouraged students to respect difference in such a way that meant learning to live with people who, at times, required additional care. Additionally, I look at how school rules relating to alcohol and sex on campus were meant to minimize student difference while also keeping students safe. Here, themes on differences in gender and sexuality emerge, as rules relating to sex did not always take into account students' differing sexual orientations. I also describe more fully the role of *stipps* and how both their selection process and continued staff oversight contributed to an intentional version of hierarchal relating where forms of good difference, based on their exemplary behavior, were valued. These student-leaders were particularly important in serving as liaisons between students and staff, a role that came to the fore in a circumstance I look at closely in this chapter, when several students began spreading unkind rumors and *stipps* responded with social mechanisms meant to stop them from circulating. These rumors, based largely on students' physical appearances, revealed the insecurities that were common among Grøndal's students and indicated the ways in which many of them marked differences between their bodies.

In chapter 4, I continue assessing how issues relating to body image emerged in the folk high school community, looking more closely at how sameness and difference were articulated through students' relationships with food and consumption. I describe how meals in Grøndal's cafeteria brought students and staff together, but also brought a sense of social alienation to some students who felt their bodies lay outside the constructs of what was socially accepted and found eating to be a performative, stress-inducing, activity. Sameness in eating, both in quantity and quality of food, made it difficult for students to exercise agency in their consuming, which became especially challenging for students who ate vegetarian or vegan diets. Even though the kitchen staff provided special meals for these students, vegetarianism presented a source of unwanted difference as it required more work, and money, for staff to accommodate. Despite this, vegetarianism also constituted a realm of positive difference, which was apparent in Grøndal's cooking-based electives and in activities that happened during *Grønn uke* (Green Week), an event designed to encourage students to engage in more environmentally conscious behaviors. Both formal and informal debates about the value of eating less meat were central to Green Week, and I describe how these debates informed how students engaged with difference among themselves when it came to their own eating habits. In addition to discussions concerning more equitable eating, Grøndal hosted a seminar during Green Week that focused on other forms of conscientious consuming and featured a talk by a self-described "Green Influencer" who had starred in *Sweatshop- dødsbillig mote* (Sweatshop: Deadly Fashion), a documentary produced by the web TV branch of Norway's largest newspaper, *Aftenposten*. In light of the role clothing played for students hoping to "fit in" with each other, the seminar served as a way for students to explore good difference that championed both sustainability and individuality in fashion choices. Students told me, however, that *Janteloven*[17] played a role in how they viewed both being advocates for more sustainable consumer habits and in standing out, saying that expressing differences in these ways could constitute "social suicide" for them. As time went on, however, students said they came to view differences in appearance in the student body favorably and said that both Grøndal's sustainably focused programming and social messaging that students, irrespective of their material status, should be viewed equally, had influenced their consumer habits in ways they welcomed.

Despite students' general willingness to adopt more sustainably focused consumer habits when it came to food or clothing, none of the students I encountered were equally eager to give up their study trips for the sake of the environment. In chapter 5, I describe how tensions relating to flying during both the pandemic and climate crisis emerged in a study trip I took with the *Backpacker* class to Northern Norway, which included a flight that spanned almost the entire length of the country. Themes of inequality, injustice, and "travel shame" were central to this trip, as students and staff grappled with fears over potentially spreading Covid-19 to parts of a Norwegian population that hadn't, until that point, had many cases of infection, while also acknowledging that Norway's major cities at the time were in lockdown and travel of any kind was largely restricted. Despite these reservations, staff felt that they needed to provide students with the experiences they (or more aptly, their parents) had paid for and hoped to deliver a domestic trip that was equally valuable to the international trips previous classes had been able to take. In addition to providing students with "once-in-a-lifetime experiences," staff also hoped that the trip north would allow students to interact with some of Norway's "national heroes," individuals who had excelled in winter sports or engaged in historically significant protests against industrial projects in the region. Activities that coincided with these meetings, like dogsledding and snowmobiling, were also meant to push students "out of their comfort zones" and encourage a shared sense of achievement meant to be experienced equally together. Despite these aims, several forms of unwanted discomfort emerged on this trip, as some students expressed feeling left outside of the group dynamic while others described feeling uncomfortable with traveling in any way during the pandemic and ongoing climate crisis.

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[17] *Janteloven* (directly, "the Law of Jante") is a cultural idea prevalent in Scandinavia that no one should have more, stand out, or feel that they are superior to anyone else. I describe the concept more in chapter four.

Chapter 6 focuses on how the *Backpacker* students continued to perceive their own sameness and difference to each other, as well as to the Indigenous Sámi they met on their study trip north. I begin by outlining the instructional material that I co-created with the class's lead teacher and describe the link between materiality and the body that came to the fore in a creative workshop we led prior to the trip. In an art-focused activity, we asked students to reflect on how the carbon emissions associated with our flight would contribute to the environmental degradation impacting the traditional Sámi way of life and to respond to these reflections through creative expression and reflection. Through these classroom activities, I learned that students had a limited understanding of the Norwegianization of the Sámi, a product, they told me, of both Norway's inconsistent public education curriculum and their spatial distance from Sápmi, Sámi territory. Next, I examine the Sámi Experience we attended in Northern Norway, a tourist offering that was led by two Sámi guides and featured reindeer-led sleigh rides and a shared meal in a *lávvu*, a traditional Sámi dwelling. I describe the ways in which students and staff positioned their sameness and difference in relation to the Sámi, translating the sense of shame they felt in the inequality Norway had fomented against them through a lens of inspiration and hope. I also write about how the Sámi people we met positioned their own sameness with and difference from my Norwegian research participants, in ways that overlapped boundaries between being Norwegian and Sámi, traditional and modern, environmentally focused and profit-oriented.

Chapter 7 returns to Grøndal's campus, where I examine how students and staff interacted with the school's contacts further afield in Kenya and Tanzania. Here, I describe the annual charity event that Grøndal hosted on campus called the "Run for Tanzania" and assess the techniques students and staff utilized to encourage as much student engagement in the planning and implementation of the run as possible. By positioning certain staff members, like Rakel, and other especially engaged students as inspirational figures in how the event was conceived, differentiation in Grøndal's community based on merit was again prioritized and produced an acceptable form of asymmetrical relating. I also return to the themes of body difference and subsequent insecurities that emerged in chapters 3 and 4, as students expressed feeling anxiety over being expected to compete with each other during the run in order to secure the most amount of funding. Even so, competition in this respect was positioned as a favorable mechanism for delineating student differentiation, as students who pushed themselves out of the "comfort zones" were able to achieve a valued form of difference by displaying exemplary behavior within the student body. I assess how the run included other avenues for students to engage outside of physical prowess, though, in an effort to establish equal access for full participation with the aims of the event. As much as equality was able to be realized as a social value for Grøndal's community the day of the run, this same sense of egalitarian relating was not made possible with the partners the school was raising money for in East Africa. Instead, differences in socioeconomic statuses between Grøndal and these contacts were made visible in a range of ways the day of the run, both in promotional materials Grøndal utilized to garner sponsorships, and in the general lack of awareness students had in knowing why the funds were being raised in the first place. Despite the gaps in both wealth and information that coincided with the run, students and staff expressed being satisfied with its outcome and felt that using their bodies to make others outside of the folk high school more equal to them, even if in a limited capacity, was worth the problems they expressed being associated with international aid and development projects more broadly.

In chapter 8 I continue to explore tensions between aid, inequality, and the body that came to the fore in a virtual meeting Rakel organized between her students and several of her local contacts in an informal community in Nairobi, Kenya. In an effort to provide a relational dimension to the funds her class had raised for a local community organization there, Rakel hoped that the virtual meeting would also give students the chance to interact with her contacts beyond a transactional relationship and because their usual trip to Nairobi was canceled due to the pandemic, meeting virtually was the only option on the table. Rakel and her students, however, expressed discomfort and dissatisfaction with the virtual live stream, articulating that such an interaction was not sufficient for establishing the relationships they hoped to make with their contacts in Kenya. In an effort to further bridge the gap they felt was present between them, students made bracelets that they planned to send along with the funds they had raised for the community center there, hoping this would add a relational dimension to the financial transaction. I assess the role materiality played in generating (in)equality during this activity and describe the ways in which students positioned their Kenyan contacts as motivational and inspiring. I conclude by arguing that both the virtual meeting and bracelet-making activity were insufficient in developing the sort of “good discomfort” Rakel said was necessary for her students’ development and for them to generate a sense of equality with their international contacts.

CENTRAL ARGUMENTS.

By examining the varying registers of sameness and difference that were conceived and contended with by my research participants, I suggest that the folk high school succeeded in shaping a social world where an equality beyond sameness was realized for students during their time living together on Grøndal's campus. As soon as students and staff left the folk high school "bubble" and ventured into Norway or the world more broadly, however, the project of equality disintegrated as they confronted the social, political, and economic inequalities that existed between themselves and the people they met outside their relational, institutional, and national borders. Because the rhythms of folk high school life were predicated on routinized sameness—eating the same food in the cafeteria, sleeping in the same dormitories, having the same, or similar, study trips and daily activities—I take the folk high school as a limit test for how equality can be produced within communities that prioritize social conformity. These activities also mirrored the sameness of Grøndal's student body, which was composed of students who were largely the same in terms of religious background, class, race, age, and social status. Within both the daily activities, and the social identifiers of Grøndal's students, though, staff invoked the importance of generating spaces for student agency, where students were encouraged to explore difference within these social structures in ways that didn't destabilize the safety of Grøndal's equality project. At the same time, removing students from the folk high school, and more broadly, Norwegian "bubble," was critical for them to understand the limits of equality and the difference that exist in global relationships that were too great for them to mediate.

It's important to bear in mind that because folk high schools are largely funded by the state they can, in some respects, be interpreted as an idealization of how education in Norway is best practiced through its state interventions. This doesn't mean, however, that the state's financial support of the folk high school network hasn't received criticism, especially in recent years. I often heard during staff meetings and in conversations I had with teachers that the folk high school network has had to advocate for its continued "impact" in order to receive state funding, as opponents of the system have argued that the schools are no longer relevant to

Norwegian society. Rakel told me that some “loud voices” have characterized the schools as “a bunch of people just knitting together in the woods,” noting how the folk high schools’ pedagogical imperatives based on experiential learning produce a fuzzy sort of justification for their continued state support, one that was difficult to quantify. While the cultural and historical significance of folk high schools has positioned them favorably in public perception (many Norwegians have a parent or grandparent who has attended one, for example, and have positive connotations of what they represent), this doesn’t mean that the schools will always remain under state oversight. Having a criterion for proving the folk high school’s relevance to Norwegian society through neoliberal logic was also a point of tension that emerged during my fieldwork, and one reason why staff were cognizant of the folk high school’s image on social media and in promotional materials in presenting the sort of idealized Norwegian young person the school sought to produce. This is also why positioning students both as civically engaged citizens in Norway and as global ambassadors for Norway’s ideals further afield was a central tenet to the folk high school’s social program: by cultivating students who were “relevant” to the future of Norwegian domestic and international relations, the schools would remain formidable and more bluntly, in business.

Even so, arguing that the folk high school network is important to Norwegian statecraft only insofar as it contributes to the image of its citizens and its reputation in international arenas is an argument too reductive for me to comfortably suggest. The presence of the folk high school network in Norwegian political spheres[18] reinforces Norway’s commitment to educational aims that privilege values, relationships, and ethics over examinations or degrees, which for many educators I know is an aspirational pedagogical model, one that represents the way education *should* be. The schools are open to both Norwegian and international students and the state offers tuition support for both; some folk high schools also have courses that are especially designed for international students that teach the Norwegian language and offer students other cultural experiences. Still, the numbers of students who are able to access these courses is limited and this practice serves to reinforce the characterization of Norway as a “good host” in short-term international relationships rather than an equal partner. Norway's immigration system remains highly challenging to navigate,[19] and the oil that supports its welfare state also fuels inequality as the fossil fuel Norway exports globally results in unevenly distributed climate change impacts in the Global South.[20] The forms of equality that existed at the folk high school were, in many respects, supported by the suffering of people students would never meet in places they would never see. This is one reason why the study trips were critical to the folk high school pedagogical model; even if equality in global relationships was impossible to realize, then students, at the very least, could develop an understanding of their own positions within larger-scale global structures that remain unjust. I did not encounter any folk high school material on restorative justice, or reparations, or dismantling hegemonic inequities with strategic, actionable steps. Instead, the folk high school, perhaps as a reflection of the state more broadly, exemplified how committed Norway remains to maintaining its prosperity while also producing an image of a nation committed to fostering egalitarianism in international relationships. Like the folk high school, Norway's willingness to trouble the waters in such a way that would jeopardize its welfare, safety, or homogeneity was not on the table. Rather, the folk high school served to reinforce the status quo by sealing its students as national subjects who were characterized as agents of change, but within specific, curated borders. In other words, the sort of equality the folk high schools sought to produce in students was not one contingent on transformation but rather domestication; by inculcating values designed to serve in the best interests of Norwegians, the equality the Norwegian state supported was contained.

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[18] See (Sanchez Loza et al. 2021) for more on the political dimensions of education.

These issues are not exclusive to Norwegian further education. Over the course of my fieldwork, I was regularly confronted with my own complicity in the structures in academia that also privilege whiteness, eurocentrism, and neoliberal values relating to expertise and acumen. I often found myself faced with similar problems relating to representation and "inspiration" in how anthropology produces and disseminates knowledge, usually by researchers supported by wealthy institutions in the Global North who extract data through “experiences” in the Global South. The majority of the students I teach at The University of Edinburgh share similarities with the students I lived and learned alongside with at the folk high school: they are well educated, mostly white, generally European or North American, largely middle class, normally concerned with social problems, and often enrolled in anthropology courses because they want to contribute to a more equitable world. The University of Edinburgh, like Grøndal, invokes values that prioritize a “welcoming community” that is “relevant to society” and is composed of students who exemplify “ambit[ion],” “bold[ness]” and “a deep-rooted and distinctive internationalism,” which is meant to garner “innovative global partnerships” that “benefit individuals, communities, [and] societies...”[21] While these aims appear legitimate, the neoliberalization of higher education in Britain, and elsewhere, has produced increasingly predatory international student fees that have resulted in millions of students saddled with prohibitive student debt and left many of their university instructors employed on short-term, precarious contracts. In many respects, Norway remains an outlier in how education is valued, legislated, and made available by the state. Even so, the limits to the sorts of equality the Norwegian state, and folk high school, were willing to extend were stark; because the Norwegians I lived alongside were the ones making the decisions in their global “partnerships”—where to travel, how much time to devote to fundraising, which organizations should receive aid, and so forth—the power remained firmly within their grasp, if not as individuals then at least as an institution.

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[19] I experienced this firsthand in my efforts to obtain a research permit, which was a highly confusing, heavily bureaucratized, and very expensive process.

[20] https://www.norskpetroleum.no/en/production-and-exports/exports-of-oil-and-gas/

My wish, though, is not to unduly criticize the educators and students I lived and worked with over the course of fifteen months and implicating myself within the discussion problematizes the differentiation that I perceived existing between us. While our differences were implicit—I was paying international fees to the University of Edinburgh in exchange for the folk high school experiences my fieldwork was contingent on while my research participants were not—the truth remained: we were the ones with the time and resources to consider these questions in the first place. Rather, my aim is to critically examine the ways in which further education challenges, and reproduces, inequity in a range of social structures and to assess the limits and possibilities of strategizing students' embodied experiences within them. My hope is that the educational strategies I assess in this thesis, those that work towards producing forms of equality within an inequitable world, will reveal shared points of reflexivity, methodological and pedagogical practices, and room for critique. What more could anyone ask from a student experience than that?

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[21] https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/strategy-2030/our-vision-purpose-and-values

CHAPTER 2/

THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE: RITUAL.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

-I Corinthians 12:27 English Standard Version

INTRODUCTION.

Following in the tradition of Norway's original folk high schools, Grøndal is a Lutheran school. As part of its school programming, Grøndal offers students Lutheran liturgical masses[22] held twice a month on campus called *Thomasmesse* (Thomas' mass), which are designed to encourage students to "embody God" through ritual practice. Inspired by the biblical account of the apostle Thomas, Grøndal's priest developed the mass as a place where faith and doubt could co-exist. [23] Over the course of attending a dozen or so *Thomasmesse* services at Grøndal, I found that most of the school's students voluntarily participated in these services despite the majority of them describing themselves as secular, atheists, or "not Christian" in belief. These assertions reflect national statistics; most contemporary Norwegians do not attend church regularly or say that they believe in God, and younger cohorts, the majority of whom comprised *Thomasmesse* participants, are even less likely to engage in regular religious practice.[24] Even so, 64 percent of Norwegians in general are members of the Church of Norway,[25] and baptisms, confirmations, and wedding ceremonies are still commonly practiced and largely performed by priests in Lutheran churches. These cultural ties to the Church of Norway reflect Norway's historical commitments to Lutheranism; in 1537, Lutheranism became the official religion of

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[22] Scandinavian Lutherans use the term "mass" (*messe*) to describe their services.

[23] Thomas, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, is sometimes referred to as "Doubting Thomas" because of his initial expression of disbelief upon hearing Jesus had been resurrected (John 20:24-29 KJV). *Thomasmesse* was originally conceived by the Finnish priest, Olli Valtonen (Kotila 1999), but the liturgy Grøndal practiced was developed by its school priest.

[24] https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2018/06/13/how-religious-commitment-varies-by-country-among-people-of-all-ages/

[25] https://www.ssb.no/en/kultur-og-fritid/religion-og-livssyn/statistikk/den-norske-kirke

Norway (then under Danish rule) and was also specified as Norway's state religion when it gained independence from Denmark in 1814 and entered a new union with Sweden. The Church of Norway was fully supported by the Norwegian state until 2017, when it became an independent legal entity, and despite its new legal status, it remains funded, in part, by the state today. The historical, and contemporary, presence of Lutheranism in Norwegian statecraft has contributed to what Van den Breemer et al. call a "hidden sacrality" in the Norwegian secular (2014: 9), which reveal "entanglements" between the secular and the sacred (Balkenhol et al. 2020) in Norwegian political and social life.

While considerable work in academic discourse has problematized distinctions made between sacred and secular formations, particularly in Protestant contexts (Asad 2003, Mahmood 2009), I find Balkenhol et al.'s conceptual framework of the "secular sacred" most useful in assessing how religious and non-religious forms became "entangled" through the *Thomasmesse* rituals. Balkenhol et al. suggest that "entanglements" between the secular and the sacred are located in "persons, objects… and places" that "intertwine, conflate and conflict" (2020: 5). For a student body composed of young people who largely identified as not religious but actively participated in Lutheran rituals, I found that these sorts of conflicts were minimized during ritual activity but came up in conversations I had with students after the rituals when I asked them to describe their relationships with Christian faith. Most students who identified as "not Christian" meant that they did not identify as having a clear faith profile or a "personal" relationship with Jesus, while others, who identified as being "culturally Christian" or "not *very* Christian," generally had a positive relationship with religious traditions and holidays but did not want to be associated with more "conservative" forms of Christianity they described as being "exclusionary" or "judgmental." Many students articulated their relationship with Christianity as a dynamic process, saying they were "doubting," or "unsure," of what they believed but through the *Thomasmesse* rituals, had become more open to experiencing Christian faith, especially within the communal context the masses offered. By privileging student participation over uniformity in belief, *Thomasmesse* muted distinctions between faith and doubt in the student body and revealed how "entanglements" between the secular and the sacred are present in both religious practice in Norway and in the state apparatus of the folk high school network.

Christian and secular[26] folk high schools alike receive funding by the government and share a central office in Norway's capital, Oslo. These schools also represent historical entanglements with Lutheranism; conceived by writer, philosopher, and pastor N.F.S. Grundtvig in the 1840s, the first folk high schools were designed to provide the peasantry with free Lutheran education meant to develop democracy, equality, and life-long learning methods outside of traditional forms of schooling in Scandinavia (Sørensen & Stråth 1997). The influence of folk high schools in Norway's national identity should not be understated, as the folk high school and Norwegian Romantic movements also contributed to Norway's eventual independence from Sweden and the formation of its nascent nation state (Stråth 2018). To date, the Norwegian state supports 83 folk high schools across Norway, with 11 percent of Norwegian young people attending them usually after secondary school and prior to further education or entering the workforce.[27] Norway's folk high schools remain an important part of Norwegian value-making (Løvgren 2015) and are periodically required to submit value documents outlining their chosen core values for student development in order to receive continued funding from the state.

While anthropological work to date has largely focused on the ways in which values are realized materially or through social action, I take a different approach in this chapter, focusing on the body as a site for value-making that mechanizes what is desirable for individuals operating within a social whole. I draw from Joel Robbins' work on value realization through ritual (2015) and Catherine Bell's work on the "ritualized body" (1992) to assess how the embodied ritual practices in *Thomasmesse* served to inform both the realization and problematization of two of the school's chosen core values—*opplevelse* (experience) and *fellesskap* (community). I argue that by encouraging full student participation in these rituals, despite the range of individual religious beliefs represented in Grøndal's student body, these values—community and experience—contributed to an encompassing value (Dumont 1980) of equality, as participants were asked to view each other as equal "through God's eyes." I employ Marianne Gullestad's (1984) analytical lens of "equality as sameness," arguing that while difference is usually minimized in Norwegian social life, *Thomasmesse* provided a "safe place" for students to explore religious difference by first grounding their sameness through shared *Thomasmesse* ritual practice. I suggest this form of equality was contingent on the folk high school pedagogical model of "embodied value-making," as I call it, which prioritized students "trying out" the *Thomasmesse* rituals instead of adhering to specific confessions of faith, so that students could explore what difference in faith and doubt among themselves could feel like on an affective register. This open invitation in Christian practice, where difference in belief was muted for the sake of developing an experiential-based community, is what made *Thomasmesse* a powerful apparatus for establishing school values through embodied ritual.

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[26] These schools are referred to as *frilynte skoler* which is translated as "liberal schools" on the folk high school website (fhs.no) but were described to me by my research participants as being closer to "secular" in the way they understood the term in English.

[27] Fhs.no

Though *Thomasmesse* was designed to minimize epistemological and interpersonal conflicts relating to faith through an emphasis on shared, communal practice, tensions over secular-sacred entanglements arose in disagreements staff had over how the *Thomasmesse* rituals should be administered. Even so, negotiating these conflicts presented a realm for reinforcing school values, a phenomenon Tom Bratrud (2021), echoing Max Gluckman (1958), suggests is a critical part of value realization. I argue that conflicts between student difference and sameness, the secular and the sacred, and the citizen and the state were mediated through students' bodies as they experienced a specialized form of religious community *Thomasmesse* offered to them. I conclude by considering the implications of this Christian practice on both Norwegian social life and statecraft, which I suggest may illuminate similar entanglements in "secular" societies more broadly.

THE SETTING.

It is *vinteruke* (winter week), and the entire student body, the *stipps,*[28] and most of the school's staff have spent the last several days staying at a ski lodge several hours inland from school and high up in the mountains. While students spend much of their time back at the folk school busy in their individual programs–football, handball, chess, backpacking, tourism, and international development–several mandatory school-wide activities, such as the ski trip, are also scheduled throughout the year. The trip has gone forward despite the ever-present specter of COVID-19, as the school has rented out the entirety of the lodge for its 100 or so students and staff, thus managing to operate within the bounds of Norway's pandemic-related restrictions. Over the course of the week, most of the students spend their days skiing or snowboarding, but other activities are available for students who would rather go ice-fishing, play board games, or practice yoga.

The final night of winter week, a *Thomasmesse* service is scheduled to be held at a local church near the lodge. Normally, *Thomasmesse* is held bi-weekly on campus in the school chapel or at a church near the school, but this time the students and I have the chance to experience rituals we've performed together before in a new and different setting. Later, Jens, the school priest, will tell me that it's important for students to see how their shared Christian heritage is present all over Norway, not just at the church back home by Grøndal.

We leave the lodge together, a stream of staff and students cradled under a tapestry of stars. Otherwise, the path to the church is completely dark; there are no streetlights, and as we slide slightly on the icy road dissolved in blackness, we grab each other's arms every now and again to catch our falls. We arrive at the church, a small, simple white wooden structure, snow-covered and cross-shaped; its extended quadrants are capped by gentle eaves that circle around the center of the building and slope upwards to a humble wooden steeple. We make our way inside its white-washed interior, softly lit in candlelight supplemented by several electric chandeliers that add an additional glow to the room. The room's carefully carved beams, painted in embellishments of gold and powder blue, line a short aisle that leads to an altar that displays four large golden candlesticks supporting thick, lit candles.

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[28] "Stipps," short for *stipendiater*, refers to the student-leaders staff selected from Grøndal's previous year's cohort who were responsible for leading activities and creating a positive community on campus.

As students and staff enter, stomping clinging snow from boots and peeling off damp mittens and hats, they pick up folded pieces of paper with the order of service printed on it, even though they've participated in several *Thomasmesse* services by now and are familiar with the routine. The church is small, quiet, close: the painted wooden benches built into the walls of the three quadrants positioned around the altar don't leave any space for social distancing. We fill every seat, knees touching, shoulders together.

THE MESSAGE.

"Welcome to *Thomasmesse*," Jens says to us, extending his arms wide. "Before we start this evening, I'm going to ask two *stipps* (student leaders) to join me for a moment; Hans and Sven, will you two come up?" The *stipps* rise from their pews, smiling as they side-step students' knees before making their way to the aisle. When they arrive at the altar, Jens, smiling, asks them to give each other a hug. They pause, looking at each other from the sides of their eyes, before turning and extending their arms widely, murmuring in an exaggerated embrace. Jens thanks them while students laugh softly, before excusing them to return to their seats.

"This is today's theme," says Jens, looking into the small audience of students watching him silently, sweating slightly under their woolen sweaters and ski jackets. "The thing about people is that so much of what we experience is physical," Jens continues. "You become a person when someone else sees you and holds you. And that's what's so interesting about the creation story; God created us in His image, and it's as if He has given us something inside of us where we want to be near to God. And then, we find that it's God who also wants to be near to us. To hold us. To give us a really good hug. And then we can also do that for each other. My faith is very important to me." Jens pauses. "It makes me feel strong and safe."

“MY FAITH.”

Jens’ message concludes. Two *stipps* are responsible for leading the next portion of *Thomasmesse*, and Jens calls them to the front of the church. *“Min Tro”* (“My Faith”) is a part of the service where a pair of rotating *stipps* interviews a chosen guest (a teacher or student), inviting the guest to share their personal experience with faith. This evening, the *stipps,* Sven and Hans*,* call Håvard, the school’s football teacher, to join them at the empty seat in between them where the three of them will sit for the duration of the interview. He joins them, his hands folded gently in his lap. Sven asks, “What is your faith?”

Håvard is soft-spoken and it’s difficult to hear his answers from the pew in which I sit. “My faith isn’t necessarily about answering tough questions,” he says, “but it’s more about how I’ve experienced God; that informs my *grunntro* (core beliefs).”

Hans asks the next question: “Why did you choose to work at a Christian folk high school?” Håvard answers, “The main reason was the football class, but it was a bonus that it was a Christian school. I thought, ‘maybe the *miljø* (milieu) will be extra good*.’* And that has been the case. There is a good community at the school because of the values here. There is love here; people are kind to each other; people feel seen but safe. You are safer and stronger in yourself after a year here.”

THE RITUALS.

When the interview ends, the *stipps* and Håvard return to their seats. The next portion of the service is called *bønnevandring* (prayer walking) and is the most participatory part of *Thomasmesse.* Three stations have been set up by *stipps* around the front of the room: the first, a small table covered in dozens of unlit votive candles; the second, several pews strewn with scraps of paper and pens for writing *bønnelapper* (prayer notes); and the third, three chairs set up in a row to the side of the altar for *forbønn* (intercessory prayer).[29] While recorded praise songs, sung in both Norwegian and English, play over the church speakers, Jens invites students to rise and light a candle, write requests as they feel led, and receive prayer. "Some really want to do this and others maybe don't," he says. "Let's respect each other. It's very important to have quiet time together. Welcome."

The students rise slowly, many of them holding their arms around each other, shuffling in formation toward the three stations while giving each other a gentle arm squeeze, or resting their heads on each other's shoulders as they wait in line. Not all the students join the formations; several quietly remain seated. Students' faces glow in the light of the votives; they smile softly as they turn and walk to another station.

A group of students sits in the pews at the prayer note station, scribbling thoughtfully. Jens and two teachers stand at the intercessory prayer station, positioned behind the three empty chairs; three *stipps* join them to wait for students to approach to receive prayer. As students sit, pairs of teachers and *stipps* gently place the palms of their hands on the students' shoulders in a posture of prayer, their eyes closed. They say nothing; all we can hear is the recording of gentle acoustic worship music playing from speakers overhead. They remain silent for the duration of the ritual; those interceding simply lift their hands from their respective recipient's shoulders when their prayer concludes, usually after a minute or two has passed, indicating that the student can rise from the chair and move on.

While I have observed several *Thomasmesse* services on campus over the course of my fieldwork, this is the first time I have elected to participate by receiving prayer. I join a line of several students waiting for prayer. We face the front of the room, eyes averted from those receiving prayer, in what feels like an offering of privacy. When we see the movement of someone rising from one of the chairs from the corner of our eyes, we turn our bodies quietly and take the newly vacated seat. A chair becomes available, and I sit in it, waiting for Jens to place his hands on my shoulders. I can sense the warmth of his palms before I feel the slight weight of their contact. I have not been touched in such an intentional way by anyone outside of my family since the start of the pandemic. Tears spring to my eyes. Jens does not speak but I can hear him murmuring a prayer, although I cannot decipher his words. After a moment, he gently lifts his hands and gives my shoulders a soft squeeze before I rise and return to my seat at a wooden pew across the room.

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[29] While the term "intercessory prayer" has taken on various connotations in different religious contexts, in this case it simply meant praying on behalf of someone else.

Once everyone who wants to has received prayer, Jens moves to the front of the altar and, gathering the prayer notes at their station, invites two new *stipps* to the altar to read them aloud. The notes are usually written, and always read, anonymously. The *stipps*, a young man and a young woman, unfold the notes and stand, reading them in turns, one by one.

I pray for all who feel alone
I pray for my dear brother in heaven and that he can feel the hug I give him now
I pray for all my family and friends
I want a good life
God, why is it so hard for me to feel that you are here?
That we can make the world around us better for everyone
To be open to new experiences even if it can feel uncomfortable at the start
That you help everyone who is struggling
That my eating disorder will go away, I'm so tired of it
Thank you for a new day every day
Thank you for the 'fellesskap' (community) here
I hope everyone can 'oppleve' (experience) the happiness I have now
Lord, thank you

To conclude the service, Jens makes the sign of the cross and prays, “Lord, we pray that you will meet all of us where we are and give us the safety to be free. Amen.” He smiles as students rise and shuffle out of their seats, pulling their mittens and hats on to meet the frozen chill of the dark night beyond the warmth of the church doors.

SAMENESS IN RITUAL EXPERIENCE.

The value of *opplevelse* (experience) was present both during the *Thomasmesse* rituals and regularly referenced in the dozens of interviews I had with Jens, students, and staff after the services. In addition to the other experiential and values-based education the school offered, the *Thomasmesse* rituals provided a unique dimension to value realization at Grøndal, in which the school’s usual activities were paused, slowing the speed of daily life (Kapferer 2006: 676). Joel Robbins (2015), building on Louis Dumont’s work on value theory (1986), writes that in most forms of social action people normally only realize lower-level values, ones that may link together to contribute to an eminent value but can also represent conflicting values that inhibit a paramount value from being fully achieved. As Robbins notes some collective activities, like rituals, hold a particular social power that cause certain values to emerge as “exemplary” which allow them to encompass lower-level values in the service of their full realization (2015: 21). For Jens, this meant that the *Thomasmesse* rituals were one way Grøndal could realize equality through the value of “experience,” as he encouraged students to participate fully, no matter their individual positions with faith or belief. “When we talk about faith,” he said, “It takes a lot of time. It’s a long way in with words, but that’s why actions are so beautiful. They connect the words to really understand.” Linking ritual practice with “understanding” was key to *Thomasmesse*, he said, and necessary for bringing the value of a shared experience to Grøndal’s students and staff, no matter the individual faith profiles represented in the student body.

When Jens first developed *Thomasmesse* twenty-five or so years ago, he said he made attendance voluntary, which meant that the masses were mostly composed of students who already had a positive relationship with Christian practice. While *kristendomsfag* (Christianity teaching) at Grøndal was, and still is, mandatory, Jens was apprehensive about making

Thomasmesse the same, telling me that it was "close to the limits" of what he felt was socially acceptable in Norway. "You can't force someone to religious practice," he said. "Then it takes away from the 'safe space.'" By implementing a school policy in which the first *Thomasmesse* of the school year compulsory, however, Jens felt that giving students who wouldn't normally be interested in religious practice a more directed chance to "try it out" would better prepare them for deciding whether they would like to continue attending further masses. Soon after this policy change, Jens said that he and Grøndal's students shared an "experience" during the first collective *Thomasmesse* he didn't expect. "It was a low-pressure, liberal service," he said, "but suddenly, we experienced the same experience of God, the presence we had. It was kind of a breakthrough, and since then, we've had many students coming for it. It's a whole other activity and it's become a central part of the school."

Jens's description of students and staff having the "same experience of God" indicates an example of what Émile Durkheim called "collective effervescence" (1974), a phenomenon that happens when people come together in ritual practice and share similar thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Ritual encounters have long been a realm of anthropological inquiry, with contemporary work suggesting that rituals can become inscribed and located within and upon the body (Bell 1992, Csordas 1997, Magliocco 2014). Bell, drawing upon Lakoff's (1987) work on categorization, describes how a "ritualized body" emerges in ritual practice, where concepts, knowledge, and social processes are not constructed a priori, but rather, become "embodied" through experience and encounters (1992: 95). While the role that the body plays in value realization has been largely absent in previous work on value theory, I have found that the linkages between the *Thomasmesse* rituals, Grøndal's stated values, and the bodies of its individual participants were necessarily intertwined. In other words, the body became the site for realizing the value of experience, and even though participants from a range of faith and non-faith backgrounds conceptualized what happened during *Thomasmesse* in different ways, students and staff articulated what they had encountered in their bodies in similar terms.

While the embodied aspects of the Thomasmesse rituals were privileged over proclamations of faith, language was still a present vehicle for drawing students together through shared experience while recognizing their differences in belief. The way language was positioned during *Thomasmesse*, and during conversations I had with students and staff afterwards, was usually conveyed in personal or individualized terms. Jens told me that he was careful to use the subjective when describing Christian faith with students; "I mostly say, *for me*," he said, both in an interview I had with him and in the *Thomasmesse* ritual described earlier ("faith is very important to me," he said. "It makes me feel strong and safe.") Håvard, too, described his faith during "*Min tro"* ("My Faith") as one that had been shaped by his personal "experiences" with God, rather than through cognitive processes meant to "answer tough questions," and the language he used to describe the Christian milieu at school was "seen" "strong" and "safe" were words that students could equally access. In this way, language was mobilized as an added dimension to the sensorial aspects of the *Thomasmesse* experience, through words meant to invoke an embodied relationship with faith. This language was usually described to me in phrases that centralized affectivity, where my research participants recalled feelings of "warmth," "love," and a sense of "calm" that came over them during *Thomasmesse*. Torgeir, a teacher who identified as a Christian, said that when receiving intercessory prayer he experienced "the Holy Spirit entering the body," before trailing off with a laugh. "No," he said. "It's like, it feels like a calming presence." I asked, "So you wouldn't say it's the Holy Spirit, or…?" He said, "I could say that, sure. I do think that the Holy Spirit is a part of that. I feel peaceful and connected with what God thinks of me. For my identity, someone who is loved by God. I think it is very individual for people, what they experience." Torgeir told me that when he gave intercessory prayer, he hoped that the students and staff who were receiving it experienced something similar, where they could see "*hvem du er i Guds øyne* (who [they were] in God's eyes)," and that they were "created in God's image." He paused. "Even if you don't have faith, I think it can be a good experience, to sit and think good thoughts." Because of the silent nature of intercessory prayer, prayers given were open to the recipients' interpretation, and were contingent on feeling instead of verbal communication. This meant that students who did not believe in God or have religious faith could also access, and interpret, intercessory prayer in ways they found meaningful without subscribing to Christian belief.

One such student, Karl, told me how he experienced intercessory prayer as a self-described atheist, saying that he didn't feel "the essence of God powering through" him or "anything like that." Instead, he described feeling "the love" from teachers and *stipps* which gave him a "warm feeling" that communicated to him that he "matter[ed]. Love is a feeling that you care for others," he said. "I imagine warmth versus cold." Another student, Herman, also described a similar feeling of warmth in relation to *Thomasmesse*. He likened the experience to "the physical manifestation of a hug" that brought him a sense of "comfort" he said had been missing in his life. Herman, like Karl, had grown up praying before family meals and had attended church occasionally, and identified at the beginning of the school year as an atheist or "at least agnostic." As we sat together at the final *Thomasmesse* I attended before finishing fieldwork, however, he told me, "I think I might have been kind of dishonest [about my faith]. I think it's fair to say I've been affected by the services here." Herman said that he felt he had been "unfair" in seeing others "experience" God and then thinking, "*None of this is real, your life is a lie.* I want that happiness to be real and to mean something. I want that for myself as well. That's why I came to that conclusion. Us being here together is a physical manifestation of an idea. You can see this idea of God embodied in this room, so in a very strange way, God is present. The idea of God is that He is present in each and every one of us. There's something nice about God being in all those who believe in Him and maybe in those who don't? I wanted it to become real, so I tried to make it real. Simple as that."

Herman's remarks on the *Thomasmesse* experience being a "physical manifestation of an idea" echoes Pierre Bourdieu's assessment of how belief is not situated within cognitive processes, but rather, is evoked through embodied expression. "Practical belief," he writes, "is not a 'state of mind', still less a kind of arbitrary adherence to a set of instituted dogmas and doctrines ('beliefs'), but rather a state of the body" (Bourdieu 2004: 88). Jens, too, said that he felt belief was less of a "mental structure" and more of a "practice," which was why he felt encouraging all students to participate in *Thomasmesse* was more important than students adhering to specific forms of belief. "God is in everybody," Jens said, referencing Luke 17:21. "Jesus said, 'the kingdom of God is within you.' He said it to everyone in the crowd, not just the disciplines." While Jens was clear in his own beliefs and positioned the sensorial experiences happening during *Thomasmesse* within the theology of an embodied God, a belief in God was not necessary for students to access the affects associated with Jens' biblical message. By referencing God as someone who "hugs," "holds," and "wants to be near" people, Jens invoked God as a physical being who could be mobilized, and felt, through the touch associated with the *Thomasmesse* rituals. Everyone in attendance had a body, and their bodies could, in turn, be used as a vehicle for experiencing and sharing God's love—or love more broadly—with each other. In this way, the value of experience established a shared sense of relating, one that was necessary for developing the sort of community *Thomasmesse* sought to create.

EQUALITY IN COMMUNITY DESPITE DIFFERENCES IN FAITH.

Over the course of participating in a dozen or so *Thomasmesse* services, I came to find that the values of experience and community were co-constitutive in making egalitarian-relating possible during its rituals. Community could only be established through students' willingness to experience *Thomasmesse* together; likewise, this experience could not be realized without the communal practice of shared ritual encounter. This form of close community—*fellesskap*—is one that Maja Hojer Bruun (2011) writes has strong ties to Scandinavian conceptions of equality and contributed to what I came to view as the encompassing value (Dumont 1980) meant to be realized through the *Thomasmesse* rituals. Egalitarianism as a social value has garnered considerable attention in anthropological work in Scandinavia, (Barnes 1954; Gullestad 1984; Abram 2018), and was notably critiqued by Marianne Gullestad, who argued that Norwegians are less interested in establishing equality than making each other the same. While contemporary scholars have developed Gullestad's position considerably in recent years, arguing that her conceptual framework of "equality as sameness" should be grounded contextually rather than taken for granted as a social fact (Erstad 2018; Aarset 2018), repositioned from the private to a public state project (Vike & Lo 2023), and reoriented to include how notions of tolerance and inclusion also inform perceptions of equality in Scandinavia (Jacobsen 2018), a point I take up later in this chapter, Gullestad's work remains salient to the discussion at hand. While Gullestad did not view the social processes of Norwegians making each other "the same" positively, I argue that the *Thomasmesse* rituals I describe here provided an alternative form of egalitarian relating that promoted student difference *within* sameness that was both positive and largely absent in broader Norwegian secular social life. Through Jens' message that students were all "created in God's image" and were equally loved and valued by God—irrespective of their individual beliefs—students were made to be both equal *and* the same through their differences. By positioning difference as a positive and critical aspect of equality, and faith, students were able to develop a sort of community that was contingent on expressed differentiation.

These differences were situated within bounded, repeated rituals that were designed to create a "safe space" that would preserve students' agency within the context of communal ritual practice. Reading anonymously written prayer notes out loud, for example, revealed student difference in such a way that allowed students to feel "seen" but "safe," as their requests could be noted while their privacy was maintained. The prayer notes also made student difference in faith visible. Trygve, who identified as an atheist, told me that he liked writing prayer notes even though he didn't believe in God. "But even if you don't believe, you *are* practicing Christianity?" I asked him. He nodded emphatically. "I'm one hundred percent practicing Christianity. It's not weird, I don't put too much thought into it." When I asked if he ever wrote *bønnelapper* (prayer notes) and he said, "Every time. I always write, 'I hope everything goes fine for everyone.' No 'amen,' no 'please, God,' just a normal message for everyone." By reading all prayer notes aloud, all students' faith—or lack of faith—was given equal attention, while the individual needs of students were respected and valued. The anonymous nature of the ritual made this kind of sharing possible; differentiation happened within the context of unified practice.

The only portion of *Thomasmesse* that did not prioritize anonymity—and publicly displayed difference—was "*Min tro*" (My Faith). Even so, participants were asked if they would like to share prior to the service and had the option to decline the invitation. "*Min tro*" was also not a proclamation, or statement, of beliefs; rather, it offered students and staff the chance to share their own stories of how they had experienced faith before attending Grøndal, and to give reflections on how they viewed the forms of Christian practice on campus. An invitation for being a "*Min tro*" guest was one of honor, and was, like *bønnelapper* (prayer notes), designed for students to develop an "understanding" of how differences in faith within the student body could still contribute to a shared community. "*Min tro*," then, was a bridge between the uniformity of the shared rituals that happened during the rest of *Thomasmesse* and the subjectivity of individual student belief that was also happening at the same time within them. Over the course of my fieldwork, I witnessed a range of students and staff who had been invited to share during "*Min tro,*" and each of them had vastly different ways of speaking about their religious orientation*;* some said they had a Christian faith, some said they weren't sure, and others said they had no faith at all. In this way, the individual dimensions of the communal whole of *Thomasmesse* were revealed, but within specific parameters that students could accept, prepare for, or decline, should they be asked to participate.

Still, there were limits to the ways difference contributed to equality in the *Thomasmesse* community. Gender, for example, presented a realm where students and staff were usually equally represented, but only insofar as they identified as cisgender. Jens regularly referred to God using male pronouns and said that God represented a father figure to him, but also sometimes described God's qualities as being maternal and usually spoke to his own position as a father when talking about God in this way. I never observed Jens delivering material on prescribed gender roles during *Thomasmesse* and male and female students and staff were usually equally present in *Min Tro* and other activities, such as leading songs or engaging in skits Jens directed from time to time. Gendered language employed during the services, however, used binary terms, which could have precluded students who were nonbinary or gender-fluid from fully engaging in the *Thomasmesse* community. I did not encounter any students who identified as such during my fieldwork, and Lisa, a teacher, speculated that this might have been because Grøndal's status as a Christian school could have deterred nonbinary students from attending. "Maybe they don't think they'd belong," she said. "But I don't think that would be the case." Margrethe, a student who identified as pansexual, told me that she had some reservations of her own before enrolling. "I was nervous coming here, but Jens is an amazing person," she said. "He's very modern and that's what you have to be if you actually want to reach a big group of people."

Students who decided to forgo the *Thomasmesse* services altogether presented another realm of difference that, in my view, was not regarded unfavorably by Grøndal's staff, but one that inhibited them from fully contributing to the school's community. Several students who chose not to return after the first compulsory service told me their reasons ranged from having a general lack of interest to experiencing more overt discomfort around the "emotions" that came up for them during the rituals. Religious difference outside the bounds of Christianity could have also contributed to why some students chose not to attend *Thomasmess*e, but out of the dozens of interviews I conducted over the span of my fieldwork, I only spoke with one student who said she practiced a religion other than Christianity. Raziya, a Muslim student from Iran who had gained refugee status with her family in Norway several years prior, said she sometimes attended, and enjoyed, *Thomasmesse*, but only if it didn't interfere with her Monday evening dance classes. She didn't offer any further remarks on how her Muslim faith related to the Lutheran context of *Thomasmesse*, and after several questions to that end, I didn't press it; it's possible that doing so would reveal differences she did not wish to draw attention to, or perhaps the differentiation I would have expected her to experience wasn't as significant to her as I thought it might have been. I had heard that previous *Thomasmesse* services before I arrived also included *Min tro* guests who were Muslim, and while I didn't witness this myself, I had heard that these guests' perspectives were embraced by Grøndal's student body.

While Gullestad's assertion that nationalism, racism and the "renewed importance of Lutheran Christianity in contrast to Islam" are part and parcel of "egalitarian culture themes" in Scandinavia (2002: 45), emerging research in the region suggests that the increasing relevance of tolerance as a social value in Norway's younger populations (Jacobsen 2018). While I do not wish to downplay the xenophobia that scholars have argued remains present in the Nordics (Andersson 2010; Midtbøen 2014; Hoffman & Moe 2020), I do want to make the case that *Thomasmesse* constituted a place where Lutheran practice was not utilized as an apparatus for social exclusion, as Gullestad suggested, but rather, created a social world where difference, religious or otherwise, was positioned positively in such a way that equality *beyond* sameness could flourish. It was clear to me that Grøndal's staff hoped students who exemplified difference inside, or outside, of the *Thomasmesse* rituals would be regarded as equally important members of the school community, and that students were not pressured to attend them long-term as doing so would take away from the "safe space" the rituals necessitated. In other words, students who did not come to *Thomasmesse* also contributed to Grøndal's overarching value of equality, as their absence served as a visible reminder that differences in faith outside of ritual participation were valid positions for students to take, and reinforced that Christian practice was just one of many ways that students could develop a sense of community on campus.

CONFLICTS AND ENTANGLEMENTS.

This did not mean that differences in faith did not, at times, produce conflicts among students and staff. Several months after the ski trip, a dozen or so students—including Trygve and Karl, the two students I mentioned earlier in this chapter, who described themselves as atheists—were chosen by Grøndal's teaching staff to be a part of the following school year's incoming *stipp* team. Arguably, the *stipp*s' most important, and controversial, role was to assist Jens and other teachers with delivering intercessory prayer during *Thomasmesse*. By leading this ritual, *stipps* served as "exemplary persons" (Robbins 2016), selected by staff to embody Grøndal's chosen values to the rest of the student body.

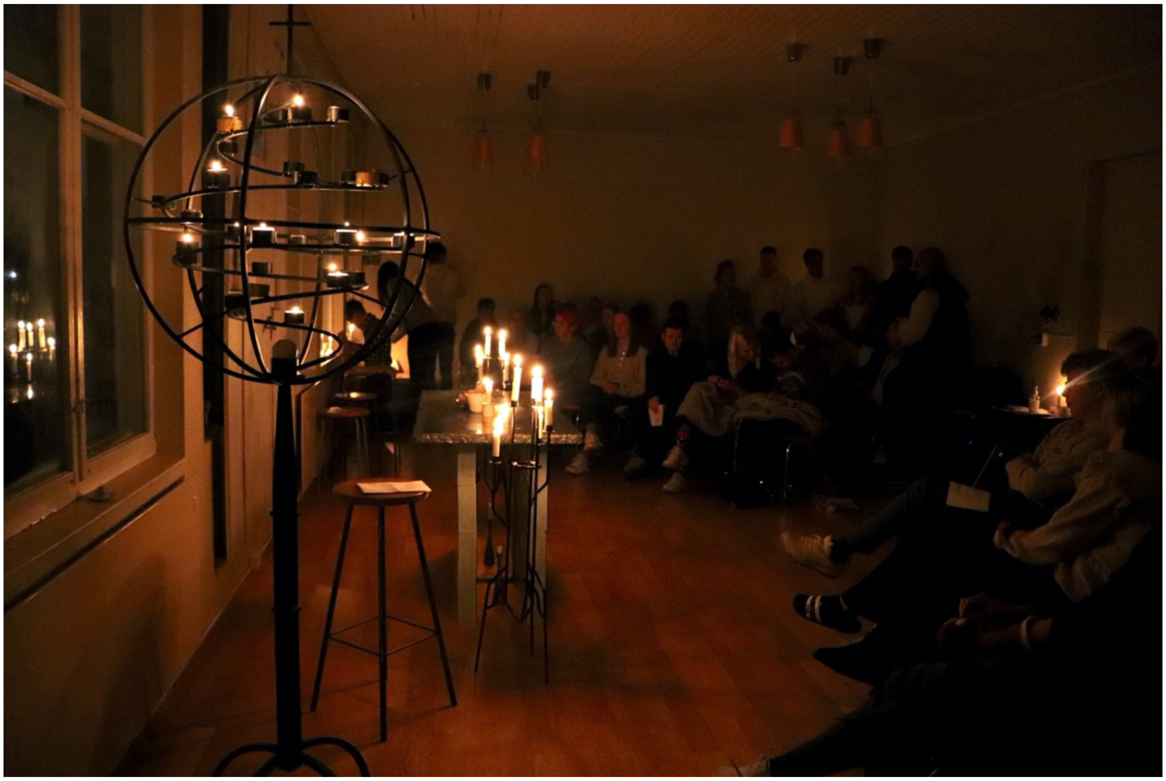

Fig. 5: Thomasmesse in Grøndal's chapel.

All *stipps*, whether they identified as Christians or not, administered intercessory prayer, which had drawn criticism from teachers who told me they had reservations with the practice. Lisa, a teacher, said that one year she had spoken with a *stipp* who wanted to give intercessory prayer but was a self-proclaimed atheist. "She just wanted to wish students the best," said Lisa, "but I thought, *well, this isn't really prayer then. This is going too far.*" As Gullestad and others have noted, Scandinavians tend to avoid conflict to establish social conformity (Hollos 1976, Gullestad 1991; Stenius 1997) and the same was true for Grøndal's staff. Martin, a teacher who had been on staff at Grøndal for the previous twenty-five years, expressed similar concerns, saying that having atheist *stipps* giving intercessory prayer was "crossing a line that shouldn't be done" and that it was "blasphemous" for *stipps* who regarded the practice as nothing more than giving "good energy." He told me, "You should believe if you're doing something spiritual like that." I asked him if Grøndal's staff had engaged with discussions about this practice, and if disagreements had been expressed. "We haven't had conversations about this," he said. "We're not very good at talking about the systems [we have in place]."

Tensions between faith and doubt during *Thomasmesse* reflect Jon Bialecki's work on American charismatic evangelicals and his observations of how two different "poles" can exist in religious communities between "closure" and "openness," or what he calls a "hermetically sealed group" and "absolute universalism" (2017: 211). He suggests that most religious communities move between these poles, ultimately landing on a place somewhere in the middle and establishing "patterns or planes that have a particular (although not total) stability" (2017: 212). While Jens may have been critiqued for being "too open" in how he led *Thomasmesse*, particularly in encouraging *stipp* leadership in delivering intercessory prayer, the established "patterns" that he had designed produced a sense of "stability" that students and staff said they appreciated. Like Lisa, most staff talked about *Thomasmesse* as being one of the "most important" parts of life at Grøndal and integral to the kind of community the folk high school sought to create. In other words, students being able to fully access the *Thomasmesse* rituals while contributing to the sort of egalitarian community that staff hoped students would become a part of, were worth the reservations they may have had in how these rituals were produced.

Conflicts about who should lead the *Thomasmesse* rituals also reinforced the importance of the forms of equality that the services brought to the Grøndal community in the first place. Tom Bratrud, in his work on value realization in Christian ritual in Vanuatu, writes that "conflict effectively clarifies people's different interests and ongoing construction of values and their meaning" (Bratrud 2021: 465), which can lead to slippages in how values are both interpreted and linked to social action, but are also important in assessing the contextual dimensions of how values "take shape" (474). In the case of *Thomasmesse*, staff conflicts over how doubt was mobilized during its rituals represented a "disvalue" (Robbins 2022: 40), a realm of disagreement over the accepted limits of how student difference should be represented and displayed.

Ultimately, Jens felt that promoting secular student leadership within *Thomasmesse* was worth any disagreements this practice produced, as it signaled to the student body that students could access the masses equally, even if they lacked the Christian faith that the rituals themselves endorsed. Lisa said that, despite her reservations with Grøndal's allowing *stipps* who did not identify as Christians to give intercessory prayer, she still felt that their leadership was one reason why student participation in *Thomasmesse* had increased in recent years. "Maybe the *stipps* make it the natural thing to do. Some years ago, almost no one went. But in recent years, students aren't afraid of it anymore. It's more accepted. We've noticed a change." As Naomi Haynes and Jason Hickel have noted, hierarchies often co-operate within egalitarian value orientations (2018), and in the case of *stipps*, this intentional, differential leadership was meant to represent how equality could both encompass, and transcend, student difference.

Giving secular students the platform to operate as "exemplars" also revealed the overlaps between secularity and sacrality happening within the *Thomasmesse* rituals themselves. Balkenhol et al. call for a "praxeological approach" when considering how people interact with the "entanglements" between "shifting, coalescing, overlapping and contradicting qualities associated with secularism and religion," a position I find useful to the discussion at hand (2020: 8). Praxeology, the philosophy that humans usually engage in purposeful rather than reflexive behaviors, reveals how the secular and the sacred were entangled through the *Thomasmesse* services, as students voluntarily participated in shared Christian practice irrespective of their personal religious beliefs. By viewing the *Thomasmesse* experience as a social process that deliberately made space for student differences in faith and belief, the secular and the sacred became muted through points of mutual intersections that centered around the words invoked in Jens's message: "love," "safety" and "respect." It's important to note that the forms of secularism and sacrality present in the *Thomasmesse* community were able to become entangled *because* of their likeness: as I have mentioned, tolerance, agency, and acceptance—qualities dually associated with secularity—[30] were prioritized above adhering to specific Christian doctrines or confessions of faith. Some students expressed surprise, and relief, over the "welcoming" version of Christianity they found invoked during *Thomasmesse*; "When I first said I was going to a Christian folk high school, my mom was afraid I'd get radicalized," Inga told me with a laugh. “But the Christianity I’ve found here hasn’t been a problem. It’s *koselig* (cozy, pleasant), it’s just tradition.”

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[30] Attributes that Talal Asad (2003) notably critiqued, but remain salient in the secular imagination today.

Conflicts about differences in Christian belief represented in Grøndal’s student and staff populations were also minimized during *Thomasmesse*. Accepted difference had limits at Grøndal, and the sort of tolerance extended to religious affiliations outside of Christianity was not generally granted towards what students called “conservative” Christian views like heterosexual marriage or eschatological notions of hell or damnation. Many students said it was views like these that made them hesitant to engage with Christian practice in the first place, remarking on how they perceived Christian faith as part of a conservative ideology marked by “judgement” and “exclusion.” Bjørnar, a student, went so far as to say that he had grown to “hate” Christianity because of its conservative profile in Norway, but came to view the *Thomasmesse* services as a decidedly “different” Christian practice he valued. By providing a welcoming space for students who had different experiences with Christian faith or otherwise, Jens hoped to challenge these negative stereotypes associated with certain forms of Christian “religiosity” in Norway, which he said fomented a sense of “certainty” that made doubt, an important part of faith, impossible to situate. Referencing Jesus’ parable of the Sower,[31] he said, “I do think that there is much trampling and ripping up of weeds where faith could have grown when you say, ‘this is not good enough.’ You don’t see the good that is actually happening.” While *Thomasmesse* provided a place for students to interact with a version of Christian practice that was decidedly liberal under Jens’s leadership, it also presented a faith profile that, in my view, hadn’t been superficially diluted to appeal to a wider audience. Jens and the rest of the teaching staff were serious about their respective relationships with faith and were open to communicating their own convictions and beliefs with both students and me whenever asked. These distinctions, though, as well as others made between personal belief and cultural practice, were intentionally minimized during *Thomasmesse,* or were revealed with constraints in embodied rituals designed to strengthen, rather than divide, the community at Grøndal. “The open door is what you have to have in the folk high school,” Jens told me. “My experience is that it's not such a big difference between Christian youth and secular youth. It was bigger before. I think that's the case in Norway."

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[31] Recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the parable likens faith to seeds sown on various soils.

CONCLUSION.

As I have noted, Christianity in Norway takes on different meanings depending on the context in which it is being invoked. The distinction between articulating Christianity as a traditional practice or a personal faith usually presented itself as an important one for Grøndal's students to make and reflected broader tensions in how Norwegians view Lutheranism as a cultural artifact or expression of *tro* (faith, belief). Despite the strong ties to Lutheranism in both the state and cultural traditions in Norway, many of my research participants said that Norwegians today have a growing scepticism toward Christian belief. It was through *Thomasmesse* rituals, then, that students could "try out" what it "felt" like to engage with Christian practice on an embodied register, in such a way that contributed to an experiential community they regarded as a "safe space." By integrating the individual and the relational into a collective ritual experience (Robbins 2015), students and staff could work toward a shared value of equality produced through embodied practice that transcended the social contracts Gullestad argued Scandinavians generally employ, where difference is minimized for the sake of conformity (1984).

This is not to say that the *Thomasmesse* services did not produce unequal relations, or seamlessly invoked full participation from all students, a circumstance I hope I have adequately described in this chapter. The limits to integrating student difference within a specific faith tradition were apparent, and the reasons why most students felt comfortable participating in them was most likely because of the previous Christian practice they had encountered prior to enrolling at the folk high school. Even so, the *Thomasmesse* community was unique, a social milieu I did not expect to find among a group of students who did not subscribe to being called "Christian" but participated in Christian rituals anyway. As Jens said, "*Thomasmesse* shows Norway's 'secular' youth in religious practice, but how can they be so secular, these kids? I don't know always how to address their needs as post-structural adults, but I do know they're getting something from these services. Otherwise, they wouldn't keep coming." By providing a social space that integrated student difference into the sameness of shared ritual, I argue that what students "got" was the opportunity to embody a cultural and religious practice that is no longer common in Norway, but whose significance remains. In this way, the *Thomasmesse* experience revealed "entanglements" between the Norwegian secular and sacred that emerged not only in the activities of the institutionalized, state-funded folk high school system, but also, within the interior epistemologies of students, many of whom had viewed Christianity in a negative light but found a new way of interacting with Christian practice, and faith, that they valued. As Keilin, a student, said, "In Norway, even though we're secular, we're also a Christian nation as well. Christian values are buried so deep in society, not hidden, that's not what I mean, but a part of society. So maybe I'm a *bit* Christian now that I think of it."

The implications of the role that *Thomasmesse,* and Christian folk high school programming more broadly, will play in shaping Norway's future generations remain to be seen. While the state's involvement in the folk high school's value-making is explicit, in both the funding and governance it provides the folk high school network, the repercussions of *Thomasmesse* on Grøndal's students in their lives after graduation are implied and warrant further study on the influence that folk high school education has on graduates' future civic or public engagements. Even so, the religious participation that emerged in this context reveal the salience of Christianity in Norwegian statecraft and suggest the presence of a "post secularity" that exists in "secular" societies in Europe and elsewhere, where new forms of religious practice are revealing how the secular and the sacred are being reconceived and reproduced (Beaumont 2019; Habermas 2010; Taylor 2011, Rectenwald et al. 2015). My aim with this chapter, then, has been to demonstrate how sacrality and secularity became bound together within the individual, institutional, and state bodies represented in the *Thomasmesse* experience, a circumstance that I suggest reveals Norwegian entanglements with Christianity more broadly. In the case of *Thomasmesse*, tensions that emerged around these categories were neither reinforced nor dismissed completely, but rather, were situated within the greater service of developing a community meant to create equality both within, and *beyond* sameness through embodied ritual practice.

That night after *Thomasmesse* concludes, I push open the wooden doors of the church and watch students disappearing into the cold darkness, the shadows of their bodies engulfed by a landscape of inky sky and muted, falling, snow. Suddenly, dozens of flickering lights flood my vision: they're torches, and students are holding them in front of their bodies, touching the tips together to light them. They smile and laugh, faces warmed by the glow. Once all the torches are lit, the students shuffle forward in unison, a moving body of different beliefs and experiences, a unified procession of lights pricking the darkness. The excitement and joy are palpable: the frost in the air, the fire, the snow, it all feels human and elemental. After the warmth and quiet of *Thomasmesse*, the vastness of the Nordic landscape feels foreboding, but somehow safer within the context of torchlight and laughter, of bodies still close, now providing a refuge against the snow. When we arrive back at the lodge, students begin scaling the slope of the main trail directly behind the building, holding their torches to form a giant heart shape with their bodies on the side of the mountain. Voices call to me. "We need you," they say. There is a hole in the heart; two students beckon for me to join, my light bridging the gap. The teachers and staff are below us, taking pictures and videos to capture the moment. Liv, a student behind me, slips on the ice falling slightly into me. "Just hold my hand if you need to," I say, and she grins and clasps it. The teachers call to us that they've got the photos they're after, and we cheer, making our descent, our bodies in motion breaking the outline of the heart. Some students walk gingerly down the slope, while others slide down seated on the icy snow, holding their torches up in jubilation. Embers from the nearly spent torches have fluttered in burning scraps to the ground, their light mirroring those of the unending stars above. Students continue to laugh and embrace; a couple of them gather some of the torches from students who are making their way inside the lodge, and as they sword fight with them, they cackle, overjoyed with the chance to play with fire. Several of us place our still-burning torches in the snowbanks at the door of the lodge, waiting for them to burn out. We will collect what's left of them tomorrow, their charred soot encrusted in the glassy snow.

CHAPTER 3/

THE BODY IN FORMATION: ACCOMMODATIONS.

Skolen skal ha internat som en integrert del av læringsprogrammet.
(The school shall have dormitories as an integrated part of the teaching program.)
-The Folk High School Act, Section 2[32]

INTRODUCTION.

In this chapter I give a broad overview of the spatial orientations of the folk high school campus, assessing how its dormitory living arrangements were designed to influence student's social formations in such a way that would produce embodied experiences of equality between them. Anthropologists have identified relationships between space and friendship, arguing that kinships outside of "blood ties" can emerge from proximal localities (Froerer 2022), suggesting that sharing space invokes personhood (Course 2010), and assessing how private spaces localize class and gender identities in friendships (Gullestad 1984; 1993). Other scholars have explored how friendship is tied to nation-making (Smith 2014) and political formations (Kaplan 2006) and have suggested that the state is "always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1991: 7). Gullestad has argued that conceptions of home in Norway represent a sharp contrast to society, where "intimacy, privacy, wholeness and the personal" oppose "the bureaucratic, instrumental, efficient and specialized" (1989: 175). Because of Grøndal's status as an institution supported by the state which also provides a "home" for students for the duration of their time living on campus, I take the dormitories as a salient site for exploring how friendships emerged through both institutionalized mechanisms Grøndal implemented in an effort to produce equality beyond sameness, while also assessing how students built their social homes in ways that both reinforced and diverged from school policies. I do this by examining the spatial formations of dormitories on campus, taking a close look at how school policies relating to Grøndal's *stipp* (student-leaders) program and *Botrening*

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[32] https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2002-12-06-72

(life skills) class produced positive social hierarchies built on good forms of difference. Next, I examine how campus rules relating to sex, drugs, and alcohol produced a different sort of community than most of Grøndal's students were used to, coming from social milieus that privileged these sorts of experiences despite the risks associated with them. School rules pertaining to sex, however, reinforced gender normative codes of conduct that circumvented queer students' experiences on campus, a difference that they said was evident while still feeling supported by students and staff. Further themes relating to gender emerged in a "boys only" club that the Football class formed early in the school year, where social relationships among them were forged through secrets, rumors, and ranking girls' bodies in such a way that created a sense of unwanted discomfort for the student body as a whole. Here, I assess how the *stipp* team emerged as a forceful influence, organizing morning assemblies to put a stop to the behavior and interacting with students in ways to encourage that they view each other as equally valuable, irrespective of the differences they displayed in their physical bodies. I conclude by assessing how these interactions (a school value) produced good conflict meant to generate egalitarian relating and write about how these experiences led to reflection and contrition for the students involved with starting the rumors in the first place.

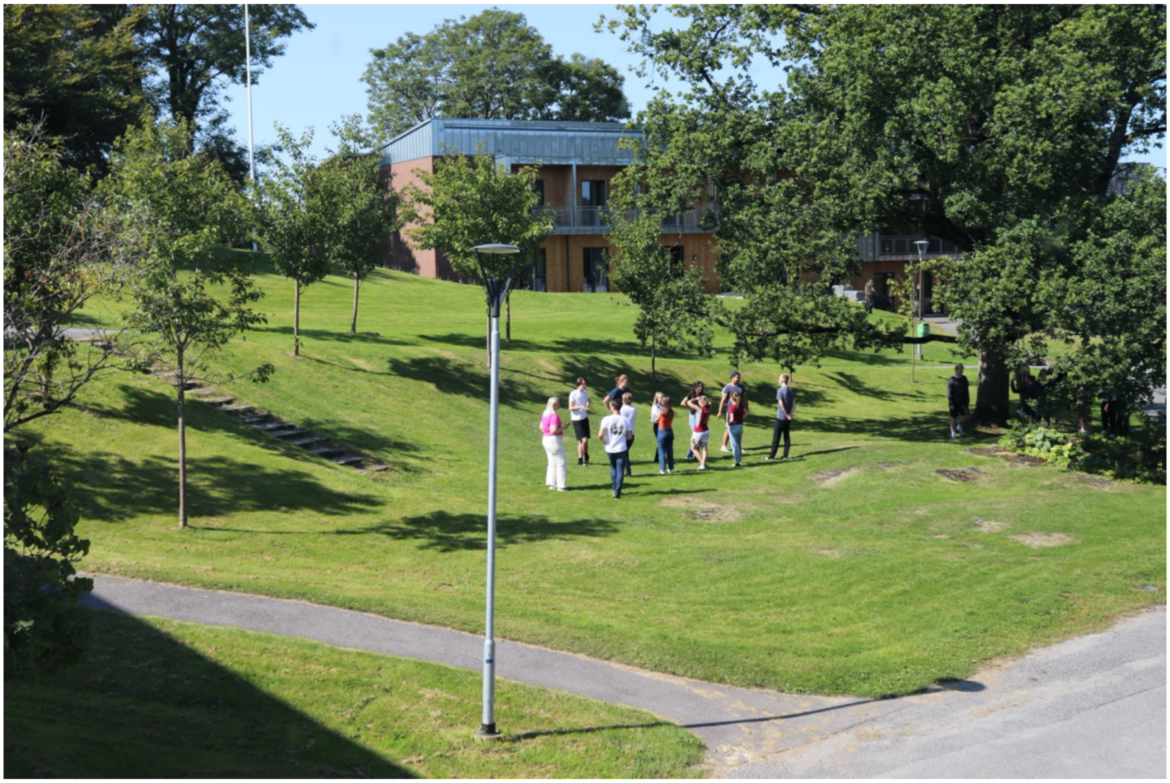

Fig. 6: The view from my apartment window: a stipp leads an ice-breaker activity.

THE CAMPUS.

The Grøndal campus consisted of seven main buildings which were positioned around its central courtyard, featuring majestic trees and manicured lawns. *Skrivargarden*, the school's oldest building, held the *Backpacker* and *A og B* classrooms, a small *finstue* (formal living room), and the *stipp* living quarters on the second floor. To its right was the building I lived in, a brutalist structure that was home to several student corridors, two apartments, the administrative offices, and the *Reiseliv* (Tourism) classroom located in the basement. Next to it lay the school's primary teaching building with classrooms, the student kitchen, and a gym that often doubled as an auditorium where students put on performances and saw concerts when musicians come through. To the left of *Skrivargarden* was the building that housed the cafeteria and the *dagligstue* (main common area) where students had *kristendomsfag* (Christianity teaching) or *stipp*-led activities in the evenings. On the second floor were several corridors of dormitories, above an entry area that featured a pool table and soda vending machine. Directly across the courtyard from *Skrivargarden* was Grøndal's newest building, a massive dormitory facility built in 2019 that featured modern Scandinavian design with rooms that opened directly onto the courtyard or balconies on the second floor. To its left was the small building that housed the groundskeepers' workshop and the intimate chapel, a room barely large enough to hold *Thomasmesse* attenders when the services took place there. To the back of the property beyond the chapel there was an athletics building that featured a large indoor volleyball court with heated sand, as well as a small training room beside it where students often spent time in the evenings, lifting weights and running on treadmills. Originally, Grøndal was an *ungdomsskole* (youth school, or lower secondary school) that opened in 1920 before eventually transitioning to a folk high school in 1974. The oldest building that remained was *Skrivargarden*, which traces its history back to the 1700s when its original structure was built. Prior to being the central building for the *ungdomsskole*, *Skrivargarden* had also served as a sheriff's estate and courthouse. Because the rest of Grøndal's buildings were built in different time periods, replacing others that were no longer structurally suitable to the needs of the growing school, the campus felt to me like a material manifestation of different Scandinavian eras, all somehow contributing to a sense of Norwegianess that had changed over the years but in many ways, remained the same. Of the buildings that held dormitories, incoming students were asked to select which they'd prefer to live in, each with different price points associated with the rooms they chose. The most affordable of these buildings was the one I lived in, first in an otherwise empty corridor when I arrived on campus, and afterwards in an apartment on the upper floor, after my husband, Buddy, and cat, Freyja, joined me a month later. You wouldn't know it from looking at it; outfitted with three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a fireplace, the space was as homey and spacious as any place I've lived in before or since.

Fig. 7: My cat sleeps amidst our mostly thrifted and borrowed furnishings.

In addition to students and *stipps* calling Grøndal their home, several staff members also lived on campus. In the early days of the folk high school, living on the school property was mandatory for teachers, and the remnants of this lineage remained; the apartment that my husband Buddy and I lived in, for example, had once been home to Rakel (*A og B*), Lisa (*Backpacker*), and Martin's (*Reiseliv*) daughter prior to us moving in. As the folk high school and its teaching staff's families expanded, some teachers had moved off campus, but many still lived within its property boundaries. Rakel, for example, was located in the duplex to the rear of our building next to Inga, a kitchen staff member, and Martin and his wife lived in the first-floor apartment of the main teaching building just next to it, as they had done since Martin took his job as the *Reiseliv* (Tourism) teacher thirty years prior. Håvard (*Fotball*) and Marta (*Backpacker*) lived with their two young children in the apartment above Martin, and Jan (*Backpacker*) lived in the apartment next to theirs before he got married over the summer and bought a home not far from campus. Ole, the groundskeeper, lived in an apartment by the athletic facilities, and Annette, Grøndal's director, lived with her family half a mile up the road closest to the fjord.

Living in such close proximity to each other was a lovely experience: Rakel, Marta and I would practice yoga together in one of our apartments some evenings, and Martin and his wife had Buddy and me over for dinner or coffee from time to time and would sometimes send over freshly baked loaves of bread and preserves they had made. Over the course of my fieldwork, I was invited to most teachers' homes, whether on campus or in the surrounding area, and was always welcomed warmly, very much considered a part of the team. As Gullestad noted, in Norway, "Becoming friends often means being allowed to pass through the doorway [of people's homes]… (Gullestad 1993: 134), as inviting visitors inside is usually reserved for family members or otherwise well established relationships. The folk high school, however, presented an alternative form of relating, where welcoming outsiders in was very much a part of the social world the school sought to create. This sense of equality was also extended to me beyond social interactions to those relating to economic arrangements; Annette, who had approved the rental agreement to my apartment, generously gave me the teacher discount rate to reflect my perceived position as an equal educator on campus.[33]

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[33] I *was* a teacher, in some respects, offering lessons supplemental teaching for *Action og Bistand*, *Backpacker*, and *Reiseliv*, but I made my own schedule and didn't have any of the formal responsibilities Grøndal's staffed teachers had. The instruction I gave coincided with my ERASMUS+ traineeship grant agreement.

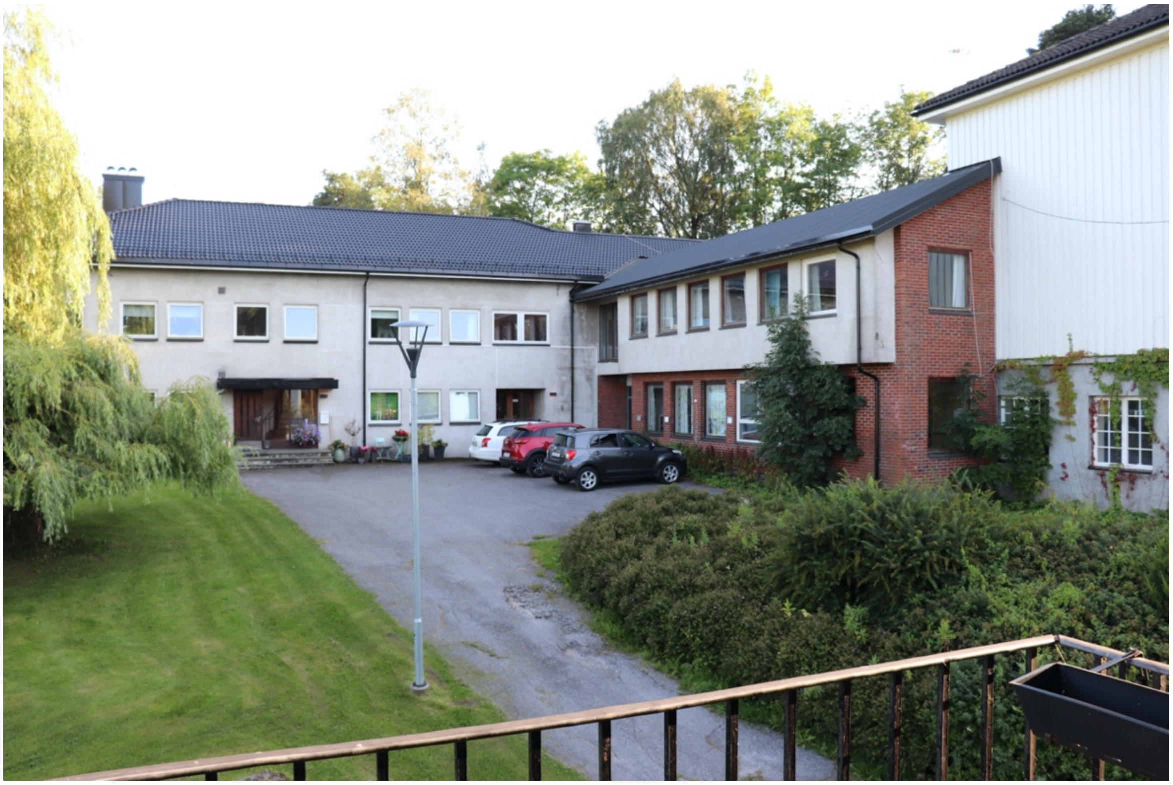

Fig. 8: The view from my balcony: four staff apartments and the main teaching building.

For students, similar social formations grew from their proximal placements. Each of Grøndal's dormitories were further sectioned into mixed-gender corridors, where students were assigned rooms that were same-gender, and were expected to assume a corridor identity together. The reasons for this were twofold: one, to ensure that students had small enough social groups on which to rely on in the early days of the school year, and two, to position each corridor into teams that would compete against each other during *stipp*-organized activities throughout the academic calendar. Corridors usually housed between ten and fifteen students in total, with students paired in rooms with shared bathrooms (two or four students per bathroom, depending on the dormitory). Most students came to Grøndal without having any prior contacts and, as such, roomed with strangers, an important part of folk high school social pedagogy where students were encouraged to "get out of their comfort zones" relationally and get along with people they wouldn't necessarily choose to live with. Students were tasked with sweeping, mopping, and cleaning the hallways and bathrooms in their corridors twice a week during *fellesvask* (common cleaning); this kept their fees down as there wasn't a need to hire cleaning staff and instilled students with a sense of *fellesskap* (community) for their shared homes. Students were also responsible for keeping their common areas clean, as each corridor had a shared living area with simple L-shaped couch, a kitchenette, and other assorted chairs and side tables. The rooms, overall, were simple but comfortable; there were either one or two small beds, depending on whether the room was a single or double, which were usually pushed to the sides of the room, with two small chests of drawers or desks, two wardrobes, and a shared sink and mirror. All of the rooms in each of the corridors had been recently updated with IKEA furniture, with most of the rooms having been re-painted in soft grey or white depending on the building. The newest build, however, was decidedly different from the others: once inside, the elegance of the newly appointed rooms felt especially grand, with tall ceilings, built-in beds and desks, and private balconies that overlooked the quad. This building's common spaces, too, were more elegant than in the other dormitories: they boasted additional dining spaces with long IKEA tables and sleek counters and sinks. Students, or more aptly, their parents, paid more for these accommodations, a distinction that felt somehow obvious and also rarely mentioned.

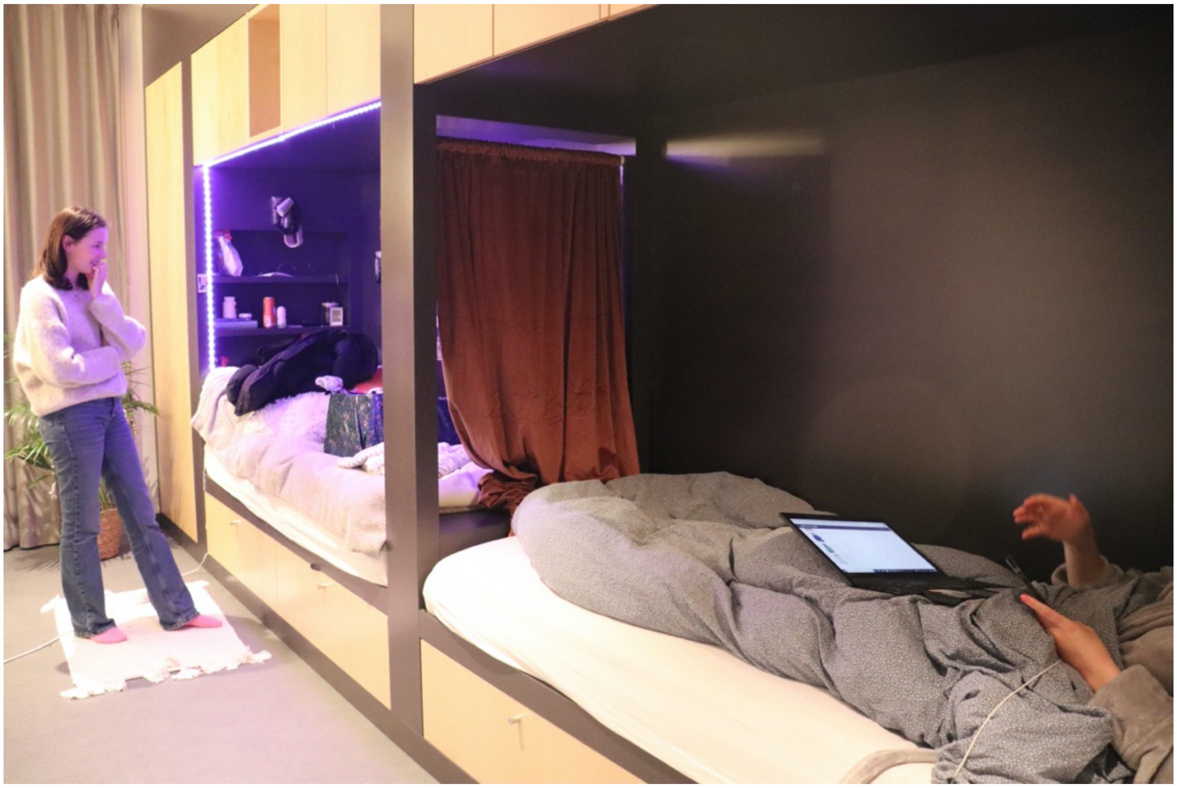

Fig. 9: A Backpacker and an Action og Bistand student in their shared dorm room.

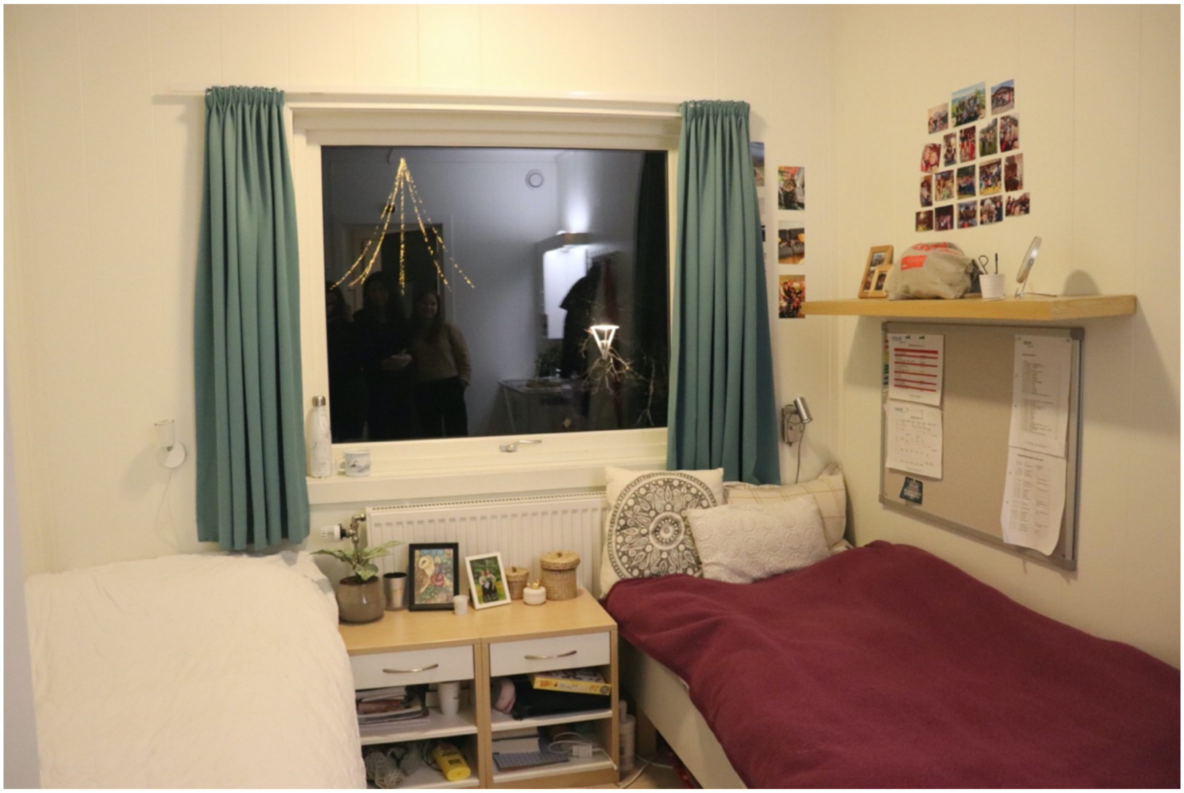

Fig. 10: A more affordable dorm room, home to two Backpacker students.

While *stipps* lived in their own corridor, all of Grøndal's students, irrespective of their programs, dwelled in corridors interspersed together. This included the *Botreningslinje* (life skills course), a program that had been designed to give students with disabilities skills to live on their own after they left Grøndal. Living among other students, Synnøve, one of the course's teachers told me, was critical to both the aims of the program and to the *fellesskap* (community) that happened on Grøndal's campus more broadly. "*Botrening* students are integrated here,"[34] she said. "Many of them need some direction, [and the other] students learn how to communicate with students with different needs." Synnøve said that part of this communication included how students from different classes spoke in group settings. "[They think] 'we can't talk shit about people, we are big brothers and sisters to them and need to watch out for them.'" Synnøve also described how *fritidskontakt* (free time contact), an elective that paired *Botrening* students with students from other classes in a “buddy system” format, was one way her students developed relationships with students outside of their program. Student pairs could choose what they wanted to do together during their Friday morning block: go for a walk, watch a movie, play games, relax. “This is the best year for [my students],” Synnøve said. “Other students are going to university [after Grøndal] but for them, they’re just going to their own apartment and maybe doing manual work. Here they meet a lot of students who are the same age.” Olav, a student who had been in the previous year’s *Botrening* class and had returned to spend an additional year in the *Reiseliv* (Tourism) program, told me that his folk high school experience had been a large departure from his previous schooling. “I was lonely,” he told me. “I was in the special needs classes, *barneskole* (elementary school) all the way to *videregående* (high school). So last year was *Botrening* for me and that was the first year I could try to socialize with other teens. It’s been really good for me here, and I have developed through that. Because of the years before, it has mainly been me and my family, really.” Martin, who was Olav’s teacher in the Tourism class and happened to be his uncle, also described how the *Botrening* program was “incredibly important” for the school and contributed to both the *fellesskap* among students as well as their personal *utvikling* (development). He told me that a previous student, who had become a *stipp,* had initially expressed misgivings about living in the same corridor as a student with disabilities, but after getting to know his *Botrening* neighbor, he “became a very different person. After a while they got to know each other, and they did *fritidskontakt* (free time contact) together. And when the time came for being a *Botrening* assistant, he decided to apply for the job. He got it, and now he’s a special education teacher.”

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[34] *Botrening* students did not live in the same room as other students but were usually paired together in double rooms or were assigned single rooms per their needs and preferences.

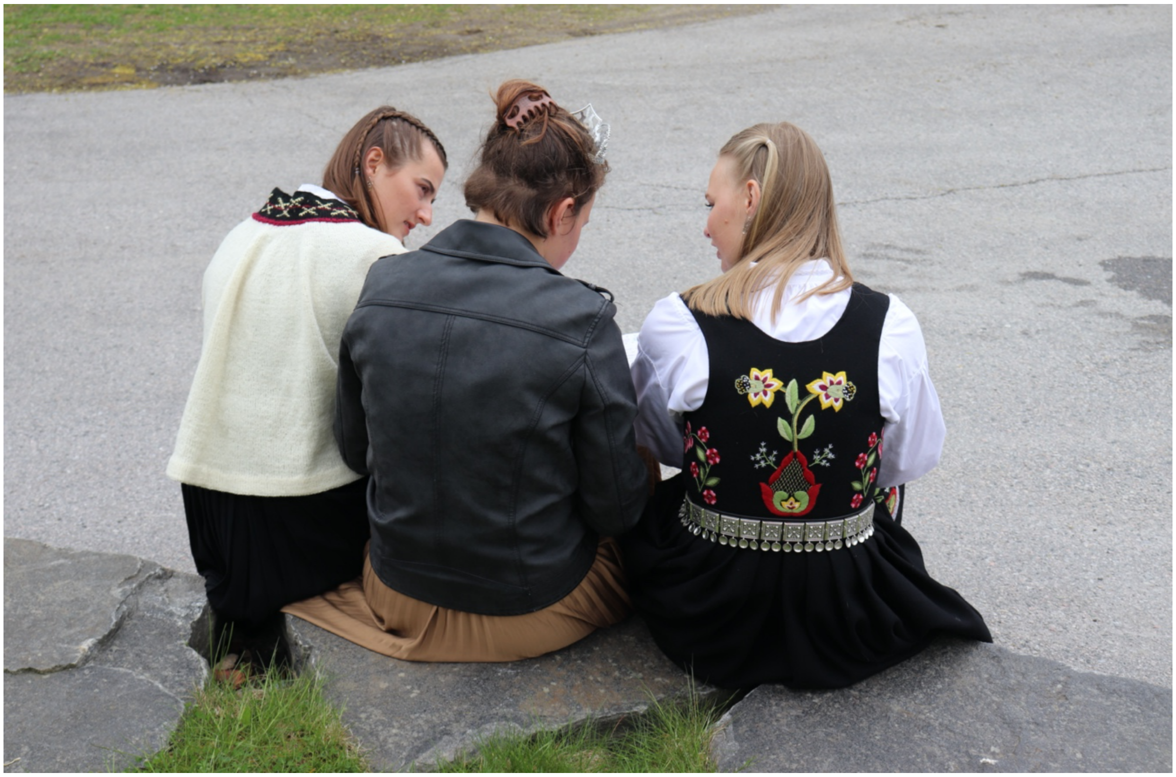

Fig. 11: Two stipps and a Botrening student dressed in their finest at commencement.

The *stipp* group was commonly referred to as a single unit, but there were actually two distinct groups of student-workers among them. While *stipps* were meant to create a positive, inclusive environment for all of Grøndal's students, *Botrening* assistants, commonly referred to as *botass* for short, were three or four students selected to focus primarily on assisting the *Botrening* students with any additional needs they might have in their daily activities. *Botass* lived with the other *stipps* in *Skrivargarden* and participated in most of the other activities the *stipps* planned together but were trained to work with students with disabilities and received an additional payment for the labor that coincided with their added responsibilities. *Botass* often had previous experience working or living with disabled people—Iselin had a brother with Down's syndrome, for example—and each of them worked tirelessly to include the *Botrening* students during Grøndal's various activities. Staff, too, were constantly looking out for the *Botrening* class, discussing individual students' needs, observations they had about them in group settings, and strategizing ways to include them in student life even further.

The *Botrening* program, more than any of the others, represented a wide range of abilities, backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses; because NAV (*Arbeids- og velferdsforvaltningen*, The Norwegian Labor and Welfare Administration) supported these students' room and board fees, the same financial barriers that might inhibit other students from lower-income families were not present for them. Several *Botrening* students were part of families who had sought asylum or refugee status in Norway, and were from Afghanistan, Cambodia, or Sri Lanka. Students' disabilities ranged from autism, to Down's syndrome, to blindness, and the rest of the student body was briefed by Synnøve on each individual student's profile at the start of the school year in order to know how to best interact with each of them. Most *Botrening* students had earlier bedtimes than the other students, for medical, emotional, or psychological reasons, and students were instructed to maintain quiet hours in their corridors to accommodate these needs. While students were happy to stick to quiet hours in theory, adhering to them in practice was a different matter. "I woke up at 2:30 last night and there were like forty people having a party [in the common area]," said Irene, a student. "I sleep with EarPods, but I still hear it. And people are coming out [of their rooms] saying, 'please can you stop?' Inga from *Botrening* said, 'I really need sleep.' It's not very respectful, but it's easy to be loud when people are up late playing games." Students from all programs falling asleep during *morgensamling* (morning assembly) was a common problem, due to their late-night antics; teachers often bemoaned this occurrence but felt there was little they could do to stop it. Without graded coursework, after all, sleeping in class had few tangible repercussions, and students often sacrificed their alertness in class for the socializing they craved after hours. After all, "missing" something that happened in the early hours of folk high school mornings meant students couldn't be equally informed and included, and the "fear of missing out" ("FOMO" as it was often described to me as) usually kept students over-extended and under-rested, a small price to pay for social inclusion.

SAMENESS IN RULES.

School rules represented a realm of value-making that was meant to position sameness and difference among students positively, in the service of generating the paramount value of equality on campus (Dumont 1980). In addition to implementing quiet hours, other campus rules were designed to keep students safe and equally engaged with their daily activities. Sex in dorm rooms was prohibited, for example, and drug and alcohol use were not allowed on campus. Cell phones were expected to be used minimally and were not allowed in classrooms or in the cafeteria during mealtimes. Of these rules, the one I heard discussed the least pertained to sex. I was curious about this—a cohort of nearly one hundred nineteen-year-olds would surely be interested in the topic, I thought—and I wondered if the students were reticent to speak about their own sexual activity with me because they felt that it was best to keep it private, or because many of the students had little sexual experience of their own to speak of. I suspect it was a bit of both, and I am not suggesting that sex didn't happen at all on campus, but I do want to note that folk high school students, in a general sense, are not often characterized as being particularly mature or worldly. Many of the students appeared to me to be quite young, had been perhaps a bit sheltered, and hadn't experienced much outside of their hometowns or families of origin.[35] Some of them had struggled to make friends in high school, and while their more popular peers had been able to establish relationships that made group backpacking trips after graduation possible, for example, many of Grøndal's students had enrolled in the folk high school precisely because they didn't have friends who they could plan similar trips with. I sensed that, while sex did happen from time to time in dorm rooms, it seemed to me that most students were happy to forego it, as engaging in sexual activity could generate a lot of "drama" in such a small cohort and could produce conflict that was best to be avoided.

This is not to say that sex was absent from discussions in folk high school teaching or social life more broadly; it was often talked about in *kristendomsfag* (Christianity class) and *Thomasmesse*, as well as in corridor meetings that were regularly scheduled with staff. Jens, the school priest, often spoke about the "spiritual aspect" of sex in class or during mass, even having Karl read a passage from Song of Solomon out loud during one *Thomasmesse*. "You shouldn't be afraid of sex," he said to the students, after several bursts of good-natured laughter erupted from the crowd while Karl attempted to manage the phrase “your breasts are like fawns” with a straight face. “But it is a question of, what do we do with this? Some people have asked why this book is in the Bible. Of course, love and sex should be a part of what God has created. It’s a wonderful, beautiful part of life! Belief in God is like a relationship, a picture of who humans are at our deepest. In the depths of who I am, there you also find God.” I never heard Jens speak about sex as something that was dangerous or reserved only for marriage, as I have heard other pastors or priests describe it, but the significance of sex in his own life, and to the human experience in general, was something that he did not shy away from discussing with students. “Sexuality is not always the most comfortable topic,” he told me, “but it’s important for [students] to talk about.” He often told the students that he had been with the same woman, his wife, since he was nineteen, and that his capacity for love had only grown through his life-long commitment to one person. It was clear to me that, in his view, sex was a positive attribute of being human, but also something that should be taken seriously, respected. The overarching message was that sex was a significant aspect of the human experience, but that it should be engaged with through boundaries. In other words, sex was not something that staff hoped students would experience through embodied practice during their time as folk high school students, even though most staff knew that it happened from time to time on campus anyway. As such, sex was an outlier from Grøndal’s pedagogy of learning through the body, as it was one of the few realms of human life that was talked about as being valuable in theory, rather than being prescribed experientially. Sexual relationships could rupture the whole of the student body, through breakups and jealousy, and staff hoped students would focus on friendships that created a sense of equality among themselves instead of division.

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[35] Though, I should add, most of them had traveled internationally but usually on family trips or tourist excursions.

This translated into the school rule of not allowing students to stay together in dorm rooms overnight. Irene, who had come from a conservative Christian family, had recently broken this rule with her boyfriend, and had received a text message from Mina, Grøndal’s *husmor*,[36] about scheduling a meeting with her to talk about it. "I'm nervous about it," she told me. "It's not a good enough reason to kick us out, I've heard. I get why, because of safety and everything, they need to know where you're at." She told me that her boyfriend's roommate also had a girlfriend and that the four of them had "gotten really close" through their regular sleepovers. "We have sex when they're asleep," she told me. "And we've gotten better at finding alone time." I didn't often speak with teachers about students' sex lives, but Lisa, a *Backpacker* teacher, told me that she knew students did have sex from time to time. "They don't talk about it with me much," she said, "and when it comes up in conversation there's a lot of laughing and it's *kleint* (cringeworthy). 'You have roommates!' They talk about Corridor 8," she said to me. "I think that's your answer." Corridor 8, I should note, was the empty corridor directly next to my apartment. I never heard any noise of any kind coming through the walls, and students in Corridor 7 said they thought the rumors about sex happening there were more common than any actual encounters, but it became clear to me that if students *wanted* to find places to have sex on campus, they could. "We are lucky that we have Corridor 8," said Elsa, "so if you really needed it, it's open. But the chess boys are allowed to use the rooms to study chess. Nothing has happened there that I know of. I hear about it happening in the other corridors." Students also said that they found "alone time" for masturbation, when their roommates were on trips or otherwise occupied, or simply used the toilets or showers for these activities instead.

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[36] *Husmor*, directly translated, means “house mother” and refers to the staff member responsible for keeping the dormitories functioning well. The name has been updated to be more gender-neutral (*internatleder*- dormitory leader) but folk high schools have a longstanding tradition of having *husmødre* (house mothers) and the name is still often used in informal conversations.

Sexual activity and romantic relationships were mostly spoken about in heteronormative terms. During the duration of my fieldwork, I only spoke with two students who openly identified as queer; the first, Xavier, who said he was gay, and the second, Margrethe, who said she was pansexual; both became *stipps* the academic year after I left Grøndal. This is not to say that there weren't other queer students, as Margrethe said that she thought that there were others who weren't "out" yet but having so few self-identifying LGBTQIA+ students on campus surprised both of us. She speculated that Grøndal's overarching gender profile coincided with its course offerings; "It's a sports school," she said. "It's not that many gay people playing football."[37] She paused. "But handball is really a lesbian sport. Even though you shouldn't put sexuality on sports." Margrethe had attended a theater- and media-based high school and was used to having trans, non-binary and queer classmates. When she first arrived at Grøndal, she had affixed pride flags on the balcony to her room in Corridor 4, overlooking the quad to provide a visible marker of her identity to the rest of the student body. "We ended up buying a whole pack," she said. "[Corridor 4] wanted to support me. It's not just me that's in the [LGBTQIA+] community in that hallway.[38] It's nice for other people to see and support us, too." Even though her queerness was made visible, and generally welcomed by teachers and students alike, most of Grøndal's gendered activities were conceived through a heteronormative lens. Students were referred to as "boys" and "girls" (or sometimes "men" and "ladies") during *Thomasmasse's* liturgy, for example, and were asked to read passages of scripture in call and response to each other per these prescribed gendered qualifiers.[39] Skits during mass also sometimes employed heteronormative ideas of love and relationships, where students were paired as "girlfriends" and "boyfriends" to demonstrate appropriate forms of romantic relating, usually centered around themes of listening, care, and respect. Other activities, like the annual, *stipp*-sponsored *måneskinnstur* (moonlit walk) meant to raise funds for *Prosjekt: Moldova* (Project: Moldova)[40] by having students bid on each other, or other couples, to go on "dates" together, were also conducted under heteronormative expectations. "I've said maybe we should pair girls," said Margrethe, "and the response was, 'that would be awkward.' I wouldn't dare put myself with someone else. I don't want other people to be uncomfortable, even though that’s kind of bad. Everyone expects you to be straight.” Even though queerness was by and large accepted on campus, it was not often represented by staff in teaching or in formal events which meant that queer students, while welcomed despite their difference, were not always made to feel as comfortable as straight students were. Even so, Margrethe expressed feeling satisfied with the way sexuality and gender were handled more broadly at Grøndal, especially in the school’s religious contexts. “I was nervous coming here, but Jens is an amazing person,” she said. “He’s very modern and that’s what you have to be if you actually want to reach a big group of people.”

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[37] Grøndal's sports programs changed between the two academic years I conducted my fieldwork, but they included *fotball* (soccer), *håndball* (handball) and *Ball and Games* (name in English, a mixed-sport class) and some described *Action og Bistand* (Action and Aid) as a sports-oriented class. I sometimes refer to soccer students as "footballers" and handball students as "handballers," in part because students and staff often did, and in part for clarity's sake.

[38] Xavier also lived in Corridor 4.

[39] If there had been nonbinary students on campus, I believe that Jens would have modified this practice, as he often spoke about sex and gender in progressive terms, but as there weren't the practice remained.

[40] *Prosjekt: Moldova* was one of Grøndal's school-wide development projects designed to raise funds for community centers in Moldova.

Abstaining from alcohol also often took on a religious dimension for students, as Grøndal, like most Christian folk high schools, was a dry campus. This meant that students were not permitted to have alcohol in their dorm rooms and were not supposed to drink in bars in town when they left campus on the weekends. Most students expressed being initially skeptical of these rules prior to arriving at Grøndal, but every student I spoke with said they eventually came to support the no-alcohol policy. Some said that, prior to enrolling, they understood that Grøndal’s Christian profile meant that alcohol would not be allowed on campus, as many students associated abstaining from alcohol with Christian practice. This comes as no surprise, as Norwegian evangelical groups were instrumental in Norway’s temperance movements in the 1920s (Johansen 2013) and abstaining from alcohol is still associated with more conservative Christianity in Norway today (Spein et al. 2013). While Irene had not valued Grøndal’s rules pertaining to sexual activity, she did appreciate the no-alcohol policy, saying it made her feel “safe.” “My sister went to Grøndal,” she told me, “and for her and my mom, when they were looking at schools, it was really important that it would be a Christian school. I felt the same way; here you’re not allowed to drink, and they are right about people building stronger connections without alcohol.” Irene said that she had originally started drinking in high school to overcome her shyness in social settings and had used alcohol to have an excuse to be who she really was. “But when people got to know me here,” she said, “they said, ‘you don’t need alcohol, you’re crazy enough without it!’” Vida said that folk high schools who did allow drinking had reputations for having significant drinking cultures. “We were on a trip, and we met students from a secular folk high school who said there is a lot more drama and *dårlig stemning* (bad vibes) because of the drinking." Rakel told me that Grøndal's decision to be a completely dry campus was intentional; drinking alcohol had been allowed fifteen or so years prior when she was a student herself, and that while it hadn't presented a problem at the time, she noticed a change when she started her post as a teacher. "Every Saturday the school was empty," she said. "Everyone was in the bars in town. Students were happier with more rules [after alcohol was banned]." Karl and Vida expressed similar relationships with Grøndal's no-alcohol policy. They told me that folk high school life really begins after midnight, as I have mentioned, when students start to engage in activities like pillow fights, water fights, and informal wrestling matches. "I have a theory about this," said Karl. "We're so used to having alcohol to loosen the mood, but when we get overtired it's a bit the same [as drinking] and that's a big way to open up." He reminded me that students were arriving on campus a few months after *russetiden,* and as such, had been "pretty much drunk for three months straight" prior.

Russetiden is the time during Norwegian high school students' final spring semester when they celebrate their upcoming graduations. A *russ*, or graduate, will spend the month of May engaging in activities with other *russ* that usually centralize around heavy drinking and partying. Students generally wear matching-colored overalls and hats, and often purchase vehicles that they convert into *russbiler* (*russ* cars) or *russebusser* (*russ* busses) to transport their friend groups to various *russ* activities. Patrick Lie Andersen has noted that *russ* reinforces class differences in Norwegian youth, as the costs associated with *russ* activities are expensive and exclude students who can't afford them. In addition to the socioeconomic inequalities that come to the fore during *russetiden,* critics like Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre have argued that the activities foment social exclusion, peer pressure, and over-consumption, and as such, should have less of a sway in Norwegian youth culture.[41] Grøndal's students often told me that they agreed, and were glad that they now had opportunities for creating friendships together on campus without the use of alcohol. Old habits had died hard for Karl, though, and at the start of the school year, he and several other boys had taken to sneaking out to drink together in the woods just off campus. “It was really fun, and we really connected,” he said. “But when I think about it in hindsight, it probably would have been just as fun without alcohol.” Vida suggested that alcohol had been a way for the boys to bond with each other and Karl agreed. After staff had caught wind of the clandestine drinking happening, though, the boys in question were assigned extra kitchen duty shifts as punishment. “I think this is learning for life,” Karl said, referencing Grundtvig’s life-long learning pedagogical model. “Especially for me. I came from an environment where there’s a lot of drinking and drugs, and that might actually be a big reason why I applied here. I wanted friends who I could play football or volleyball with together and not just drink all the time. When I go home now and meet the boys, I try to influence them and say, ‘Do we have to bring alcohol? We can just play volleyball or go swimming without it.’ They will probably bring it anyway, but I think I influence them a little bit.”

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[41] https://www.oslomet.no/en/research/featured-research/norwegian-graduation-celebration-bonds-divides

Since the majority of Grøndal’s students did not attempt to drink or consume drugs on campus, it soon became socially unacceptable for students who did. In this way, the social dynamic shifted for students coming from high school and *russetiden (russ* time) completely; drinking alcohol was no longer desirable and students who still chose to do so made them different in a way that was not socially favorable. Recalling Dumont’s (1986) work on how sub-values can be reversed in certain value formations, Grøndal’s rules on alcohol use mobilized difference for the greater good of all its students, as they positioned sobriety as an avenue for equality to be realized despite individual students’ views on alcohol use. The Sunday evening that I arrived on campus in early January to begin my fieldwork, Annette and Jens were late to meet me because they had been engaged in a lengthy meeting with a student whom they had decided to expel due to his drug distribution on campus. He had been given a second chance already, and staff had come to the difficult decision that his presence on campus was hindering the rest of the student body’s ability to create a safe *fellesskap* (community) together. Vida said that after he left, the school environment overall improved, despite how well-loved this student had been to many of his peers. “I don’t think he knew how influential he was,” she said. “I think he wanted to have the attention." Karl said that even though he had been close friends with this student and considered him in many ways a positive presence on campus, he understood that Grøndal wasn't equipped to give him the level of assistance he needed. "I really wanted him to stay," he said. "But he struggled a lot with drugs and abuse in the family. It was better for him to find help elsewhere." It struck me how two influential boys, Karl and this other student, had been on similar trajectories at the start of their folk high school years, but when staff intervention happened, they had chosen entirely different ways forward. In the end, Karl displayed an openness to adapting his behavior to the folk high school values and was ultimately awarded a *stipp* role for his *utvikling* (development), among other reasons, while the other student was asked to leave because of his unwillingness, or inability, to consider the social whole in the same way. As such, student difference when it came to how alcohol was engaged with individually was forfeited for the safety of the whole community, and the school's decision to ban alcohol entirely gave students the ability to adhere to the rules as a matter of course. In other words, the absence of alcohol in individual students' bodies translated to a transformation within the student body as a whole, where relationships were made in different, safer, and more wholesome ways without it.

Because my fieldwork spanned the second half of one academic year and the first half of the next, I was able to observe how students, like Karl, assumed their roles as *stipps* and *botass*. Trygve described his transition this way: "I can see myself in [the students]," he said. "I grew so much as a student last year, and I hope they experience that kind of growth in the same way." Out of all the data I collected during my fieldwork, I have the most from students who became *stipps*, which I believe to be the case for several reasons. The first is that, apart from the teachers, I spent the most time with them; for the rest of my student research participants, I only knew them for one semester of an academic year. Secondly, these students—Trygve, Vida, Karl—were the type of students who wanted to participate in all of the aspects of Grøndal's social life, which came to include interacting with me. Trygve, for example, approached me one evening after *Thomasmesse*, eager to ask me how I felt the service went. Vida and I met during a rehearsal for the school musical, after she had performed a riotous rendition of *Chicago*'s cell-block tango, rewritten to reflect the students' experience with pandemic life. Karl made contact with me, directly, when he accidentally hit me with a snowball during a class snowball fight, but the common thread between these three key research participants remained the same: they wanted to engage, to share, to be *på* (on). They were not perfect and knew what their faults were, but they were committed to moving forward as a team of student exemplars anyway, ever willing to reach out, to grow. In the section that follows, I describe the role *stipps* and *botass* had in both encouraging inclusion and participation, but also in ensuring that any forms of inequality that emerged on campus were discouraged through social mechanisms both they and Grøndal's staff put into play.

DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNITY.

Both the *stipps* and *botass* were responsible for making sure that all students were included and considered, irrespective of their perceived differences. The week the incoming *stipp* team moved into *Skrivargarden*, just prior to the rest of the students' arrivals, they led an all-staff meeting where they presented their goals for the upcoming academic school year. After performing the new school dance they had choreographed together in simple, wholesome dance moves to the song "We are Young,"[42] Trygve stated, slightly out of breath, "Our mission: to create the best year for *all* students." Hilde spoke next. "We want to have a good school atmosphere and to include everyone, which we have designed in our open activities. There is something for everyone." An important part of including everyone on campus meant that students should be treated equally but also would be invited to participate in a range of activities suited to their own needs and interests. Karl said, "We want students to know that it's okay if they might rather sit and knit, they are allowed to do that, too. Not just play sports all the time." While the *stipp* team intended to be cognizant of student difference and individual preference, they also wanted to ensure that students were actively encouraged to participate. "We want to encourage them to try things," said Bea. "Sports, being on stage. Not to push too hard, of course, but to make sure that everyone is included. The metaphor is of a volleyball being raised over the net, that everyone can be lifted in that way."

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[42] "We Are Young" Fun. 2012.

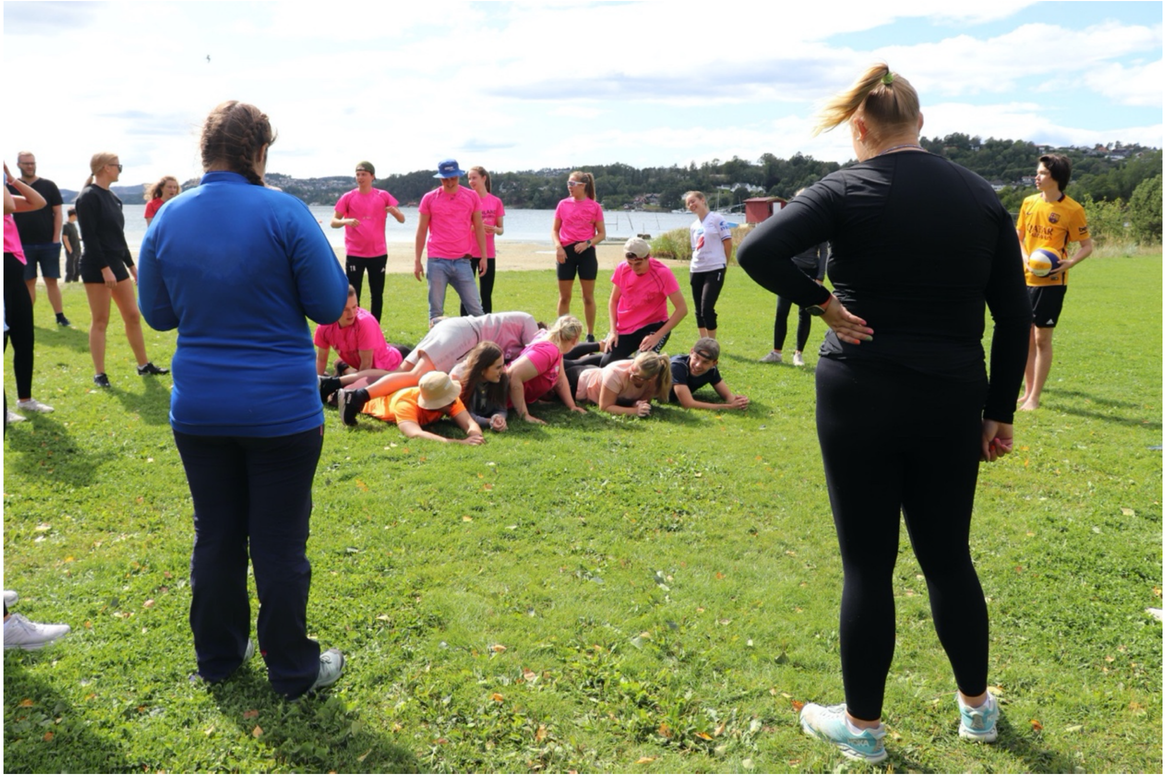

Fig. 12: The stipp team leads a very embodied student activity.

It's important to note that members of the *stipp* team were chosen, in part, because of the ways they displayed difference to that of their peers. Usually, my research participants were hesitant to place people in positions higher than themselves unless they found them inspirational or motivational, qualities that *stipps* necessarily embodied in order to be selected for their roles. The *stipp* team model had been developed by Grøndal's staff several years prior, in an effort to actively create a social order based on a good form of hierarchy (Haynes & Hickel 2018) where regular students could view the *stipps* as role models for the kind of person Grøndal hoped students could become, and the sorts of social groups students should contribute to. Rather than allowing students to make their own hierarchies based on their own perceptions of what constituted favorable qualities within the student body, Grøndal's staff assigned social power to the *stipps* precisely because they had proven themselves worthy of receiving it through their exemplary behavior. In this way, the *stipp* team was an integral social mechanism for Grøndal's school *fellesskap* (community), a carefully curated aspect of how the folk high school negotiated student hierarchy within an otherwise egalitarian framework.

Differences were also valued among the individuals on the *stipp* team, both between themselves and by school staff. Selecting a team of students that could complement each other's strengths and weaknesses was important to Annette, Grøndal's director, and the other teachers on *stipendiatrådet* (the *stipp* committee) and observing potential *stipps* in myriad social milieus on campus was a part of the selection process. At the end of the first school year I was a part of, Annette had even asked me about my thoughts on the students who had been short-listed to make the team prior to their selection; it was clear to me that she took the formation of the team very seriously and was open to as many viewpoints of the students in question as possible. She, Rakel and Martin, the *stipp* committee, would sometimes disagree about potential *stipp* nominees, but Annette said that she was open to the idea of making mistakes in their selections. "Sometimes you just have to move forward and see what happens," she told me. "They can always work out!" The *stipp* committee met with the *stipp* team weekly to discuss any issues that may have arisen, and to continue giving *veiledning* (guidance, mentorship) and support to them both as a team and as individual leaders. The *stipp* team themselves also acknowledged their own differences in relation to the equality they hoped to achieve as a team. In the presentation the *stipp* team gave to the staff that I mentioned earlier, Ingrid said, "we are a group that needs to be heard, all of us. We need to respect each other, like if someone is exhausted or wants to go to bed early. We are different and have different needs." Even within these differences, though, Ingrid said that she hoped the *stipp* team would remain a social whole, at times separate from the rest of the students. "[It's important not to] tell others about what is happening inside our group. That way we can feel safe in our *fellesskap* (community) together." Trygve told me that he hoped the kind of equality the *stipp* team had together would translate to the rest of the school community. "I feel like we're all equal in the *stipp* group. I hope so. Everyone has different strengths and attributes. We have at least one person in the group who can cover everything we need [through different strengths]. I think that was a criteria for picking us."

In other ways, the *stipp* team hoped to be integrated with the incoming students that would become a part of Grøndal's community. "We're trying to shake some things up," said Karl, when I asked him if the team planned to follow the previous year's *stipp* team formula. "The *stipps* last year were not a part of the students," he said. "They were over us. We want to be more on the ground level with the students," he said. "How will you do that?' I asked. "Being in their corridors, for sure," he said. "Just being around, being available, that's important. Participating in what they're doing." In the staff meeting, Bea also said that it was important to "*heie* (cheer for, support)" everyone equally during their *stipp*-organized activities, like volleyball tournaments, dance parties in the auditorium, and "Funky Fridays," where students would dress up in costumes each week and compete in quizzes and games in the *dagligstue* (main common area). "We want to make sure we include ourselves, too, to be a part of the gang," she said. "That every student is seen. To be spread around during meals, not just sit together. To make sure that cliques don't form." Karl also said that the team planned to have a more "open" *stipp* corridor than it had been previously, where students could feel actively encouraged to have more interactions with *stipps* in their dormitory area. "We also want to be available for private chats after morning assemblies in classrooms if students want to meet," he said. "That's a better way to have *fellesskap* (community)*,* we think." The staff had responded to the *stipps*' presentation favorably, enthusiastically supporting their aims in achieving student inclusion. Helga, the handball teacher, said, "I liked very much what you said about breaking up the group during meals, inviting students to sit with you rather than having a large group of you in the middle. I'm glad you've thought about this!" Torgeir, a *Botrening* teacher, added, "I'm glad that you talked about *Botrening* when you talked about including everyone. That's better for the *fellesskap* (community) of the whole school." Mina, the *husmor* (dormitory leader) said that she appreciated how the *stipps* had brainstormed "concrete ways of including everyone. That you have thoughts about *how* students can be included and then you can experiment with that, take an account of what works and what doesn't work so well. It'll likely be different for different students." While the *stipps* had been fully supported by staff in their plans and expressed feeling as prepared as they could be to meet the new students when they arrived a week later, I don't believe any of them expected the challenges thar would come to the fore early on in their new roles. In the section that follows, I assess how the *stipp* team worked with staff, each other, and Grøndal's new students to ensure that their *fellesskap* (community) would remain intact despite the factions they observed forming in the social structures of the incoming student body.

BAD HIERARCHIES: RUMORS AND RANKINGS.

Trygve was the *stipp* who first alerted me to the formation of *Knark*. One day in late September, as I was joining the *Reiseliv* (Tourism) and *Sjakk* (Chess) classes on their way to a hike not far from school, he asked me if I had heard about the rumors that had come to light in recent days. I hadn't, and he described to me the situation: "[The *stipps*] don't know exactly the story but rumors have been spread about things that are untrue." He described to me how *Knark*, the name of a secret boys-only club, had formed in recent weeks, when football students started holding informal meetings together on Saturday nights, eating hotdogs and hanging out at the local gas station down the road. "*Knark* is slang for drugs," he told me. "I'm not really sure why they decided to call it that." *Knark* had actually started some years ago, I learned, when the football boys decided they wanted a social space they could meet without girls and had become a bit of a Grøndal tradition. Trygve described how this year's *Knark* meetings had been innocuous at the start, but that the content of their discussions had taken on a less positive tone as time went on. "[They started talking about] things we thought we were done with when we were fourteen," he said. "Rating and ranking girls, it's so childish."

The football boys had each selected their "top three hottest" girls on campus, Irene told me, but it wasn't "just a list," she said. "They also compare the girls. 'She has a big butt,' for example. And I've heard people don't like my dialect, they say it's ugly." There was some confusion over who had or hadn't made individual footballers' "top hottest" lists; Irene said that she was rumored to have made several of them, despite her *sørlandsk* (southern Norwegian) dialect, but also put forth other names as possible contenders. Kristine, a *Backpacker* student who became a *stipp* after I completed my fieldwork, was also rumored to be on some of the lists; she had even asked some of the footballers, many of whom she said were her friends, how the ratings had been formulated but they refused to tell her. “To be honest I don’t care that the boys meet for *Knark*,” she said, “It’s nice for them, to have their own place. Something very important for boys our age is *guttastemning* (boy vibes).” Irene agreed. “The boys also talk about feelings, too. It’s not just bad things.” While both girls believed that gendered meetings could be positive for the footballers, both expressed discomfort over the kinds of discussions they had been rumored to have been engaging in. “The things they’ve said are not okay,” said Kristine. “I don’t really know what goes on, but the comments can be like, ‘Elise without the beard and Elise with the beard’ and I think that’s really bad.” For both Kristine and Irene, the rumor that they had made it onto several of “top hottest” lists was one that caused an uncomfortable sense of achievement, as being made to stand out was not a desired position, even if the attention was based on a perceived victory. When I asked Kristine if making lists made her feel awesome or terrible, she said, “I feel awesome *and* terrible. It is a compliment, but the system and the ratings, I don’t get it.”

While I, too, didn’t fully “get” the system, I can say from my subjective view that most of *Knark*’s rankings had little factual merit. “Elise with a beard,” for example, did not have more than what I would describe as a bit of peach fuzz on her cheeks, and otherwise adhered to the beauty standards Grøndal’s students seemed to favor: slim, blonde, and athletic. In other words, there was very little about Elise’s physical appearance that made her stand out from the rest of her peers, and her alleged difference was one that seemed overblown if not altogether fabricated. It appeared to me as an outsider that a great deal of the effort put into *Knark*’s rankings was more to encourage a bit of humor to circulate within the football team, rather than cause any real damage to occur outside the group. At a certain point a sense of absurdity took over, negating any risk of what I perceived to be serious hierarchization or bullying. Even so, Kristine told me that *Knark* rumors had influenced the entire school, as students, particularly the girls, were generally anxious about it and had “even been afraid of talking to the boys.” Kristine told me that in an effort to level the playing field, the girls had made their own group called *Knirk*, where they would sit together in one of the corridor common areas and chat about the boys together to develop what they called "*puppastemning* (slang for "breast vibes," a play on words echoing *guttastemning*, "boy vibes"). Unlike *Knark*, where only the Football boys were included, *Knirk* had extended an open invite for all the girls on campus in an effort to achieve more equality than the boys had done, while still holding to the necessity of it being reserved for "girls only." Kristine told me that the *Knirk* group wasn't interested in ranking the boys in the same way they themselves had been ranked. "We talked about it but thought, 'we don't like when they do it to us, so we don't want to do it to them.' We do it in smaller groups [anyway], not a ranking, but [asking] 'who are you interested in?'" The distinction between the boys' ranking and expressing real romantic interest in potential partners was an important one for Kristine to make. "A lot of the guys are very childish, but I think they talk about their feelings for girls, too. A lot of guys are ranking without even talking to them!" She paused, then said to me, "if you're able to infiltrate *Knark*, you're doing a very good job."

In the end, I wasn't able to gain access to *Knark*, but I was able to have a series of conversations with the footballer who had been instrumental in forming the group in the first place. Rune told me that originally, the class had simply wanted to have some time alone apart from the rest of the school. "That was our social time," he said. "The only thing we do together is play football. We went down to Circle K [the gas station] to talk shit. We talked about what happened at school that day." Rune said that he had initially started the discussions on Grøndal's girls with his fellow footballers in an effort to break the ice. "Everyone was scared to say stuff, so I just started saying things. Often to get people to talk, you throw in a juicy question, and they start talking. After, we connected easier." Rune told me that the rankings were never meant to be distributed to the rest of the school community, but that one of the footballers, who had himself sworn to a vow of secrecy, had been "worn down" by a girl he had a crush on and, in an effort to impress her, revealed the content of *Knark* discussions. "We trusted each other," said Rune. "My top three came out and that got blown out of proportion. I had a real crush on one of them. We didn't expect it would get out." Rune assured me that the rankings were not based on whom the footballers "wanted to have sex with. I can promise my life on that," he said. "We talked about how women look, and how their asses look. It's normal, girls do it, too. It's more accepted when girls talk about boys that way. It's a messed-up situation. 'Elise has a beard,' we can't say that. It unfortunately got back to her. I think she has a very strong character. It's very sad to hear it got to her. Everything gets out here. It wasn't just me; it was all of us together. Everyone is at fault."

The formation and perpetuation of these rumors initially led me to believe that they had come from a place of student boredom, where young people who were largely constrained to the goings-on of the parameters of Grøndal's campus were hungry for any insider information about its social forms. I came to discover that it was more than just boredom, though, that fueled these rumors; there was also a sense of trust established through sharing them, a special sort of relating that was predicated on keeping the information within the confines of specific social ties (see Bergmann 1993; Kirsch 2002; Raj 2019). Ingrid put it this way: "When [the boys] go to Circle K just to talk about everyone and then they come back to school like everything is normal, it makes groups of those who know and those who don't." Students wanted to be privy to what happened in *Knark* because doing so would make them valuable, equal; new pieces of insider information presented themselves as social currency for students eager to achieve sameness on their perceived social pecking order. This wasn't the case for all students, though; I was told that most of the *Botrening* students hadn't been made aware of what was happening, and that the *Sjakk* class didn't care about it in the first place, preoccupied as they were with improving their chess scores.

Per my knowledge, the *Botrening* students were not ranked in the same way as the rest of the student body. I don't know if the footballers had discussed ranking them and agreed that it was inappropriate, or if there was a tacit understanding that remarking on their differences would be a step too far. I suspect that it was the latter, as I never heard students speak negatively about any *Botrening* students, but I have no way of knowing. I was never at *Knark*. Treating the *Botrening* students differently, though, was perhaps not as kind a gesture as the footballers might have thought it would be; after all, *Botrening* students wanted to be integrated into the social atmosphere, and many of them had girlfriends or boyfriends so they certainly had a vested interest in romantic happenings on campus. It struck me as noteworthy that certain behavior that was not acceptable in relation to the *Botrening s*tudents was alternatively permissible to be put forth on the rest of Grøndal's student body. In other words, attention placed on perceived student difference had its limits.

GOOD HIERARCHIES: STIPP LEADERSHIP.

Trygve said that as soon as he and the other *stipps* caught wind of *Knark* they knew that had to put a stop to it. "It makes a bad influence on the atmosphere, [playing on] insecurities in people. People may have a background you don't know about. We don't want to have gossip. We feel like we are growing and evolving as people, and we don't want to stay twelve years old forever. It's a year for growth, so starting off this way doesn't mean they'll be like this all year. You have to give them time to grow." In an effort to curb the effects of *Knark* on the student body, Trygve and the *stipp* team had asked Grøndal's staff if they could address the issue in a morning assembly right away. "We had the [assembly] and explained to the students how we wanted the environment at the school to be and it seemed like everyone understood what we were trying to say, that we have to see a change." He said that staff had been appreciative of the initiative the *stipps* had taken, especially because they hadn't been aware of what was happening at *Knark* in the first place. "Annette said it was great what we did, and she agreed 100 percent. And Rakel also backed us up really well. We said we wanted her to join because everyone feels like she's respected and is a clear and great speaker. She was proud of us, that we decided we didn't want the atmosphere to be like this, and we chose to do something about it." Trygve said that students, too, were grateful for the assembly. "We saw in the faces of the students, it felt like they paid attention and really tried to understand. We had some great responses to the meeting; many students thanked us for taking it up." I said that I was surprised to hear that the students had been engaging in this kind of activity, considering they appeared so polite and kind in my interactions with them. "We thought so as well, that they were sweet angels," Trygve said. "And we said it yesterday in the meeting, 'we have such good thoughts about you,' that's what we started and ended the meeting saying. We won't drag on about this forever; if it's not fixed, we'll come back to it, but if the students change themselves then we'll forget it and move on." Trygve said that he believed staff would never have known that any of this was happening, had it not been for the *stipps* alerting them to it. Kristine expressed similar sentiments. "A lot happens in the corridors and rooms," she told me. "And a lot happens after hours."

While the *stipps* felt that their formal admonishment of *Knark* during their scheduled morning assembly had been received favorably by the student body, Vida did not feel her influence was welcomed in the same way. In an informal interaction she had with *Knirk* members one evening, she told me she said to the group, "'I don't think it's okay if you are saying what you think the guys are talking about.' And then they stopped [talking] and it was awkward silence. 40 girls were there, just staring at me." She told me that after she'd left the meeting, a student delivered an anonymous message to the *stipp* suggestion box about her, stating, 'we think you're too *ovenfra-og-ned* (top-down).' That made me very sad and angry," she said. "If it wasn't anonymous, I could have done something with it. But I'm a staff member and I think I have to say it [if there's a problem]." Most of research participants, however, told me regularly during my fieldwork that they "hated" conflicts and would do anything in their power to avoid it. "Conflict is the worst for Norwegians," said Karl. "We can't talk." This was one reason why rumors spread, he speculated. "It's inevitable," he said. "It's just what people do. It's really hard to break out of that." In my view, my research participants primarily avoided conflict in an effort to minimize difference. By employing social techniques to appear the same, at least on the surface, a sense of order was maintained despite any emotional turmoil that may have been happening internally.

Handling conflict well was a central aim of the *stipp* team, though, and one area of growth Trygve said he was looking forward to developing further. "I'm excited to see how I'll grow as a person. How I am in a group, working together as a team. You can't just think about yourself and your own expectations. You have to make everything work as a group. There will be problems and conflicts, but you don't want to intentionally make them. You should be forward thinking." Bea also said that conflicts within the *stipp* group should be handled "directly," rather than “going to others. That makes the problems even larger.” Because of the intentionality of how the *stipps* chose to develop good conflict within their team, a social format was put into place for the rest of the student body to observe how conflict could invite students to achieve a deeper sense of equality, and respect, despite their differences. This, in turn, could curtail rumors from spreading, as students would be emboldened to engage with interpersonal conflicts that could result in social repair instead of rupture. By displaying how a social group could achieve equality through the differences that conflicts revealed, the *stipp* team served as a blueprint for how the rest of Grøndal’s students could also access this form of relationality despite the discomfort face-to-face conflicts warranted. In other words, the *stipps* inspired students to believe that the temporary discomfort of conflict was worth it.

Even so, good conflict remained difficult for students to engage in. Kristine, who described herself as being “super conflict-avoidant,” said that *Knark* had resulted in some “drama” between girls who were romantically interested in some of the same football boys. “There are girls that stir it up,” she said. “They don’t want to, it just happens.” Kristine said that most of the conflict stemmed from her friends in the *Håndball* (Handball) program, that was composed of all girls except for one boy. Vida said that the competitive aspects of Grøndal’s sports programs could have resulted in “insecurities” in students enrolled in them; like all folk high schools with sports programs, Grøndal does not require student try-outs, and the idea is that anyone with an interest in football or handball should be equally included and able to attend. While Håvard, the *Fotball* teacher supported this pedagogical point, he also said that it sometimes presented problems in discrepancies between students’ abilities on his team. “There are some skill differences with this current class,” he told me, prior to the development of *Knark*, “but they are a great group socially. It’s a bright point, even though the training part is a bit difficult.”

Fig. 13: Students await instruction during a ballgame elective in the gym.

Vida speculated that because Grøndal's sports programs placed more of an emphasis on physical performance, with the added dimension of student difference in ability and athletic prowess, the football and handball students fixated on their own and other students' bodies in ways that were unique to their classes. "If you hear some girls screaming for attention, it's probably someone from *Håndball*. Last year it was not that way. It comes from a place of insecurity." She told me that during the first *elevkveld* (student evening)[43] at the start of the school year, where each class was tasked with introducing themselves to the rest of the school with a planned performance based on a bit of humor, the *Håndball* class had performed a mock interview of their students, describing "who was the best looking, who's the sportiest, who gets the most boys, who has the biggest butt. It was the first week of school, it was too much!" To my knowledge, staff had not responded unfavorably to this particular performance; while Rakel sometimes said that students "went too far" in their *elevkveld* offerings, no school assembly was organized to address them in the same way *Knark* had been. It struck me as particularly noteworthy that a public ranking of students' own in-group was not met with the same repercussions that *Knark's* activities had elicited; describing oneself or one's own group disparagingly for the sake of collective humor was permissible in a way that talking more seriously, in secret, about other students was not. For his part, Rune expressed true remorse in how the content of *Knark* had taken a less positive turn. "I can see why it was excluding," he said. "I learned my lesson. I felt like I was a key influence in the football group. I'm going to try my best to be better. To bring people in. I have *fritidskontakt* (free time contact) with two *Botrening* students. I feel like it's true what they say about the football team; we can really influence the school in a bad way." "Or in a good way?" I asked. "Yes, of course," he said. "Or in a good way."

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[43] Each class was expected to organize one evening per academic year to entertain the rest of the student body in a performance in the auditorium that focused on humor, dance, and music. Making fun of each other, through impressions of students and staff and insider-jokes, was a benchmark of these performances. Staff usually attended *elevkveld* performances and sometimes contributed to them, so the content was normally fairly tame, even if students sometimes toed the line of what was appropriate as Vida describes here.

CONCLUSION.

In this chapter, I've demonstrated how Grøndal's pedagogy, which integrated dormitory living into its learning outcomes, used institutionally enforced social mechanisms to produce good forms of sameness and difference in such a way that students were able to achieve equality among themselves within the student body. The *Botrening* (life skills) class, in particular, was designed to allow students with differences in abilities or needs to be prioritized in such a way that could still make them feel integrated into Grøndal's community. Through *fritidskontakt* (free-time contact), specially chosen *botass* (life skills class assistants), and dormitory rules pertaining to quiet hours, *Botrening* students were given additional accommodations through school strategies meant to meet their needs in such a way that would benefit them while contributing to the development of the student body as a whole. Having staff live on campus, or close by, also contributed to a shared valued of equality among students and staff. While the social interactions that came from these living arrangements wasn't seamless—I rarely heard of students visiting teachers' homes without invitations, for example, while teachers could, and would, enter the dormitories unannounced—the proximity of students living close to staff created a special sense of *fellesskap* (community) and a welcomed form of school unity.

Sameness in rules was also meant to keep students safe but sometimes used language that didn't consider student differences in gender or sexuality. Even so, students who were from the LGBTQIA+ community described feeling welcome and appreciated at Grøndal, which was demonstrated most importantly through the "progressive" forms of Christianity they interacted with on campus. Emblems of traditionally Christian morals, specifically those pertaining to teetotalism, were also apparent in Grøndal's rules pertaining to alcohol on campus, but these rules, in my view, were more about keeping students safe rather than making them holy. Through a range of physical and social activities meant to keep them engaged, students could explore how they could interact without alcohol or drugs in such a way they came to appreciate. This did not mean that students unilaterally followed dormitory rules, which resulted in consequences that ranged from extra kitchen duty shifts to expulsion, but how students responded to these forms of correction, as a matter of personal *utvikling* (development) informed how they could progress to the coveted role of *stipp*.

Stipps, then, were the most visible form of school-enforced differentiation on campus, as these student-leaders embodied good difference in both their selections and in their interactions with each other and the student body more broadly. As value "exemplars" (Robbins 2016), *stipps* displayed how difference was necessary for equality to flourish (Dumont 1986), by demonstrating behaviours that were designed to contribute to the value of equality on campus even if it meant disrupting social formations that were happening among students. This was especially the case when inappropriate rumors and gossip started making the rounds on campus, and in the ways stipps managed conflict in meeting these problems head-on. By modeling good forms of conflict, through Gruntvig's "living word" model which privileged dialogue and communication, students could express their differences within the safety of an overarching sense of equality modeled by the *stipps* they admired. These rumors, though, also brought to the fore how contentious the body could be for Grøndal's students, a circumstance that problematized the equality project the school sought to develop. The intersections between influence, bodies, food, and exercise were also an important part of Grøndal's social life, and a visible marker of how student sameness and difference emerged in daily activities. In the chapter that follows, I describe how students' bodies were positioned in the cafeteria and in athletic activities on campus, and how these formations brought to the fore students' perceptions of physical fitness, ideas of proper consumption, and forms of disordered eating in Grøndal's student body. I also expand on the theme of consumption, broadening its scope to examine how other forms of consumer behaviors were invoked, and explored, on campus.

CHAPTER 4/

THE CONSUMER EXPERIENCE: CONSUMPTION.

O, du som metter liten fugl, velsign vår mat, O Gud. Amen.

(Oh, you who feeds the little bird, bless our food, Oh God. Amen.)

-Traditional Norwegian prayer

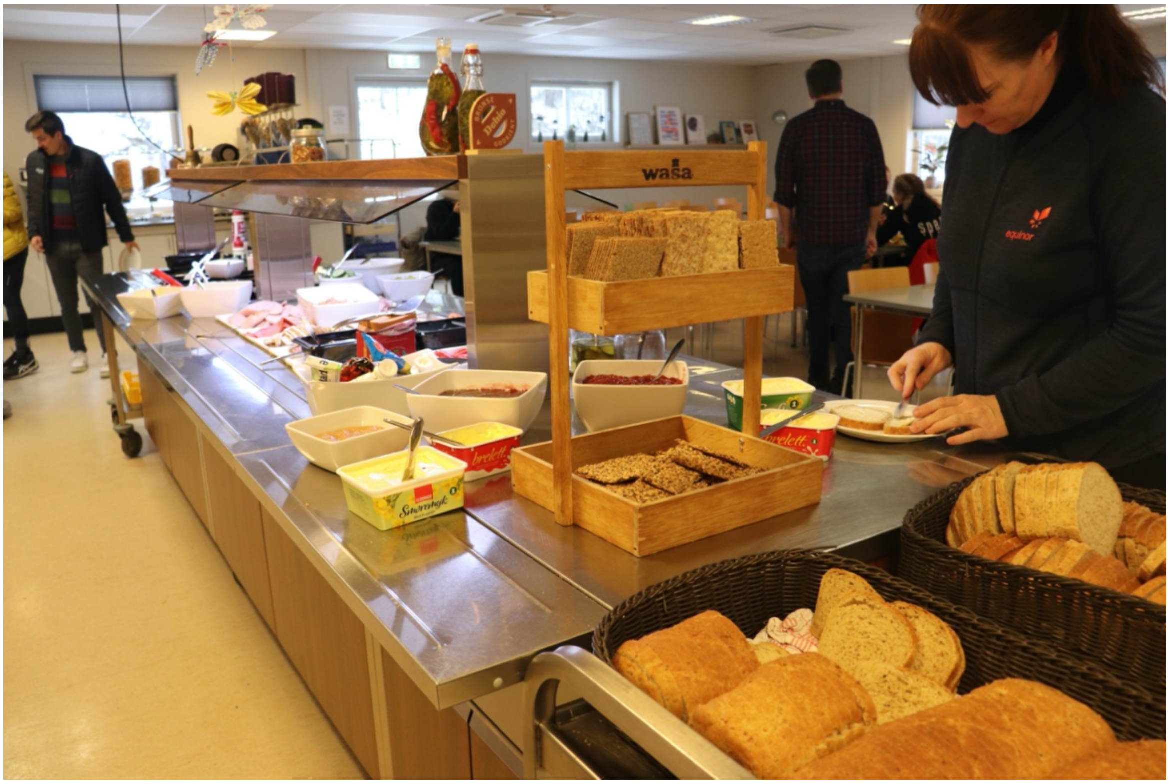

Fig. 14: The daily cafeteria spread.

INTRODUCTION.

In this chapter, I explore the various forms of consumption that happened on Grøndal's campus, both in students' and staff's eating practices and consumer habits more broadly. I describe what students perceived to be acceptable forms of eating, both in variety and quantity of food they consumed. I assess the ways in which forms of peer monitoring when it came to eating translated into how students perceived their physical appearances and describe the insecurities and "eating complexes" students said were the result of wanting to inhabit similarly sized bodies. Through folk high school programming, however, such as content in *Thomasmesse* or Grøndal's cooking-based electives, staff exemplified how good forms of difference could be realized through spiritual or "healthier" relationships with food. I also describe how different forms of eating elucidated tensions in students and staff, as vegetarian eating brought forth problems associated with cost, waste, and disagreements on how best to represent vegetarianism on campus. By assessing conflicts that emerged surrounding vegetarianism, both in a formal debate *stipps* organized during Green Week and in all-staff meeting between teachers and kitchen staff meant to discuss more sustainable forms of consuming on campus, I argue that eating, as a realm of embodied value making, produced a place for *fellesskap* (community) to be negotiated through difference. Through *samhandlinger* (interactions) that came to the fore through preparing food and engaging in debates, students could explore how equality through difference could be achieved among themselves on campus, while working towards more equitable forms of consuming in Norway more broadly. I also assess other forms of consumer habits students and staff engaged with, mainly relating to clothing, examining how *Janteloven*[44] informed how students viewed their wish for sameness in appearance and material wealth, and the role Grøndal played in encouraging good forms of difference that privileged more conscientious consuming while realizing the school value of *utvikling* (development) when it came to making a difference.

Consumption in anthropological terms encompasses a wide range of interpretations. For the sake of my analysis here, I take the consumption of food as my first zone of inquiry and the use of material goods as commodities as my second realm of analysis. R. Kenji Tierney and Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (2012) have noted that what and how people eat food is constrained by culturally specific practices that integrate local and global aspects of food production and supply chains in contemporary life. Within these patterns, the material aspects of food and its symbolic meanings can indicate "social differentiation, which defines the boundaries between social groups, and social hierarchy, which entails class, status, and power inequality" (Tierney and Ohnuki-Tierney 2012: 118). The embodied aspects of eating communally, they write, incorporates the self into a collective social whole which “gives foods a powerful symbol for the collective self not only conceptually but also at the gut level” (Tierney and Ohnuki-Tierney 2012: 121). In this way, the perceived proper and improper ways of eating, especially in institutionalized settings, can represent an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) built on a sense of national belonging and shared cultural identify. Daniel Miller (1995), in his work on consumption and commodification, expands the conversation to assess how mass consumption has mediated social life in contemporary economic and social relations. He writes that while the commodification of goods had, to date, largely been couched in economic terms, anthropology had taken an interest in the “social economy” approach, which addressed “concerns similar to those of economists but with an emphasis on social structure and social values” (151). David Graeber, for his part, suggested that by thinking about consumption not as solely an “artificial creation” of advertisement and marketing, but rather, a realm for identity-making and meaning, anthropology can take consumer habits as indicators of both desire and resistance (490). In the chapter that follows, I take consumption to mean both food consumed and consumer goods used, as both realms became value-laden insofar as they could produce or preclude sameness and difference, inequality and equality from happening within Grøndal’s student body.

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[44] *Janteloven,* "Jante's Law," a concept that I describe more in detail later in the chapter, relates to a common cultural idea in Scandinavian societies that everyone should have, or be, the same.

THE CAFETERIA.

In Grøndal’s cafeteria, tables are set up directly next to each other in long rows that span the length of the room. For breakfast, lunch, dinner, and supper, students enter through the doors to the side of the room and line up at the single buffet station positioned in front of the adjacent kitchen. They grab plates and slices of freshly baked bread from the two large bread baskets, before making their selections of *pålegg* (bread toppings), sliced lunch meats and cheeses, liverwurst, jam, cucumbers, peppers, and pickles. To the front corner of the room, next to the open window to the kitchen, is the drink station with a coffee machine that distributes individual cups with the press of a button, as well as water, milk, and apple and orange juice dispensers. There is dairy-free milk available for Grøndal’s vegans in the refrigerator under the counter in front of the kitchen window, with several cereal dispensers lining the wall next to it. Because of the way the tables are arranged, in long rows that extend perpendicular to the buffet all the way to the far wall, students sit at random, simply taking the next seat as it becomes available to them. The only exception are the *Botrening* (Life Skills) students who usually opt to sit at the few tables to the side of the room that are positioned perpendicular to the long rows and are freestanding tables of six. While most of the teaching staff are finished with their workdays by 3:30 pm, when dinner is served, there is always a teacher on *tilsyn* (supervision) who will be on campus through the evening and sleeps in a designated dorm room on campus in case of emergencies. This means that teachers on *tilsyn* eat their meals in the cafeteria, usually seated with *Botrening* students, or sometimes taking their plates to the staff lounge next door. *Botrening* students are encouraged to sit with the rest of the students if they wish, and some of them do, while others appreciate having a bit more space in the less crowded single-standing tables.

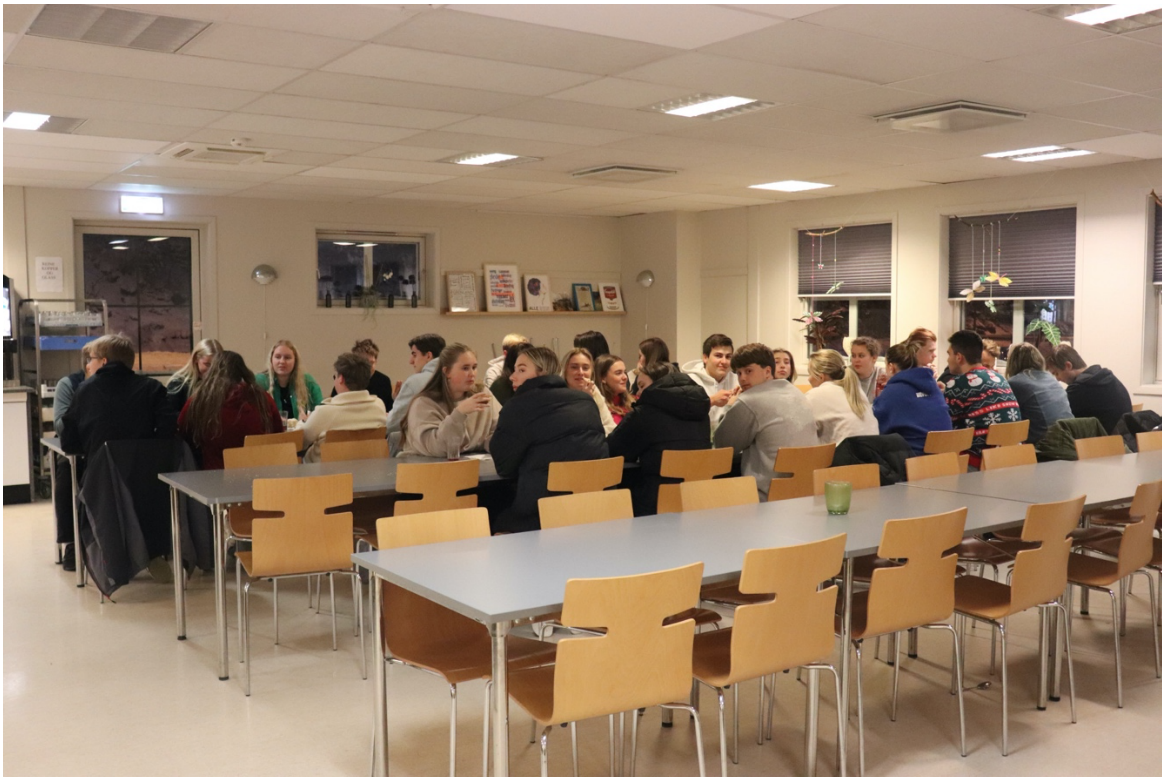

Fig. 15: Students enjoy their kveldsmat (evening meal) together.

At dinner, depending on the food served, large trays and tureens of food are placed on the tables in a "family-style" service arrangement. After a teacher gives the afternoon announcements and leads the room in singing the "*O, du som metter"* prayer, students pass "Mexican stew," "chicken tikka," or *lapskaus* (Norwegian beef stew) to each other, ladling steaming food onto their plates. The menu for each week is posted on the blackboard behind the buffet and students are served the same food for each meal, irrespective of their personal preferences. The only exception are the dishes made for Grøndal's three or four vegetarian or vegan students, which are kept warm on heated plates to the side of the main food bar. On Sundays dinner is earlier, served at 2 pm and includes more elevated fare: pork tenderloin with gravy, boiled potatoes and carrots, chocolate mousse or raspberry jello. All meals are included in students' room and board payments, which come through each month usually from *lånekassen* (the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund); students do not need to swipe a meal card or engage with any other sort of payment prior to eating. The food feels readily available, abundant, free; the kitchen staff are careful to use sustainable methods as often as possible, and usually re-serve leftovers in creative ways, but no one is ever hungry, unless they are particularly fussy, and the food is always hearty, cheerful, and plentiful. If students don't like what's on offer for a particular meal, fish being a less popular dish, for example, they often go to Burger King down the road or heat up frozen pizzas in the student kitchen instead. Mostly, though, students eat together, quietly observing the quantity their peers ladle onto their plates, careful not to take too much or too little.

SAMENESS IN EATING.

I wasn't cognizant of this sort of peer monitoring around eating happening until Ingrid, a *stipp*, told me about it around the time *Knark* went public. She said that at the morning assembly she and the *stipps* had organized to address *Knark*, she had also added an additional few words on what she said was happening in the "eating culture" in the cafeteria. "What disturbed me the most," she said, "[was] people commenting on other people's food or bodies compared to them, and that's not okay no matter what." She told me that one of the footballers had remarked on the amount of food another student had taken saying, "'Look at her and how much she has on her plate!' Some people around reacted but they didn't say anything, they were just shocked. I think in the cafeteria when everyone is sitting there, they didn't want to draw more attention." The student at the center of this unwanted attention, who had what Ingrid described as a "larger body," had been rumored to have had comments like this directed her way before, but Ingrid had not witnessed this happening previously. "But then I got confirmation of it," she said. "I had said to the students, I often don't hear things, but then I heard this with my own ears. I didn't say anything there because I knew we were going to have the meeting after, and I didn't want to embarrass her more."

I soon learned that this instance of peer monitoring was not an isolated case, as students regularly described to me feeling like they needed permission from each other to eat more than what they felt was socially accepted. "When I sit by people they always say, 'I want one more plate' and they look for allowance to go," said Xavier. "We eat together, and we see [everything everyone eats] and some people comment on the amount of food people eat. It's irrelevant! Our bodies function differently." Elsa also expressed feeling like she was being watched while she ate. "At the folk high school, we're eating food with someone all the time," she said. "There are times when, if I was at home I would take more, but people can see here if I take more. I eat enough, I'm sure of that. There are a lot of people who get seconds. But people are concerned that other people are watching them." I also witnessed this sort of watching and asking for permission to eat happening among students during meals outside of the cafeteria. During a road trip I took with *Backpacker*, I noted how students would collectively assess the *pålegg* (bread toppings) set out for each meal, asking each other whether or not they could open an unopened pack of lunchmeat, for example, or assess with their peers if there was enough *Nugatti* (chocolate hazelnut spread) left for them to take some. Students were hesitant to finish something—a lone slice of pizza would often be thrown out rather than eaten—or students would divvy up leftovers equally, ever vigilant that food should be fairly distributed. During one student-made meal, when *A og B* cooked a celebratory feast for the footballers after they had raised the most money of all the classes for the Run for Tanzania, a surplus banana split was left on the counter, students unsure of what to do with it. “Jamie, this is for you!” Silje said, happy that she’d found a solution. “I’ll have a bite of it,” I said, “but I’m not really into eating a whole banana split right before dinner. Want to eat it with me?” She shook her head no and I called to the group, “Hey everybody, let’s just all each take a bite.” Silje acquiesced. “Alright everyone, there’s a banana split that needs eating!” With this invitation the rest of the students crowded around, slipping spoons into the dripping ice-cream and whipped cream. “These Norwegians,” I said with a smile to Damaris, the only other international person in the room. “They really need permission for everything, don’t they?” She nodded. “At least these ones do,” she said. “They definitely wait for one person to take the lead, then they follow.” None of the students, it seemed, wanted to appear too eager to eat, as eating anything, even a bite of ice cream without each other’s consensus, would draw too much attention and unwanted difference within the group.

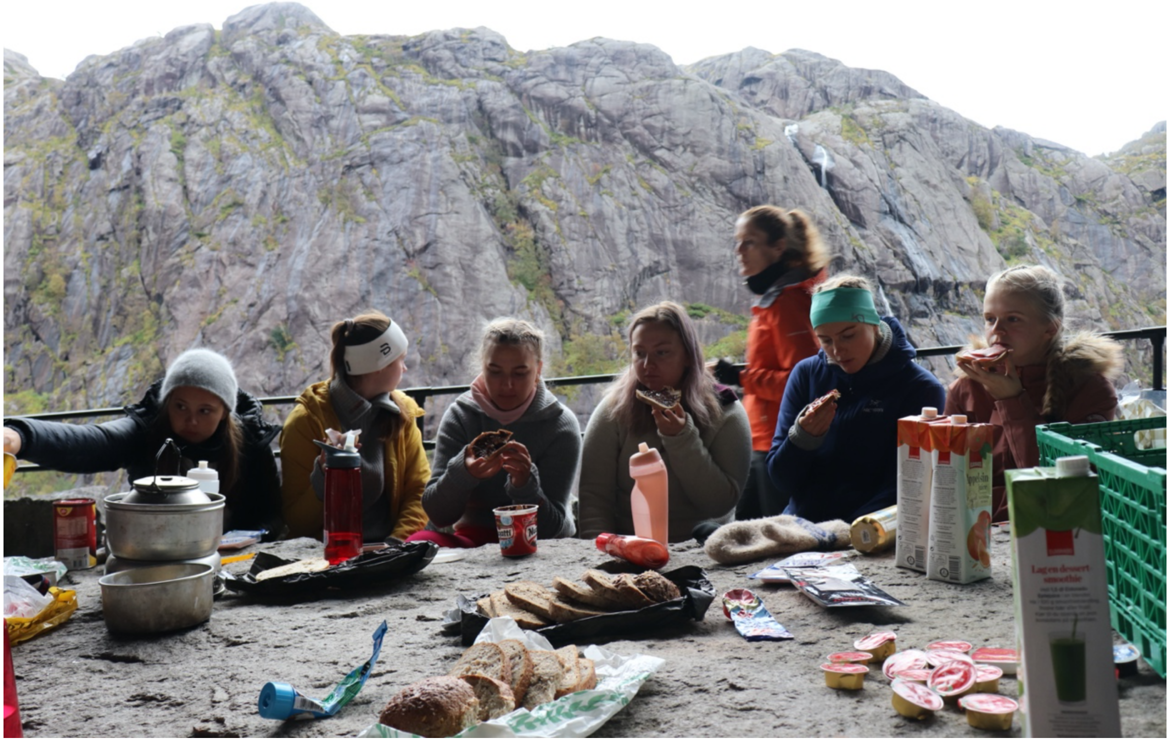

Fig. 16: “Er det nok Nugatti (Is there enough chocolate-hazelnut spread)?”

Alternatively, students who did not eat enough drew as much attention as those who had been perceived as eating too much. One afternoon, Kristine, Rune, and Xavier told me that another student, Karen, had struggled with some recent rumors she believed were circulating due to her weight and had started to eat very little at mealtimes as a result. The issue started when Lars, Karen's crush and also Rune's roommate, had been rumored to have made a disparaging comment about a performer who had during the live taping of *Lindmo*, a talk show, we had participated in the week prior in Oslo. "[The singer] was gorgeous," said Kristine, "but she had a bit of curves, and there is a rumor that Lars said he would never date someone that fat. But I've never heard him saying something like that." Rune said, "He's shy. He says stuff to me that he would never say [in a group setting]. It was a small comment that she was curvy, and it got taken out of context. I asked him about it, and he got pretty mad. There's a lot of rumors." "I heard that Karen took it very personally," said Kristine. "She was very sad. She was the one who said she heard him say it as well. Which made it even more hard, I think." In a conversation I had with another student, Ragna, she told me that Karen's eating habits had become one of shared concern. "She's left dinner twice without eating," Ragna said. "She ate one piece of pizza and then said she was finished, and Kristine got up and got more food for her. Something is not right." Ragna, for her part, was not willing to participate in Karen's eating habits in the same way Kristine had. "Sometimes Kristine will say she's so exhausted and doesn't want to be with [her] but if she doesn't it'll be bad *stemning* (vibes)," she said. "I don't want to be responsible for my friends like that. That's not a good friendship."

Sameness in the quantity of food students ate was also reflected in the sameness of the varieties of food on offer. I asked Xavier, Kristine, and Rune if not being able to choose their meals in the cafeteria contributed to a sense of stress over a lack of control in their eating. Kristine said, "Last year when I lived in Bergen, I focused a lot on working out and eating right. I wanted to build muscle, so I ate a lot of protein, and I was convinced I was going to work out every day. I sort of want to now, and I can make the time, but at the same time there's no use in working out every day because you don't have the protein or the nutrition you need. Everything I eat is bread." Rune agreed. "I'm pretty tired of bread. My stomach aches almost every day. I've had a pretty bad diet. I've been picky. I've always eaten *Nugatti* (chocolate hazelnut spread). It's kind of embarrassing to say that. I felt like the last year I've been trying to open up about food. I try different things, salad and cucumbers. [But yesterday] I heard dinner was shepherd's pie and I went to Burger King instead." Xavier, however, appreciated that the cafeteria didn't offer students a choice with meals. "I don't have to worry about it," he said. "I just eat. It can be difficult for many people, but I like the food here very much."

Even if some students said otherwise, Norwegians tend to welcome conformity when it comes to cuisine (Amilien 2021). Here, Bourdieu's work on habitus emerges a useful concept when considering the sameness in consuming that happened at Grøndal and in Norway more broadly. Habitus is frequently used to explore relationships between eating habits, class, social status and access to wealth (Backett-Milburn et al., 2010; Johnston et al., 2012; Warin et al., 2008; Wills et al., 2011). As I have mentioned, the majority of Grøndal's students came from middle-class backgrounds, which informed the types of food students had access to prior to enrolling and contributed to the sorts of cuisine they preferred. While "traditional" Norwegian food (Amilien & Hegnes 2013) is by and large hearty, rudimentary, and was meant to feed farmers and keep large families sustained through long winters, "exotic" foods are becoming increasingly popular in Norway (Flemmen et al 2018: 131). Grøndal's menu reflected both, but in my estimation, the more "exotic" fare available took on a decidedly "Norwegian" bent, which meant that these dishes lacked spice and included more dairy. Even here, Grøndal's food took on a sense of sameness, one less concerned with authentic cuisine and more focused on appealing to the Norwegian palate, where predictability, consistency, and simplicity were prioritized. This sameness in taste was also demonstrated in the ways in which students would eat food the same way; sometimes students would discover another student eating a particular item outside its usual patterns, and this behavior would draw a good bit of attention. Maren, for example, was known for eating liverwurst with jam, and Lise sometimes put cucumbers in her porridge, a habit that brought similar notoriety. I, too, was once put at the center of attention when it came to eating incorrectly; I had eaten my *Kvikk Lunsj* (directly, "Quick Lunch," the Norwegian equivalent of a KitKat chocolate bar) longwise row by row instead of vertically from top to bottom, and Inga remarked at the "*galskap*" (madness) I had committed, asking if she could film me eating it for her Snap Chat stories. My behavior was so unusual to her that she often referenced it, even referring to it in the message she wrote to me in my yearbook at the end of the school year. Eating the same food, and eating the same way, was important to Grøndal's eating culture, and exhibiting too much of a sense of difference, in either food or form, was not something I often saw taken on by Grøndal's students.

DIFFERENCES IN BODIES.

Consuming the same food in equal amounts translated to prioritizing sameness in how students' bodies should appear. As I have noted, students with larger bodies, particular those who were girls, were given special attention to their eating, and there were several girls who told me that they had "eating complexes" because of it. This, paired with social pressures from social media or their families of origin, made students cognizant of the size of their bodies in relation to both the idealized figures found in overarching beauty standards and to each other. Vida said that she thought teenagers positioning their bodies as "projects" was "very common" in Norway. "In rich countries you have enough of other stuff, so your focus is on your body," she said. "Everyone has something they're insecure about, that's just how it is." Ingrid also said that an increased focus on the body was something she had noticed happening when she entered adolescence. "I miss the time when we were small when everyone played and had no worries," she said. "But now we think about how we look and how others think about us." Rebecca Lester's work on eating disorders in the United States has identified similar relationships between the individual and social groups when it comes to how people develop disordered eating. She writes, "Eating disorders do not exist within people; they emerge between people. As deeply embodied conditions [that encompass] shifting interpersonal, structural, and material relationships [eating disorders] do very particular kinds of work" (2019:9). While the "embodied conditions" of body dysphoria and disordered eating often include a gendered dimension in the west, appearing more commonly in women than men, students told me that, in their experience, that wasn't always the case. Ingrid, who had been hesitant to name the footballer who had been making comments on the amount of food students were eating in the cafeteria, eventually told me that it was Rune. "He's a nice guy!" she said. "But maybe the ones who have said these comments are just insecure about their own bodies. That's usual. I think more and more boys are being made fun of for their weight, too. I think for many of them, the body is important, how they look. It's a bigger problem than many think." Insecurities among the footballers themselves were one reason why Kristine thought the rumors about girl's bodies during *Knark* had started in the first place. "A lot of the footballers have a complex with their bodies," she said. "They don't really talk about them. So, they spread rumors instead." Rune confirmed her statement. "I've been told all my life that I'm skinny and have a flat chest and should train more," he said. "I've always been told that I needed to eat more growing up and that's done something to me. That's one reason why I go to the gym. Lars is a pretty buff dude and I want to be like him, the girls must like that." Xavier agreed. "Guys think about it just as much as girls do. I've had an eating disorder before, and complexes. Girls get away a lot with commenting on boys' bodies. 'He's too short' is a common comment. We can't help it! Don't you know what you're saying? You're just as bad!'"

Even though "body complexes" were common in both Grøndal's boy and girl populations, students said gender expectations in Norway also produced differences in how students interacted with food. Marianne Elisabeth Lien has argued that food in Norway takes on a gendered dimension where social ties centered around eating are "asymmetrical, often placing women in the role of feeders… [which] represents both work and care" (1995: 157-158), and Gullestad made similar claims about how Norwegian women are often seen as "emotional specialists" (1993: 142) in social relationships more broadly. Kristine, for example, had ensured that Karen regularly ate enough, taking on the responsibility of Karen's "body project" as a shared endeavor. Kristine was also a part of *Backpacker*, a class that along with *A og B* was composed predominantly of women and were the groups I observed collectively organizing equitable food distribution the most. This gender demographic could be one reason why there was an additional sense of responsibility happening around how food was distributed in these classes, both in group meals and for students individually. Karl, in a conversation I had with him on Norwegian gender expectations, echoed this idea, noting that girls are often more *pliktfull* (dutiful) than boys are. “I think girls generally, are more obedient,” he said. “They’ll follow orders more easily.” Gullestad also remarked on gender codes similar to the ones Karl mentioned, writing that “traditionally girls have been raised with a stronger emphasis on obedience than boys” in Norwegian society (Gullestad 1996: 39). When I asked Karl if men and women are equal in Norway he said, “in today’s society men and women *should* be equal, of course. I don’t think they are in Norway. I feel like you might get more respect as a man.” Jofrid told me that “men absolutely get away with more stuff than women,” in Norway and that women are expected to take more “responsibility” as a result. In this way, gendered expectations for how students expected each other to behave were apparent when it came to considering the collective good, even if both genders struggled with body image and different social expectations of how they believed their bodies should conform to certain aesthetic standards.

GOOD EATING.

Although eating sometimes carried negative connotations for many of Grøndal’s students, food, and its contribution to living a good life, were also present themes in much of the school’s instructional material and social life more broadly. In her investigation of kinship in Malaysia, Janet Carsten suggests that feeding and receiving food is one way people “become persons” together (1997: 223), and the same could be said for Grøndal’s students. Several electives centered around preparing and sharing food, for example, and students and staff expressed a good deal of satisfaction eating the same food as everyone else prepared by Grøndal’s kitchen staff. This was especially the case during lunchtimes, when the entire school community would eat together in the cafeteria, staff lounge, or *dagligstue*, our plates laden with items made fresh daily by the kitchen staff. During lunch the kitchen would put out additional delicacies—lentil salad, coronation chicken, cold pasta, fine cheeses[45]—and students and staff alike would eat together, enjoying the food and social time in between their other scheduled activities. Not having to pack a lunch or worry about making dinner was a relief to me and many of my colleagues, a welcome chance to spend more time on our tasks at hand or at home with our families instead of having to think about preparing our next meal.[46] In many ways, the cafeteria felt like the heart of the school and students and staff regularly praised the kitchen for the food that was delivered to them each day. Eating the same food together for each meal gave us a shared sense of *fellesskap* (community), an *opplevelse* (experience) that was, by and large, the same.

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[45] Grøndal’s kitchen, like most folk high schools, also offered catering services to the local area providing meal packages for weddings, confirmations, and other party events. These sorts of food items were often leftovers from catering orders, another way to eliminate food waste.

Eating the same food while sharing in a communal practice also came up in *Thomasmesse* during services when communion was delivered. Communion didn't happen during every *Thomasmesse*, but when it did, Jens and other staff members would invite students who wanted to participate to line up and receive a bit of bread and take turns sipping alcohol-free wine from a chalice. In one particular service, Jens described how communion represented the relationship between food, faith, and strength. "We need to eat well," he said, "and *nattverd* (communion) is a sort of food. It's food that makes us strong and faith is a certain kind of food that can give us energy. This is the form we have to receive food in faith. It makes me stronger." Jens, referencing J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* book series, asked students if they remembered how Sam and Frodo on their journey to destroy the ring, considered their last bit of bread integral to completing their quest. "They needed food to survive," said Jens, "and because of that last piece of bread, they were able to get through. It was so important. That's what faith can do for you; give you strength to get through tough times. To know that God loves you and sees you. That can strengthen you." Jens welcomed all students, whether they had been confirmed in the church or not, to receive communion if they wanted to, an invitation that he sometimes said was a "controversial" choice among Grøndal's staff. As I mentioned in chapter two, Jens felt that the possibility of students interacting with an embodied experience of faith was worth any risks associated with them not adhering to more dogmatic principles or confessions of faith. In other words, everyone who had the capacity for eating could receive communion, and every *body*, in God's eyes, was a good body, a vessel capable of communing with God. In addition to experiencing food and the body as gifts meant to be enjoyed, students also had the opportunity for communicating problems they were experiencing with food or their bodies through *bønnelapper* (prayer notes), the anonymized prayer requests they were invited to write and have read out loud communally. Praying collectively on behalf of someone who was struggling with an eating disorder or poor body image was a way for students to relate to their own physical forms in relation to the embodied whole, to express care for others who were struggling in different or similar ways as they themselves might have been. In other words, taking on someone else's "body project" in this way invited students to engage with compassion, but not obsession. In the context of *Thomasmesse*, the body project in question, while being acknowledged by the students and staff, was firmly placed in God's hands.[47]

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[46] While I eventually started eating dinners with my husband after he arrived on campus, I ate all of my meals in the cafeteria for the first months of my fieldwork. I paid the same amount for my meals as students did, NOK 50 ($4.75 exchange rate as of June 5, 2024) per day, which represented a further point of Grøndal's generosity towards me.

Making the same food and consuming it together once it had been prepared was also an important part of Grøndal's cooking-oriented electives. In addition to taking on a social dimension, food prepared in these classes also represented a realm where ethical questions about environmental concerns and animal rights came to the fore in students' cooking and eating habits. This was especially the case in *Naturlig liv* (Natural Life), a course that focused on teaching students how to shop for and prepare more environmentally sustainable dishes. Marta, the *Backpacker* teacher who returned from maternity leave halfway through my fieldwork, also led this elective. As someone who was concerned with sustainable practices herself, Marta cooked all the meals for her husband, the *Fotball* (Football) teacher Håvard, and their two children, often sourcing ingredients from local farms rather than the supermarket. Just prior to her return to work, she had developed a new program to add to Grøndal's course offerings called *Flyt: yoga og naturlig liv* (Flow: Yoga and natural life), a course that she hoped would focus on “climate, nature, and a healthy lifestyle,” but unfortunately hadn’t received enough applicants to see the program through. Instead, Grøndal’s students had signed up for the school’s travel-based programs, a common occurrence, and the reason that Marta said the school was able to “survive” over the years. “We use the trips to trick them into coming here,” she told me. “It’s the elephant in the room when it comes to trying to be more environmentally sustainable as a school.” Marta said that when she had initially become interested in incorporating sustainability into her teaching, she “went into it with a lot of energy, wanting to save the planet,” but felt like her enthusiasm was not matched by her students. As time went on, Marta changed her position, focusing more on the personal side of sustainable living by teaching students about how they could be more conscious of their consumer choices and being more “connected” with nature.

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[47] This is by no means to suggest that eating disorders were not dealt with in a solely spiritual context at Grøndal; as I have mentioned, students with diagnoses followed specific safety protocols administered by local health authorities.

This was especially the case during *Naturlig liv,* when Marta would instruct students on how to make vegetarian food or using techniques that she said would use “the whole animal” in meal preparation. Like most of Grøndal’s electives, *Naturlig liv* met once a week for a couple of hours and was attended by students who had signed up for the course prior to the start of the school year. In one *Naturlig liv* class I joined, Marta described food as having medicinal qualities essential for “healthy” living. “It’s exciting to know more about food culture,” she said, holding up a book called *Hummus og granateple: Mat fra Tyrkia og Midtøsten* (Hummus and pomegranate: recipes from the Middle East). “Especially if it’s good for the body. In Middle Eastern food, they mix garlic and yoghurt for probiotics. And maybe they’ll have olive oil and bread, the chemical makeup is very healthy.” While the majority of Grøndal’s food was distinctly Norwegian (or, as I have described it, ambiguously “Norwegian”), the sort of food Marta and her class prepared was decidedly different. Here again good difference, in this case as it related to culinary culture, was viewed positively, an educational sphere for learning about both variations in cuisine and the people who consume food in alternative ways. This form of difference, too, was a part of sustainable practice, as students could interact with eating food in ways that was not culturally normative but was positioned as being better for the planet.

During this particular class, for example, Marta told them that the dish they were preparing was a vegetarian version of bacon made of out cheese, nuts, and dates. “I don’t usually eat pork,” Marta said, “and I miss bacon, but this is a vegetarian variation that tastes very similar.” In addition to finding inspiration for more sustainably produced foods from other cultures, Marta also talked about how traditional Norwegian cooking techniques were more environmentally conscious than current food practices. “There is an old Norwegian tradition of using bones in cooking,” she told them, “and the collagen in them is powerful. It’s sustainable and also very good for your body. If we only eat the inner filet and nothing else, we miss so much nutrition from the rest of the animal.”

While Marta did not eat exclusively vegetarian food, she limited her own meat consumption and always used the entirety of any animals she and her family consumed. “Vegetarian food is not always more sustainable than meat,” she told her students. “And depending on where you live in Norway, sometimes there aren’t as many vegetarian options available.” In Norway’s west coast, where she was from, she told her students that farm animals eat grass which is better for the environment than factory-farmed animals who are fed soy or cornmeal. “We import a lot of soy from Latin America,” she said. “Salmon eat a lot of corn from Latin America, too.” She said that the salmon industry was particularly unsustainable in Norway and that wild salmon had been recently catching diseases from farmed salmon in increasing numbers. I had seen the massive circular farmed salmon nets in the fjords on the west coast on my trip there the previous summer; Marta said that below them the sea was “dead,” destroyed by the waste of the farmed salmon swimming above it. “They are really polluting the Norwegian fjords,” she said. “But there is a lot of money in it. It’s the ‘new oil’ and the government is really protecting the salmon industry” (see Lien 2015). Other students also expressed how the intersection between sustainability and economy informed how they chose to consume food personally. “It’s very tricky to eat more sustainably I feel,” said Xavier. “Last year I lived in Oslo, and I didn’t have a lot of money, it was super expensive to live there. The options that were available for me were cheaper but not always from Norway. The meat is not the same quality, but it’s more expensive to eat ecologically.” Johnston et al. (2012) has identified similar correlations between conceptions of ethical eating and social class in Norway, noting that Norwegians who reside in wealthy neighborhoods and have access to local or organic food options are more likely to choose them than those from lower income areas. Even though most of Grøndal's students came from middle-class families, as I've stated, it's important to note that their status as students sometimes informed their access to resources, or at least their perceptions of how stable they were financially, as was the case with Xavier. Keilin, however, said that Marta had shown her that making "small changes," like not wasting food or taking the extra time to prepare a more sustainable dish, was not as expensive, or difficult, as she had thought it would be prior to taking *Naturlig liv*. "Marta knows so much," said Keilin. "How does she know everything? She makes sustainability fun, and she really burns for the environment. It's really inspiring." In the sections that follow, I assess how similar forms of inspiration emerged in the student body from young people who exhibited a commitment to more equitable forms of consumer behavior.

Fig. 17: Marta teaches the Backpacker class about the benefits of being in nature.

DEBATES.

In addition to being present in the eating practices at Grøndal, themes relating to vegetarianism, sustainability, and economy also emerged in several debates I encountered during my fieldwork. The first, a formal debate, happened during Green Week, the annual event I observed early on in my fieldwork, which had been set aside for students to engage with more sustainably focused activities on Grøndal's campus. For the duration of the week all meals served in the cafeteria were vegetarian, and students made additional meals in their electives or class sessions using expired food they sourced from local grocery stores at a reduced rate. One evening, the *stipps* organized a "climate debate" and asked several students to assist them in arguing either for or against vegetarianism. The rest of the students gathered in the *dagligstue*, seated shoulder to shoulder on the sofas turned towards the four debaters, two on each team, who were positioned in a row of seats in front of them. Hans and Marcus, the two *stipps* in charge of the event, were there to moderate, and the two team names, the "Meat-lovers" and "Meat-beaters" (in English, the latter ostensibly named after a joke on masturbation) were announced to the rest of the students who stifled laughter. The duration of the debate maintained a humorous tone, with comments from each side meant to get a laugh (Karl, for example, advocated for meat production because, without cows flies would of course become homeless), interspersed with more factually based material.

After the debate I spoke with several students about how they thought it had gone. Gunn told me that she was annoyed that the teams hadn't taken the event more seriously. "This was not supposed to be funny," she said. "They weren't prepared enough. If I was supposed to learn something, but I was not satisfied. I don't think it was very funny." Sara, who had been on the Meat-beaters team, said that she had only been asked that afternoon to prepare. "I'm not that into the climate debate," she said. "Of course, I know some things, but I only had a chance to read a little bit. It was supposed to be entertaining." Lila, who had argued on behalf of the Meat-lovers, agreed. "People don't really know that much about eating meat so it's easy to say controversial things. It was a bit like I was acting." Vida, still a *Backpacker* student at the time and not yet a *stipp*, said that while she had originally planned to participate in the debate after being asked to do so, she had changed her mind when she realized the event was not going to be as serious in tone as she believed the theme warranted. “It was supposed to be fun,” she said, “and I did *not* want to play. I can’t be a part of a debate that’s a joke when it’s something I really stand for.” Sara had taken over for Vida and Vida was grateful for it, but when Sara asked her if she thought it should have been more serious Vida said, “absolutely. I think it was poorly done. I understand that’s not so fun.” Lila said that it was “hard” for her to debate on the “wrong side. We *know* we should eat less meat.” Sara said that she had employed humor as a technique to get students to engage. “Because it’s in front of this crowd, it’s best if it’s not serious. Then they don’t actually want to listen.” Evalina agreed. “It’s cool to pretend you don’t care.”

I rarely witnessed students argue with each other during conversations, and conflict, as I have mentioned, was not usually something students were eager to engage with. Perhaps it was because the debate had invited conflict through its format, even if it had not been as “serious” in tone as some students felt it should be, but the conversation I had with students afterwards felt less measured, more open than usual. The debate had changed the rules of engagement from agreement to dissent, and students were emboldened to follow suit in their own interactions afterwards. In this way, the school value of *samhandlinger* (interactions), was able to be achieved in a new way as students were able to speak with each other about important issues that they may not have broached on their own. There was a palpable shift in the social dynamic, one that students normally might have felt too uncomfortable with to engage with in any meaningful way, but in this social context, had received some sort of unspoken permission to do so. They were, in this case, encouraged to disrupt the sense of sameness that usually permeated their everyday social interactions.

Fig. 18: Vida and I at a rockstar-themed Funky Friday.

Through the debates, Vida emerged as a figure meant to serve as an inspiration for how the rest of the student body could engage with good difference in their eating habits. As one of the few vegetarian students on campus, her position in the minority was now viewed favorably, an embodiment of a lifestyle that could, and should, be aspired to. Vida was known for being more open in voicing her opinions than other students, and this, as I have mentioned before, caused her some discomfort in informal social settings from time to time. Even so, the other students in the conversation expressed admiration for her willingness to make consumer sacrifices for the sake of her principles and commended how knowledgeable she was on vegetarian practices. “I don’t want everyone to be vegetarians or vegans,” she said, “but I want everyone to have an open mind about eating less meat.” Vida told us that in her experience when she stopped eating meat, there were “ripples” that happened in her family and social circles. “[They found] it was really easy [to eat vegetarian],” she said. “It’s very childish that people don’t want to sacrifice anything. Norwegians eat twice the amount of meat they need. if you just cut that in half, your body will function better, and the production will go down and the climate is

better.” Vida’s assertions, I should add, reflect national statistics, where meat consumption per capita in Norway has more than doubled since 1960, reaching an all-time high in recent years (Animalia 2022).

Vida told me that it upset her that her fellow Norwegians didn’t understand or respect that her food choices were “for the good of everyone. For me it’s about climate. And that the next generation has to have a place to live. Meat production is the second worst source of global warming after energy use. We have to stop eating as much meat. I was surprised that there are so few vegetarians here. At my old school, we all cared about the climate and helped each other be better. Your friends really have a lot to say about it. I went to a very creative school; it was almost weird if you didn’t go to the demonstration for the climate. Everyone did the climate strike with Greta [Thunberg].” As she spoke, several other *Backpacker* students approached us with trays of pizza, selling slices for funds they planned to contribute to *Prosjekt: Moldova* (Project: Moldova). Many of the slices had been covered with pieces of pepperoni, an added incentive to get students to make the purchase as they had been eating vegetarian meals all week and were likely craving a bit of meat. We looked at each other before Evelina said, “I’ll take a vegetarian slice, thank you!”, to a chorus of our laughter. Vida’s influence, at least in this moment, had worked.

I also observed what I would call an informal debate that happened between staff regarding vegetarian offerings in the cafeteria. During a staff meeting that focused on a self-evaluation report the school had conducted with the intent of assessing its sustainability practices, vegetarian meals, and their cost, were central to the analysis. Two teachers, Jan and Håvard, had led the research, asking students to share their views on Grøndal’s more sustainable food initiatives, and inquiring if they were satisfied with the vegetarian food that was on offer. While the report had concluded that students overall were very happy with the meals Grøndal’s kitchen staff prepared, they had given mixed reviews about the vegetarian options that had been on offer. Marta remarked that she felt offering mediocre vegetarian food gave students a “bad impression” of a vegetarian lifestyle. “They should have a good experience with vegetarianism," she said. "Not just serving them cheese all the time. So, it's better to drop it rather than have something subpar." Annika, the head chef, expressed concerns over the expectations she felt students had with the sorts of vegetarian food the kitchen could realistically offer to them within the confines of their budget. "It's very expensive," she said. "I've thought about it many times. Maybe we need more money to make this happen." Annika said that preparing special food for Grøndal's few vegetarian students was also unsustainable because it took much longer to make and ended up wasting a lot of food. "We cut vegetables all day long," she said, "and then lots of it ends up in the trash. And we know that the students do like pancakes and tomato soup, so that won't be wasted." Rakel added that when she ate vegetarian meals, they were often expensive and that the students were probably used to eating similarly. "They don't know how hard it is to make meals out of a budget," she said. Martin, perhaps in a bid to smooth out the slight tension between the teaching and kitchen staff that had built in the room, suggested that teachers should give their classes a budget and instruct them to find a way to feed the whole school sustainably. "It'd be a fun project," he said, "and then they'll realize how much the kitchen does with the budget they have."

(IN)EQUALITY IN CONSUMER GOODS.

The tensions between cost, desire, and sustainable choices extended to other dimensions of students' consumer habits more broadly at Grøndal. Clothing, electronics, and fuel use were all topics of discussion in morning meetings, Saturday seminars, and classroom lessons, and students were invited to consider how their consumer behaviours fomented inequality between themselves and the people who made the products they used. This was most notably the case during the Saturday seminar that kicked off Green Week called *Sweatshop: dødsbillig mote* (Sweatshop: deadly-cheap fashion), led by a former fashion influencer named Freya who had starred on the *Aftenposten*[48] documentary by the same name several years prior. Grøndal's Saturday seminars, which were mandatory sessions scheduled each week during the school year, were designed to expose students to Norwegian “role models,” often people similar in age to them, who had displayed exemplary behavior in their communities or careers. One week one of my friends, a PhD candidate and NGO organizer from Indonesia, spoke at a seminar we co-organized; another Saturday, a young Norwegian athlete who had climbed the world’s seven highest mountain summits presented. Freya’s session focused on her experiences traveling to Cambodia to tour the factories where the clothing she recommended was made, and how viewing the violations against human rights that supported her clothing changed how she viewed both her job and her purchases. She had since become a “green influencer,” traveling to high schools, folk high schools, and universities to present on how to interact with clothing more equitably and was the type of role model Grøndal hoped students would emulate when it came to more conscientious consuming.

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[48] *Aftenposten* is Norway's largest printed newspaper. The company also produces digital media content, like "Sweatshop," which is posted on their web TV site.

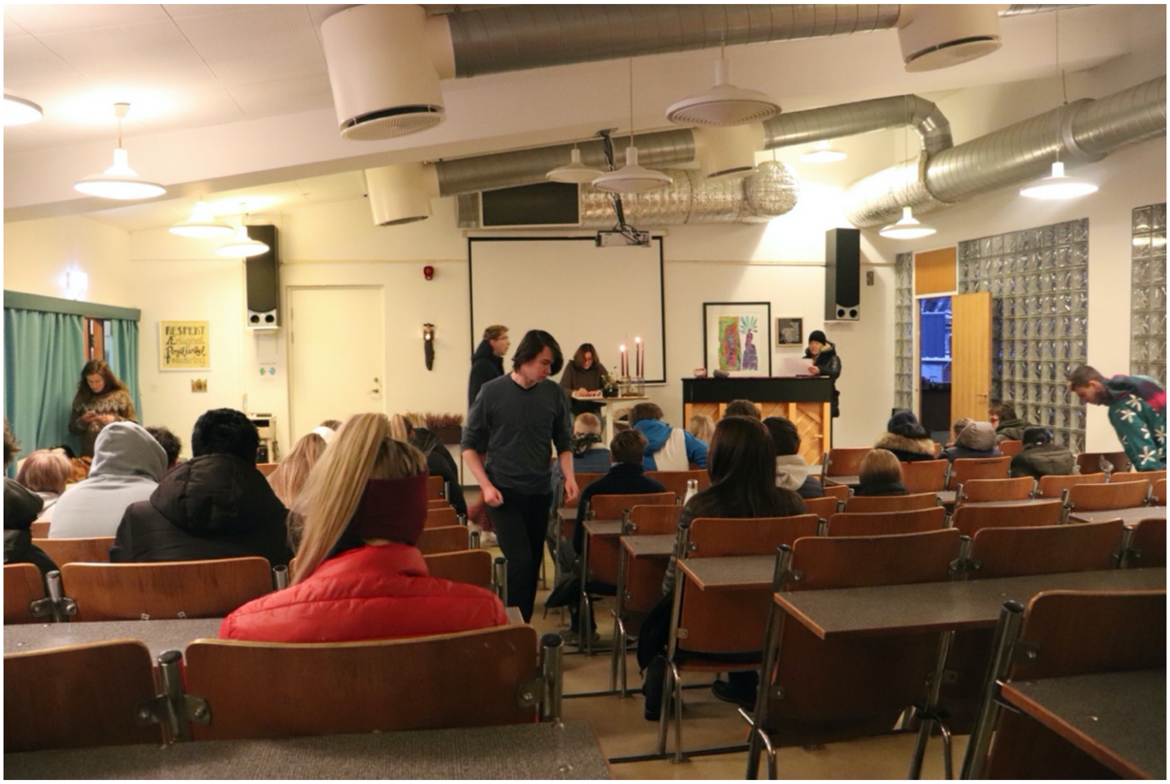

Fig. 19: Students enter the foredragssalen (lecture hall) for their daily morning assembly.

After showing the students an episode of the documentary, Freya told them she was eighteen when she visited Cambodia, just a bit younger than most of them currently were. “All of this comes flooding back, watching it again," she said, wearing an outfit composed of clothing she had thrifted and commanding attention despite her small frame. Freya described how prior to traveling to Cambodia, she had focused most of her energy on clothes, shoes, and popularity. "I wanted more, more, more," she said. "I think many Norwegian youths and certainly adults, too, feel this way. Norwegians love shopping. We buy lots of clothing, and we buy cheap clothes. But we don't ask, 'how does this affect the climate? How does this affect those who make the clothing?'" After discovering that the textile workers who made the clothing, she said she bought as a hobby worked twelve to seventeen hours a day, seven days a week, and suffered poor health and paltry wages, she decided that she could no longer participate in the system. "This is modern slavery," she said. "People are not treated as people." Instead of purchasing new clothing, Freya committed to buying only used items and sewing and repairing her clothes instead of replacing them. "So often people don't know what to do when they get this kind of information," she told the students. "In [Norwegian] culture," she said, "we constantly know so much about what's happening in the world, how many problems there are, how much hatred and war. We live in a little bubble, and we become desensitized to it. We don't receive the information. But maybe things like this put a little prick in our bubble." She told us that after the first season of the show went viral, she felt that people were "ready to see the truth." Despite a general openness to information, however, she said that many Norwegians she met during her talks were not able or willing to adequately process the human suffering shown onscreen. Freya said that students often felt overwhelmed by the enormity of the situation and felt immobilized to act, or that making personal changes wouldn't have any meaningful impact. "I'm just a 'nobody' can be the feeling with all of this," she said. "But if you are a drop in the ocean, and I am a drop in the ocean, we are *masse* (many). The collective 'us' is what makes a difference." Freya said that the contrast between Cambodia and Norway was "*sinssykt stort*" (insanely big), and that, after returning to Norway, she "laid in my bed, ate my mom's food, went to school for free. There were so many things in my life I had not been grateful for." Freya hadn't considered how her quality of life, in part, depended on the cheap labor that produced her consumer goods. "We are rich because they are poor," she said. Despite the vastness of the issue, Freya said that in addition to concrete ways to bypass fast fashion, students could also contribute to social justice movements that advocated for textile workers' rights. "Speak to your friends and family. Post on social media. Share campaigns. Be a part of political movements. Be engaged. When you make changes in your life, all of these small changes are seen by your friends and family. And these little changes make a better world." Freya concluded her presentation by telling students that, through action, they could show "*troen* (the faith, belief)" that the world could improve. "We need people to *tenne lys for fremtiden* (light candles for the future)," she told them. "And you can do that."

After the seminar, I noticed several students examining the tags in their clothes, reading where their items were made: *Bangladesh. Indonesia. Cambodia. Vietnam.* When I asked Silje and her boyfriend Arild, seated next to her, if they thought they and their fellow folk high school students would be willing to give up some of their consumer habits for the greater good of humanity, Arild nodded. "It'll take work," he said, "but Green Week will help. This is the one week where we are all about action. People who want to come up with ideas will do it. Will they be able to get the others along? The people who already care about this and want to take the lead will. But the others—" Silje interjected, "Lots of people here are wave-riders," she said. Arild agreed. "They're NPCs, nonplayable characters," he said. "It's a video game term. They're stand-ins. Everyone follows the crowd in some way, afraid to stand out. *Janteloven* is real."

JANTELOVEN: HAVING, OR BEING, THE SAME.

The subject of *Janteloven* and how it related to consumer habits on campus came up frequently in discussions I had with students over the course of my fieldwork. *Janteloven* is a cultural idea prevalent in Scandinavia, that no one should have more, stand out, or feel that they are superior to anyone else (Eriksen 1993). First referenced in 1933 in Aksel Sandemose's book *En flyktning krysser sitt spor* (A fugitive crosses his tracks), *Janteloven* refers to a list of rules residents in the in the fictional town of Jante followed to preserve social conformity and served as an allegorical critique for the "egalitarian individualism" Sandemose suggested characterizes Norwegian national identity (Eriksen 1993:16-17). I found that this ideology of so-called equality, one "which depreciates the original and the unusual [and] discourages brilliance and high achievements…" (Eriksen 1993: 19), also informed how Grøndal's students described their "conflict avoidance" in ethical matters relating consumer culture on campus. In a conversation I had with several boys, when they had recently arrived at school and had not yet experienced Green Week or Freya's seminar, they expressed how *Janteloven* influenced how they viewed their peers' relationships with consumer spending. "People go shopping as a social activity," Xavier told me. I've been influenced by it. Maybe some have the money to do so. They live like a consumer, buy new things and wait for the next paycheck." When I asked if Xavier would call someone else out on the amount of shopping they were doing, he said he wouldn't. "I can talk about what *I* do," he said, "but I can't tell others what *they* should do. Some have a greater need than others for shopping. We can't judge them." Audun added, "*Janteloven* contributes to that. I myself want to be more conscious about my decisions with what I buy, but the furthest I would go telling someone else would be with an ironic comment." For those who might want to take a leadership role in influencing their peers to be more sustainably focused, Audun said it could have an opposite effect. "I think that's also connected to *Janteloven*," he said. "There are some people standing out and trying to take a leadership role and that can backfire: 'who do you think they are?' I feel often people have to give someone the role to be the leader, you can't just take it. You're not better than anyone else. It has to be given to you."

Here, I return to Bourdieu's work on habitus, as I find it a useful concept in framing how *Janteloven* informed perceptions of sameness and difference for Grøndal's students when it came to their consumer habits. Bourdieu writes:

> Habitus makes different differences; they implement distinctions between what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, between what is distinguished and what is vulgar, and so on, but they are not the same. Thus, for instance, the same behaviour or even the same good can appear distinguished to one person, pretentious to someone else, and cheap or showy to yet another.
>
> — *Bourdieu, 1996*

Differentiating difference within the same, or similar, behaviors, was also a part of how *Janteloven* contributed to what kind of purchases Grøndal's students said were socially acceptable or not to make. Thor said that his friends were increasingly spending more money on luxury brands, and Audun agreed. "This is a new thing," he said. "There were brands before, but there is a culture about it now. It creates a *samhold* (unity) with people who wear these clothes. They belong." Talking about consumer purchases one made, however, was *not* acceptable Audun told me. "We're all taught to be this way," he said. "It's also *Janteloven*. We don't like people who brag too much. They should show it, not say it. Then it's accepted. Then we applaud. It's frowned upon to brag." Social media, the boys said, presented a "grey area" between "showing and telling" as photos and texts of one's accomplishments or material possessions held unequal weight. "It depends on what they write or how they show it with a picture," said Xavier. "It could be bragging, and then you feel like you're not showing, you're telling. If they show it in a more casual way, then it's okay."

While bragging about having more than others was not socially acceptable, neither was not having the same consumer products as everyone else, as this could cause students to "stand out" from their peers. "It can be social suicide to stand out too much," said Thor. Audun agreed. "It's the age. Your friends are like family in high school. You want to fit in. Friends can be more important than family." Another student, Emma, expressed similar views in a separate conversation. "[In Norway], you have the same types of clothes, the same kind of makeup," she told me. "In this culture, you have to be perfect all the time. The people who are being themselves [are considered] strange. Everyone dresses the same. It's not natural to have different clothes and to be unique. One person says so and we follow." In addition to everyday clothing, the Norwegian national dress, *bunad*, also represented a place of sameness and difference for students when they were encouraged to wear theirs at Grøndal's closing ceremonies.[49] *Bunad* are intricately embroidered, ornately decorated, and take dozens of hours to make; as such, they are very expensive and only families who are well off enough to purchase them own them. Most students received theirs as gifts during their confirmations, but this was not the case for everyone, and those whose families couldn't afford them had to wear other clothes for graduation. Even within this important visual marker of Norwegian national identity, students' difference in economic status was on display.

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[49] See photo on page two for visual reference.

The tension between *Janteloven* and Norwegians' material wealth in relation to the rest of the world's population also came up frequently in conversations I had with students and staff. I interpreted the discomfort my research participants had with their wealth as a certain self-consciousness over being privileged, over knowing that most people could not access the same standard of living that they themselves enjoyed. In other words, having wealth confronted their wish for both equality *and* sameness; students simply could not fathom how the systems that supported their comfortable lifestyles also oppressed the people who made their consumer goods, and this disparity in both quality of life and access to material resources caused them a great deal of concern. Students often chalked up the issue to Norwegians being "selfish," usually reducing the dynamic in economic disparities on a global scale to that of a personal issue. "Most Norwegians are selfish," said Liv. "It's hard to care about these things. Next year when I live alone, I have to do what's most economic for me. It's better for my wallet to just [buy fast fashion]." Keilin expressed similar sentiments but linked her personal consumer choices with state logic. "Norwegians are not good at giving things up," she said. "It's not easy to give up a luxurious life, I get that. I'm probably guilty of it myself. Money is the issue behind a lot of things. For example, in Norway, we maybe don't need the oil for anything other than the money. We have other forms of energy. But Norway is greedy."

Anna widened the scope of human greed beyond that of herself, the Norwegian people, or the Norwegian state; "humans in general, we need more, more, more," she said. "Maybe that's in our nature. In ancient times we had to get everything we needed to survive. Now maybe we need *more* to survive; it's very addicting to get more money, more shopping, even though it's not sustainable." Freya, too, described how the Norwegian standard of living could not be feasibly extended to global populations without furthering climate disaster. "I've heard so many times throughout my life, in school," she said, "that we need to get poor people out of poverty, that they need more wealth. But nobody's talking about the fact that if everyone was to live like Norwegians, we'd have to have three earths [to accommodate that standard of living]. Our emissions are way too high. Of course, we need to get some people up, but we have to be willing to take our emissions down. We're too materialistic, I feel." Similarly to how students described that eating more ethically was financially out of reach for them, students also said that even if they wanted to be less materialistic or environmentally conscious in their clothing purchases, it wasn't possible for them, considering the lack of more sustainable options available in Norway. "There aren't that many good secondhand stores here," said Vida. "You have to live in Oslo to have them." Liv said, "The secondhand stores in Oslo, though, they're not cheaper than other stores." Silje added, "A lot of our used clothes get sent elsewhere. Out of the country. I can't speak for all." Despite these constraints, Vida said that Norwegians "know the truth" about clothing production and the impact it has on the environment and human life. "I stopped buying new clothes a year ago," she said. "I buy second-hand, I knit, I sew." "Everyone knows the truth," echoed Silje. "We don't want to acknowledge it. You can't say 'I'm for the climate' and not sacrifice anything. But a lot of people aren't ready."

While students often expressed having difficulty with making more environmentally conscious consumer choices, the folk high school model of embodied learning provided them with concrete ways to experiment with more sustainable living. An elective called *ReDesign*, taught by Lisa, gave students tips and techniques for repairing and upcycling old clothing and furniture, all while doing so with a focus on artistic expression. These skills were transferred to the rest of the student body during Green Week, when she and several of her students hosted a clothing repair workshop in the art room, teaching students how to spool sewing machines and patch worn clothes. Karl, using a sewing machine for the first time, told me that when he discovered his ski pants had a hole in them, he thought he'd have to buy a new pair, but when Vida taught him how to sew, he fixed them instead. "I spent an hour and a half on them," he said, "and I saved the world through ski pants!" He laughed. "It's not hard to fix things. And it's fun!" Lisa told me that she was surprised and delighted by the student turnout to the workshop; "So many came to repair their clothes," she said, "It was just fantastic!" Lisa said that she felt the best way for students to learn was by “doing” and that she was happy to see how students had “inspired” each other during Green Week in a positive way. “Lots of *kule jenter* (cool girls) set an example, that it’s cool to fix clothes and make clothes. Vida is like that. Students don’t mind wearing used clothes, it’s more trendy to fix clothing now. Students’ attitudes make a big difference.”

Not every Green Week activity, however, was equally suited to all members of Grøndal’s student body. One event in particular, a clothing swap that took place one evening in the the *dagligstue* (the main common area), revealed that differences in students’ bodies invited, or precluded, students from full participation. The swap had been organized by two *stipps* who had asked students to bring pre-worn items of clothing they no longer wanted that they could trade for other students’ equally unwanted pieces. Clothing had been folded and arranged by style—athletic wear, sweaters, t-shirts, dresses—and stacked in piles on sofas and various coffee tables around the room. Students browsed the selections, holding up items to their bodies, asking their friends if they thought something suited them, before taking pieces into the bathroom down the hall to try on. Most of the clothing sizes appeared very small to me and I said so to Vida: “I wonder if some students who have larger bodies might feel left out of this.” “I’m sure they do,” she said, “but there’s always the option to organize a swap online so more people can contribute. It’s only us here, and these are the sizes that are mostly represented.” Karl said the same. “Maybe if there was a Facebook group with people who are similarly sized,” he said. “But I get it; the only thing I could trade would be clothes. I don’t read a lot of books, but that could be an idea.” Karl said that he was glad to have the chance to swap clothing, as being one of the only students on campus who paid his own fees, he didn’t have much of a budget for buying new items. “Plus, it’s a *fellesskap* (community) thing,” he said. “You feel some sort of pride seeing your clothes on someone else.” For students who wore straight-sized clothing, the embodied feeling of sharing community through clothing was readily available. For students who did not and had possibly already experienced feeling othered during meals or activities due to the size of their bodies, the clothing swap presented another realm where their difference precluded them from full participation. In this way, students could not fully achieve equality with their peers during the clothing swap unless their bodies fit the items shared. In other words, there were limits to how students could fully participate in the sort of sustainable options available to them on campus, and the importance of sameness in body size in the clothing swap, and other forms of clothes sharing, was tacitly implied.

Still, most students said that they welcomed the different kind of atmosphere Grøndal generated when it came to consumer practices where students' appearances, and the need to conform, were not as important as they had been in the social worlds of *videregående* (high school) they had come from. Silje told me that this was one reason why she felt Freya's seminar was valuable for her self-development. "This is the time we grow the most," she said. "If we get to hear people speak about important topics, that will be a part of shaping us." Silje said that attending Grøndal had changed her perception of people in her age group and "opened [her] eyes" to the sort of person a young adult could be. "I wasn't used to people my age being good people," she said. "I was used to people not caring and just being really, really self-centered. But here, people care. There's hope for people my age as well." For Silje, the selfishness she said that typified her generation was not valued at Grøndal, which had influenced her new-found wish to be more conscious in her consumer habits. Anna agreed. "I feel like I'm better than lots of my other friends [off campus]," she said, "and that's because I go here and have had all these lectures, Freya coming, for example, and talking about the clothing industry." Even though Anna had been inspired by Freya to stop purchasing new clothes, she admitted she still usually did anyway. "Now, though, when I buy new clothes I have a lump in my stomach," she said, "because I know the people who make them are working in horrible conditions. At the same time, it's easy to say, 'everyone is else is doing it, so fuck it', kind of." Jona, a *stipp*, put it this way: "We can know about these things, but we have a long way to go," she said. "It's not just done in a day. I think people need to understand that they have to make a change for themselves. It doesn't help if we think, 'others are not thinking about it, why should I?' We have to bring it into our lifestyles." For Jona, knowing was contingent on doing and being exposed to the information about clothing production necessitated changes in her own consumer habits. Jona also said that she thought Green Week was useful for students, in that they were taught skills they could take with them in their lives after leaving Grøndal. "I think students thought that the clothing workshop was fun and maybe they were inspired. Maybe they found out that vegetarian food isn't that bad after all." Lisa, echoing Jona's hope that students would take some of the skills they had learned during Green Week into their lives after graduation, also noted that Jona herself was an inspiration for how students could commit to more sustainable practices. In a conversation we had over the summer, Lisa said Vida and Karl's participation in Green Week was one reason why that had both been appointed for *stipp* roles for the upcoming academic year. "Vida is already good at this," she said. "During the climate debate, she was asked to do it but felt it wasn't taken seriously enough and declined taking part. Karl, too, will be good. He was sewing and repairing his pants during the sewing workshop. It was so fun to see!"

CONCLUSION.

In this chapter, I've examined how the eating and consumer habits displayed at Grøndal more broadly informed how students prioritized sameness among themselves in the folk high school's student body. By promoting good difference in food and clothing, however, Grøndal's pedagogy invited a social world where students could experience a community where difference was valued instead of avoided, especially in terms of producing more equitable relationships with the environment or people elsewhere. *Janteloven*, as a prescribed form of equality predicated on sameness, threatened this project, as students who did not want to "stand out" articulated a sense of apprehension in appearing different or "better than" their peers. Through inspiration, however, teachers, guest speakers, and exemplary students demonstrated how engaging with more equitable and sustainable consumer habits was possible, and a worthy aim to develop on individual and collective registers. This did not mean that everyone was unilaterally included in these aims, as the clothing swap made visible, but it did mean that students were exposed to different ways of interacting with consumer behavior in such a way that could yield positive social and environmental outcomes. Even if these activities represented a "drop in the ocean" in the face of global poverty and wide-scale environmental degradation, the overarching message was that students should still contribute to forms of equality that were within reach, and in so doing could generate a broader sense of community in the world writ large.

In this way, we see how the sub-values of equality, sameness and difference, per Dumont's hierarchy of value (1980), reversed depending on the context in which they were invoked. Good forms of sameness, as in eating and cooking the same foods together, offered a sense of community and a "collective self" (Tierney and Ohnuki-Tierney 2012: 121) for Grøndal's students, one in which the student body was nourished and contained. On the other hand, unwanted forms of conformity, as illustrated by Gullestad's "equality as sameness" also precluded equality from happening, when students experienced social pressures to eat the same amount and inhabit bodies that were similarly sized. This desire for sameness, too, translated into hierarchies that related to *janteloven*, where standing out in consumer habits was viewed unfavorably, and represented an unacceptable wish to "stand out."
As Bruun et al. (2011) note:

> [In Scandinavian families,] economic inequalities are actively downplayed; in spite of high incomes, consumption is moderated so that it does not exceed what is 'enough'. Phenomena that do not "serve needs for practical functions but exist solely to create hierarchy" are considered improper because they distract the family from 'real' things and relations… (10).

Similarly, forms of unethical or excess consumption at Grøndal were generally viewed unfavorably, with one exception: the international study trips students planned to take with their classes each spring. And while food and clothing represented realms for experimenting with good student difference and the possibility for ethical action, no other consumer habit presented as much moral ambiguity for students and staff as Grøndal's international study trips. "Sometimes I think the *bærekraft* (sustainability) projects we do are a bit stupid," said Rakel. "How is this really doing anything? We know [the problem is] the trips. When Håvard showed us the carbon emissions we used [in 2019] you can clearly see it's the traveling. We could do literally everything else sustainably but then adding a flight, it pushes us back over immediately.” In the chapter that follows, I describe the challenges Grøndal’s staff faced in delivering the study trips that students had paid for amidst pandemic restrictions and environmental concerns. I focus primarily on the trip that the *Backpacker* teachers, Lisa and Jan, led to Northern Norway and assess how the different forms of movement that students encountered during the trip informed how they viewed their relationships with their national identity, the environment, and each other.

CHAPTER 5/

THE BODY IN MOVEMENT: ENVIRONMENT.

Ut på tur, aldri sur (out on a trip, never upset).

-A common Norwegian saying

Fig. 20: The Backpacker class at the airport, masked, briefed, and ready for Alta.

INTRODUCTION.

In March of 2021, I travelled with Grøndal's *Backpacker* class on their study trip to the region of Finnmark in Northern Norway. For this trip, we flew 1,700 km from Norway's capital city, Oslo, to Alta, a town not far from Norway's north cape. The *Backpacker* class was composed of twenty-three Norwegian students between the ages of nineteen and twenty-one who had enrolled in the course in order to learn how to plan backpacking trips in Norway and further afield, which would culminate in a three-week backpacking trip to Australia and the Philippines. Due to the pandemic restrictions that were in place during the 2020/2021 school year, however, the international trip was cancelled, and the *Backpacker* teachers, Lisa and Jan, were tasked with planning a trip that they hoped would emulate the goals of their usually scheduled international trip but within the limits of domestic travel. Lisa and Jan viewed the unforeseen change in plans as an opportunity to experience more of Norway and to teach their students about school values through workshops with people who Lisa said were Norway's "national heroes": Randi Lyngdal, a Norwegian dog sled champion, and Anders Ulf Karlsen, the owner of Alta's Lohijoki resort, who had used his snowmobile as a tool of protest during the Alta controversy demonstrations in the 1980s. These meetings, Lisa said, along with physical activities *ute i naturen* (out in nature), would provide an opportunity for students to "get out of their comfort zones" and be inspired by Norwegian figures who had done the same by withstanding extreme weather conditions on dog sled or snowmobile. By "being there," and engaging with similar embodied experiences as some of Norway's national heroes, the trip to Finnmark would reinforce historical fact with present-day encounters for the *Backpacker* students.

Fig. 21: Teachers Jan and Lisa during a school-wide hike in the mountains.

Despite their excitement over planning the trip North, Jan and Lisa also expressed feeling a sense of pressure to provide their students with a quality trip that was equally as valuable, and memorable, as the class's previous trips to Australia and the Philippines had been for former students. The *Backpacker* students made frequent comments comparing their trip to both the class's past trips, and the trips that Grøndal's other classes were currently taking, a circumstance Lisa described as being unfortunate, and constituting a sort of behavior she did not welcome. Indeed, these comparisons brought forth unwanted differences between students, which impeded Grøndal's paramount value of equality from being realized among the student body (Dumont 1980). In addition, the forms of movement we encountered on the trip were designed to forge social cohesion among students through a sense of sameness in embodied activities, as students were meant to move as a single moving mechanism by dog sled and snowmobile. By relying on each other, students were able to move forward in both their personal development and trust as a cohesive social unit, as well as in an affective capacity that represented how moving forward together feels. This sense of moving equally, both literally and figuratively, was contingent on students engaging with good discomfort, meant to get them "out of their comfort zones" physically and relationally. While most students welcomed the chance to overcome challenges together, several students also expressed a sense of unwanted discomfort they associated with feeling left out by their peers. As much as these activities generated equality among most students, they also presented a place where student difference was especially visible for some. The discomfort the *Backpacker* students engaged with during our trip to Alta, however, contrasted the sorts of discomfort associated with the achievements of the "national heroes" we met on our trip. These contrasts revealed differences in Norwegians, both generationally and geographically, and positioned these figures as inspirational for overcoming the sorts of challenges few contemporary young Norwegians encounter today. This new form of Norwegian "comfort," students and staff said, was the result of Norway's oil industry and welfare state, which had produced a standard of living that problematized the vision of Norwegian ruggedness and resilience, and in turn, revealed a discomfort with Norway's wealth more broadly.

The most “uncomfortable” dimension of the trip, one that could not be overcome, was the carbon emissions associated with it and its contributions to climate change. As Thomas Hylland Eriksen has noted, “Climate change, largely a product of human activities, is arguably the most comprehensive and dramatic challenge facing humanity” (2021:1), a position Lisa and her students echoed when I asked them about it, despite their desire to take the trip North as planned. Eriksen writes that climate change has been discussed as a consequence of the “growth paradigm and uncertainties produced by modernity” (2021: 3) an outcome of over-consumption, carbon dependency, and global capitalism. This growth, Eriksen argues, has resulted in “accelerated” social lives where “human beings produce, communicate, and transport more and more” (2021: 3), a phenomenon evident in the *Backpacker* class’s desire to travel as far as they could under the pandemic related travel restrictions. This relationship with air travel, and fuel, is one that Eriksen relates to energy exploitation and capitalist growth, one that “…bears within it an inevitable element of destruction (Hornborg 2019) in a dual sense, since we are simultaneously exhausting resources which it has taken the planet millions of years to produce, and undermining the conditions for our own civilisation by altering the climate and ruining the environment on which we rely” (2021: 3).

Stefan Daalsgard has remarked on the nature of carbon commodification in global markets, as fossil fuel use valuation has taken on “different moral, political, and economic discourses stemming from climate change” (2013: 81). This phenomenon is especially relevant in Scandinavia, where Daalsgard has conducted research on market campaigns from the Danish transport sector. Daalsgard writes that carbon has emerged as part of a “moral consumer economy” that denotes a certain “intangibility” for consumers, as carbon is “not an object or a commodity that is produced or consumed in any classical sense” (2013: 82). This disembodied, invisible quality of carbon use was especially relevant for the *Backpacker* class, as students often said the carbon emissions associated with our trip didn’t feel “real.” Despite the knowledge that the trip North would contribute to environmental degradation, the “intangibility” of it resulted in a minimization of the impact our trip would have on the climate.

This echoes similar sentiments of “denial” Kari Norgaard (2011) identified in her fieldwork in a rural Norwegian community where increasingly volatile winters due to climate change have interfered with local tourism. Drawing on psychology, sociology, and anthropology, Norgaard asks argues that people tend to rationalize their unsustainable choices by minimizing their impact and compartmentalizing their actions.

In this chapter, I assess similar patterns of minimization and justification that emerged when the *Backpacker* students and staff weighed the “cost” of their carbon use against the benefits of the trip to Alta. As a locus for providing equality among themselves as a class, while also perpetuating ineqaulity through the carbon emissions associated with the trip, the journey North represented a site of competing values that illuminated how sameness and difference were negotiated through environmental concerns, capitalist growth models relating to travel, and the ethical dimensions of carbon use. In this way, the trip presented a good deal of moral ambiguity for my research participants, as they expressed that traveling during the pandemic was accompanied by a sense of “travel shame” as it revealed the inequalities between themselves and their fellow Norwegians, many of whom were in regionally specific lockdowns that prohibited them from traveling outside their city limits. For students and teachers hoping to embody school values, the body came to present a site of tension as traveling during the pandemic also meant that their bodies could become vectors of Covid-19. Similar feelings of ethical ambiguity around our flight North were also expressed by the *Backpacker* teachers and several *Backpacker* students, as concerns over how our flight would contribute to climate change were a present point of discussion. Students expressed to me feeling tensions between wanting the experiences they, or their parents, had paid for while also being uncomfortable with the inequality these trips highlighted, both in their position as travelers as Norwegians while most of Norway’s cities were in lockdown and as a result of the carbon emissions associated with the trip. Despite their reservations, all the *Backpacker* students decided to take the trip north, a circumstance that revealed how reticent they were to forgo the trip and demonstrate difference amongst their peers. In this way, the “experience” of being in Alta, as a mechanism for developing good forms of discomfort, group cohesion, and national pride, superseded concerns relating to environmental degradation or public health.

MOVING BY FLIGHT.

On the Monday before our trip north, I receive a text message from Lisa: “Can you come to the *dagligstue* (common area)? Our flight to Alta has been canceled.” I enter the room to find all of Grøndal’s teachers gathered, all in similar positions, with each of the flights for their trips during the schoolwide travel weeks now canceled due to new coronavirus restrictions. They are scattered across the room seated on modern Scandinavian sofas and huddled over their laptops typing feverishly, or on their phones with their respective airline’s customer service representatives, desperate to find a way for their trips to be rescheduled and go forward as planned. Today was meant to be a planning day for the trips so students don’t have any classes; instead, they are off playing volleyball, cleaning their rooms, or enjoying the early spring sunshine on walks to the local grocery store. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to them, coronavirus had touched our school bubble, if not literally then metaphorically, with each of their trips in jeopardy and the threat of cancelation hanging in the room. Jan, next to Lisa, is attempting to rebook flights for upwards of twenty students and staff, and mutters, “Is this trip really necessary? Oslo is closing, Kristiansand is closing, now the virus is spreading to these places up north, too.” He had been on hold with Scandinavian Airlines for the last 25 minutes, only to have just had his call dropped without warning.

Lisa looks at me with a tired smile. “We have to be ready for anything,” she says. She’s in her mid-forties, but her decades of playing sports and spending time outdoors skews her appearance younger; she is the definition of *strålende* (brilliant, radiant), even in the midst of her present challenge. Rakel, the only teacher for her class, *Action og Bistand* (Action and Aid), is alone in her corner of the room and in a similar position. “This was not how we had planned to spend the day,” she says ruefully, her cellphone glued to her ear, also on hold with Scandinavian Airlines. Annette and Hilde, Grøndal’s principal and vice principal, are nearby, providing whatever support they can to teachers in crisis mode. “I found a flight!” exclaims Jan suddenly, a triumphant look on his face. He pauses. “It’s more expensive, though.” Jan is a former Grøndal student still in his mid-twenties, but with a confidence and joviality that gives him a sense of authority despite his age. He often says that he is the “potato” of the staff: “I can be used in many ways,” he says with a smile. He’s usually most needed providing sound tech for school performances and, in the role he is working with today, assisting as a chaperone on school trips. Presently, he and Lisa decide to book the flights he has found despite their higher price, and the trip is rescheduled to go forward as planned. Lisa tells me that she is relieved that the students will receive the trip they had paid for after all but says that “if it was up to me, I would *not* go.” She tells me that she feels a sense of pre-flight *skam* (shame), imagining walking through the Oslo airport with her large backpack in tow, a group of students surrounding her and sporting the same, preparing to fly in the middle of a global pandemic. The Norwegian government has just announced that further restrictions will be put into effect on Monday afternoon, while we will be flying high above the newly formed rules en route to Alta, but we are not currently sure what those will be. “We just have to travel while we can,” she says. “It’s a once-in-a-lifetime trip for the students.”

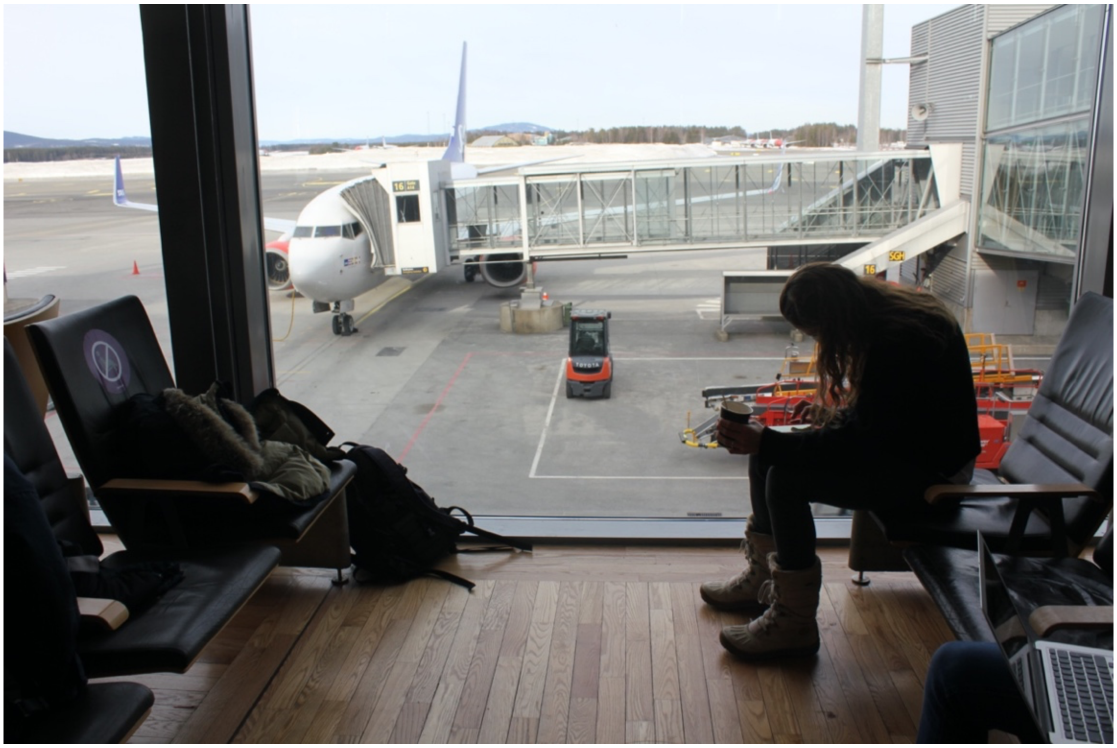

Fig. 22: Lisa checks for Covid-19 updates from the Norwegian Ministry of Health.

Indeed, the rhetoric of a “once-in-a-lifetime” experience informed my own decision to join the *Backpacker* class on a carbon-intensive flight during both a global pandemic and climate crisis. I had never been as far north as our itinerary planned to take us, and most of the students going on the trip hadn’t either; one student, named Inga, told me that she was happy to be “forced” to travel inside Norway’s borders. “Whenever I chose to travel, it’s *always* south,” she said, “to Spain or Greece. I would never have chosen going to Finnmark on my own.” We are in a bus on our way to the Gardermoen airport, outside of Oslo, our giant rucksacks carefully stacked one on top of the other in the back trunk. We arrive at the airport, don our facemasks, and move together through security and towards the gate; despite any reservations we may have concerning our trip, there is a collective *reisefeber* (directly translated “travel fever,” an excitement for travel) in anticipation for the first flight most of us will have taken since the beginning of the pandemic.

Once onboard, we ascend fluidly, many of us playing games on our phones or chatting quietly with the student or teacher next to us. I sit at a window seat, observing the view of Norway below. After several minutes, the pines and farms dissolve into only snow, glacial; bruised and blushed scattered blues are reflected in the late afternoon sun. The land is split only by rivers, dark and silent. Untouched. Pure. I imagined walking in that vast purity, breaking the frozen silence with my feet. Flying isn’t really an embodied experience; takeoff and landing are the only parts you feel unless you get some pesky turbulence. Otherwise, you’re just floating, streaming, your body not processing the inertia of it. It’s too fast to feel the miles. It’s too abstract to feel the fuel burning beneath you. I think about the carbon emissions that are being emitted to sustain this silent soaring, the oil slick in the engine beneath us that causes this kind of otherworldly glide miles above the earth. It’s no wonder that those of us who are lucky enough to afford flying often do it as much as we can: the sense of freedom and ease contribute to an ownership of the world sprawling below us that is unparalleled. There’s a reason humans tend to envy birds.

(IN)EQUALITY IN TRAVEL.

Lisa told me that when planning the trip to Finnmark, she and Jan had hoped to take the train instead of flying, as they felt that taking the train would be more of a “backpacker” kind of activity and a “greener” mode of transportation. Taking a train all the way to Alta, however, she said, would not be possible, as the Norwegian railways end in Bodø, 770 kms southwest of Finnmark’s capital city. Lisa said that they could have taken the train part of the way and then transfer to bus, but train fare in Norway is very expensive and flying is almost always more affordable. “That wasn’t the way it was when I was their age,” Lisa tells me. “When I was traveling then, we didn’t even think about taking the plane. The bus or train was much cheaper.” Lisa and Jan had also considered a trip to Svalbard, the Norwegian archipelago situated between mainland Norway and the North Pole but said that Finnmark felt safer and wasn’t as expensive to reach. Finnmark also required fewer, even if not considerably fewer, carbon emissions to reach by flight from Oslo, a bonus in Lisa and Jan’s view. “We also wanted to do the Sámi Experience,” she said. “That’s the main reason we chose to go to Alta.” Lisa said that she felt the Sámi Experience, a tourist offering led by Sámi guides that featured a reindeer sleigh ride and a shared meal in a traditional Sámi dwelling, would give students the chance to interact with Indigenous people in a similar way the trip to Australia and the Philippines normally did, albeit the Sámi in Finnmark rather than the Aboriginals in Australia. The trips to the Philippines and Australia, and now Finnmark, Lisa told me, were meant to be “trips with meaning.” Meaningfulness, in this respect, was made by generating an appreciation for cultural difference, and for students to examine how their own lives compared with the contacts they would make with people outside of Norway. For most of these trips, inequalities in socioeconomic statuses between Grøndal’s students and international contacts were made visible, an important part of experiential learning the folk high school sought to create.

While Lisa and Jan were limited by the sort of experiential-based programming that privileged new or different experiences they could offer students amidst pandemic related travel restrictions, Lisa said that they felt traveling as far as they could within Norway’s borders could still present the sort of “exotic” trip that students craved. “Most of our students now have traveled to Spain, or elsewhere in Europe," she told me, "And in order for the folk high school to get the students [to enroll], we have to travel to more interesting places, further and further away." This was one reason why Lisa and Jan had chosen to organize a trip that would travel the entire length of Norway, as it would give students the maximum distance they could travel within the parameters of pandemic restrictions. Lisa said that she felt, however, that there should be further rules in how often, and how far, folk high school trips should be allowed to travel: "the students want more and more, and it has to stop somewhere. We have to have some rules for the trips." Recently, most of the folk high schools, including Grøndal, had discussed introducing some such regulations, or at least suggested guidance, into the number of trips their classes were allowed to take. In 2019, the folk high school council recommended that schools limit international trips to one per class, but Lisa told me that not every teacher at Grøndal agreed over these new limits. "It's different for the *Reiseliv* (Tourism) line," she said. "Martin's [the class's primary teacher] philosophy is to travel as much as the money the students pay can take them." But when *Backpacker* was asked to eliminate its yearly trip to Scotland in an effort to reduce the line's carbon usage, Lisa said her response was, "Of course! We *have* to reduce the trips. It's good for us to get a little bit pushed to find new ways of traveling." The football teacher, Håvard, had collected the data for how many carbon emissions each line was responsible for in the 2019/2020 schoolyear, and Lisa said that looking at the numbers was inspiring, in that it encouraged her to imagine more sustainable ways of being at the folk high school, while seeing the facts. "I knew it, but to see the numbers made it all more clear. The goal is to reduce the climate emissions from now until 2025 for the folk high schools in general. We all have to make a difference."

Because Norwegian folk high schools are voluntarily attended, each of the 85 schools must compete with the others in order to secure enough students to stay in business. This was one reason why reducing, or eliminating the study trips entirely, posed a challenge for Grøndal; without them, staff believed that they wouldn't attract enough students to remain open. Jens, the school priest, told me that it was the trips that saved the folk high school network in the 1980s, when the schools had fallen out of popularity, and many were on the brink of closure.

“Travel exploded,” he said. “That’s how we survived.” Marta, another *Backpacker* teacher who was on maternity leave during the trip to Alta, told me that, originally, folk high schools were more about skill development rather than experiences, but that “with traveling, there is a lot that happens in learning: making a fire outside, packing warm enough clothes, for example. That’s worth learning.” Rakel, too, referenced the early days of skill-based learning, telling me it was her “dream” that the folk high schools could return to those sorts of pedagogical offerings. “But we know we can’t just completely cut the trips,” she said. “We won’t survive.” Competing for students meant that most folk high schools organized similar study trips for students to choose from. This was not the case for all schools, however; there were several that had a stronger focus on *bærekraft* (environmental sustainability) or *friluftsliv* (outdoor life) and offered experiences that were specifically designed to be more carbon neutral. “You have sustainable schools that have farming and all that stuff,” Marta told me. “They have a niche, and they are well-attended.” Grøndal, however, was already well-established as a sports and travel-based school, and staff did not feel there were enough potential students to go around should they switch to being solely sustainably focused. “We couldn’t do *Reiseliv* (Tourism) without traveling,” Martin told me. “I can’t go back to where I was 30 years ago with a more theoretical approach, that has changed. They’re so tired of it from high school, all the theory. They want to experience things in practice.” Ultimately, most folk high schools remain in business today due to the international trips they offer, and these trips tend to take on similar qualities that promise experiences that students have normally not yet had in their travels prior. The cultural, and social, capital garnered by taking these trips cannot be understated: one Instagram post Grøndal posted during the school’s study trip to Italy the year prior featured a photo of students smiling in front of the Trevi Fountain in Rome and was captioned *“reise er det eneste du kjøper som gjør deg rikere”* (travel is the only thing you can buy that makes you richer).

Bo Stråth has identified relationships between capitalism and egalitarian individualism in both the folk high school movement and in the development of Norway’s welfare state. Farmers and peasants, he writes, were viewed as both symbols of the emerging state as well as actors in the commercialization of markets in the 19th century (2018). In the wake of post-revolutionary Europe, Stråth suggests:

> …the Nordic countries managed to keep the tension between freedom and equality under better control than elsewhere in Europe… Norden became, in some sense, more equal than many other societies, and the people's movements were crucial in this development. When trying to come to terms with new kinds of inequalities when industrial capitalism was spreading, the people's movements gave the debate a particular twist. Ideals of equality were connected to ideals of positive freedom following Isaiah Berlin and to ideals of self-realization through *bildning* (2018: 49).

As I have mentioned, the folk high school movement was critical for the development of *bildning* (*dannelse* in Norwegian) in the Nordics, a key element of egalitarian individualism and a guiding principle for social democracy to take shape in the region. As a part of *dannelse*, the folk high school founder, N.F.S. Grundtvig, encouraged both religious and political participation, encouraging the establishment of farmers' cooperatives and a farmers' party for political reforms (2018: 57). This "individual liberty within a collective identification" provided by local self-governing coalitions in the peasant and working-class communities led to a "Nordic Sonderweg" in which democracy and capitalism co-existed in the service of both economic growth and social integration. This was a model that the social democrats later built upon to develop a program for social democracy in Norway (Sejersted 2005).

It comes as no surprise, then, that capitalist logic remains a part of the folk high school network today. This was revealed at several turns during my fieldwork, when the school incentivized fund-raising initiatives by offering cash prizes to the highest student-earners, for example, or in the frequent staff meetings about how best to promote the folk high school courses to attract enough students to secure the necessary financial support from the Norwegian government. Here again, we find Vike's work on individualism, equality and the welfare state (2023) central to understanding how students viewed the trips as a metric of their own (in)equality in relation to their peers. So, too, did Grøndal's individual program leaders feel the pressure to give students what they had paid for in a way that felt equal among the student body. "Students compare trips," said Lisa. "I wish they didn't, but they do." She said that social media in particular gave students a platform for comparison, as each of the classes' Instagram profiles posted stories that students regularly viewed and compared. "There's more comparison happening now," she told me, "Especially with *Reiseliv.* It's also fun to follow, but there is more of a competition now who has the best trip, who has the best experiences. It didn't use to be that way." I also witnessed the *Backpacker* students regularly comparing their class's social media posts to those of Grøndal's other programs, noting when *Action og Bistand* went on a paintballing outing, for example, saying that they should be allowed to go on a similar trip, too. Rakel also disliked these forms of comparison, as she believed each class should have its own specific profile that created a sense of difference than the others. "It's been hard to do that during Corona," she said. "We have fewer options for activities, so all of the students are doing the same thing." This blurring between sameness and difference in activities also presented a site of tension for students who felt they were entitled to the same experiences as their peers. At the end of the school year, Lisa and Jan received some anonymous feedback from one of their students about the skydiving trip that *Action og Bistand* had been able to take, expressing that they felt *A og B* had been prioritized over their class by being allowed to take the trip when *Backpacker* hadn't. "But [my students] got to do indoor skydiving in Voss anyway," Lisa said. "And we had spent the travel budget already, while *Action og Bistand* had money left over." Lisa paused. "Sometimes I feel like the students really are spoiled! And I don't like when they compare to what the other classes do. I wish they were just grateful for what they got to do, especially in the middle of corona."

I asked Lisa if she felt that students compared themselves to each other, or those who they perceived as having "more" than them more commonly than contrasting their lives with those who had less. "Absolutely," she said. "My daughter compares with her wealthier friends all the time. Maybe Norwegians compare more because we're supposed to have the same." Norwegians having "the same," in this respect, was not only about material wealth but also extended to the social capital of the sort of "experiences" they wished to enjoy, particularly as they related to travel. During a class activity back at Grøndal earlier in the schoolyear before I started fieldwork, Lisa had instructed students to create presentations called *min reise* (my trip) and describe travels that had taken prior to joining the class. "One student had a family trip to Tanzania that cost NOK 32,000[50] per person." Lisa told me. "Afterwards, I talked to another student about her presentation, and she felt like the other had been bragging about the trip. She was really privileged but I didn't feel that she was bragging—but others might think that, like, 'look what I've been doing with my family.' I didn't feel that way, but I can understand why that student did. I would never have the money to have that kind of trip." While not all of Grøndal's students had been on similarly extravagant trips before starting at the folk high school, most of them had traveled internationally with their families or on school trips prior. All of the students in the *Backpacker* classes had traveled to Europe and most of them had been further afield, in the United States or Southeast Asia. The value of travel, in this case, transcended from family structures to those found on Grøndal's campus. There was, however, a distinction between the value of education and travel by the Norwegian state; while students' tuition was funded by the state, the trips were an additional expense for students, or their parents, to pay without governmental support.

I spoke with one of the folk high school council administrators, Malin, at her office in Oslo several months after the trip to Alta, about the inequalities that came to the fore in folk high school study trips and how differences in socioeconomic statuses in Norway's young people might inhibit them from being able to attend the schools in the first place. She described how "market strategy," "capitalism," and having to "sell" the folk high school experience had been increasingly influential factors in the culture of the folk high school network in recent years. "When my oldest daughter was a folk high school student," Malin said, "she saved the money herself to pay for her class's trip to Los Angeles. It would have been hard for us to pay for her then, but with my youngest, we had become more affluent and could afford it." She told me that more environmentally focused programs didn't necessarily require fewer finances for students to attend them than travel-based classes due to the types of equipment they necessitated, like skis, outdoor gear, and other expensive equipment. For students, like her son, who didn't attend a program that required funds for travel or special equipment, she and her husband still spent "quite a few thousand getting him out the door." Malin said that she and her colleagues were concerned that these financial costs inhibited "all the young people living in Norway" from attending folk high schools, and that the network's focus on "experiences" had resulted in some troubling consequences. "The *fellesskap* (community) of our schools is the most important aspect, but we don't have the language to sell that," she told me. "If we spend so much time selling experiences, it has to influence the *fellesskap* too. It doesn't get as much focus. We need to work on the school community and the inclusion, first and foremost."

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[50] Approximately $3,000 per June 18, 2024, exchange rates.

Grøndal's own messaging on social media and on their website also dealt with the tensions between the benefits of travel and the inequalities that their study trips revealed, both in the student body and in the environmental ramifications of study trips that required traveling by air. During the early stages of the pandemic, when there was no formal uniformity between folk high schools on the sorts of trips they were allowed to negotiate within various regionally specific restrictions, students often expressed to me feelings of confusion over what they should, or shouldn't post, on either their class's, or their personal, social media profiles. Each class had students who had access to their class's social media logins and were responsible for posting content from their trips, and life more broadly at Grøndal. One *Reiseliv* student, Arild, told me that after his class had taken a class trip to Bergen, they had received a message from one of Grøndal's board members telling them they should stop tagging the school in these posts because of the ethical ramifications associated with traveling during the pandemic. "We're always told to promote the school [on social media]," Arild told me. "And then we got chastised for it. They didn't take responsibility for sending us, [and then] we felt like we had to hide it." Tensions between the best way to travel were also apparent in how Grøndal positioned its study trips in relation to sustainable practice. Grøndal's website claimed to be "work[ing] continuously to become an even more sustainable school both in operation and teaching." This included "find[ing] good alternative travel methods" when possible, such as traveling by bus each year on the school-wide trip to Italy. “On our trips,” the website stated, “we have a conscious relationship with which tour companies and partners we have. We focus on taking care of both local culture and the environment in the places we travel to. The study trips must have a high academic quality and contribute to lifelong learning.”

This sense of lifelong learning echoed Lisa and Jan’s sentiment that the trip to Alta would be a “once-in-a-lifetime” event that they believed would be worth the cost of the carbon emissions the flight north necessitated. While all of the students in the *Backpacker* class chose to take the trip despite their reservations, some of them also expressed “shame” over traveling amidst environmentally related concerns. Inga, from Trondheim (if you imagine Norway shaped like an upright spoon, Trondheim is located where the bowl meets the handle), said that she wanted to have a “green mindset,” but at the same time was aware she didn’t. “I *want* to want it. I want to *want* to be a better person and *be* a better person. Sometimes you forget about it.” She paused. “Sometimes flying is the only option here. There are no train lines in northern Norway. And flying is very comfortable. It *is* that.” Vida told me that while she was “not a big fan of flying,” she decided to join the trip to Alta as it would likely be her only flight that year. “I think that if we were going to actually make it to Finnmark to see anything, we would *have* to fly,” she said. Jona, from Trondheim, agreed. “I don’t actually ever fly domestic,” she said. “I usually take the train home during school vacations. It takes 10 hours. I feel better doing that. I actually enjoy having a *tur* (trip); you’re listening to a podcast, knitting. Not everyone feels the same way.” Inga said that while she had hoped that the class could travel to Australia and the Philippines, she was just as happy with the class trip to Finnmark, noting that it was an added bonus that it required fewer carbon emissions than flying “half-way across the world. I’ve never been here before,” she said. “It’s kind of weird. I can’t understand that we’re here. We’re far from home, we’re as far as Italy. I don’t understand how far it is.” Not understanding how far we had travelled was the result of moving by flight, she said, traveling almost the entire length of Norway in just under two hours. Not feeling the distance in her body, or at least not fully processing the kilometers travelled, paralleled how Inga described interacting with how unequally the effects of the climate crisis were experienced by differently positioned people on a global scale. “I feel like some days you don’t think about [climate change] at all,” she said, and “some days it’s totally overwhelming. The ice is melting, plastic is in the ocean, pollution is everyone, people are starving.” I noted that while most Norwegians aren’t experiencing those kinds of effects of climate change firsthand, perhaps there were still some effects of the changing climate that Jona, Inga, and Vida had experienced more personally. Inga said that she hadn’t had a white Christmas in years. “And that’s sad, considering how far north I live.” Vida added that they also hadn’t had as much snow in her hometown in southern Norway, Kristiansand, in the last few winters as they’d had when she was a child. “When I was little,” she said, “we had like two meters of snow on the terrace. Now we haven’t had *any* for at least five years. It’s kind of sad.” Snow was in no short supply in Alta, though, and several students described being there as feeling redolent of their childhoods further south. Being able to be “out” in the snow in this way was one reason many of them said the trip north was worth it, a way for them to engage with the sort of winter they were used to experiencing in years prior.

Choosing to travel during the pandemic, however, presented further ethical concerns for the *Backpacker* class and produced a sense of difference that did not contribute to the overarching value of equality (Dumont 1980). The fact that the class was able to travel during the pandemic, while many of the students’ peers who lived in larger Norwegian cities where regionally specific lockdown measures were in place revealed inequalities in mobility between them, a circumstance that students said made them uncomfortable. Shortly after landing in Alta, Jan received a message from his fiancée stating that she had been exposed to a child who had tested positive for Covid at the kindergarten where she worked. Lisa and Jan decided that it was best that he quarantine at the hotel until he could be tested, which meant that Lisa had to lead all of the scheduled activities on her own. The worry over transmitting the virus to a population of Norwegians that hadn’t had very many cases was palpable; “Can you just see the headlines in the Alta newspaper?” Lisa said. “Grøndal brings *korona* to us!” In the end, Jan tested negative and was able to join the rest of us after receiving his results, but Vida said that when she heard that Jan might have been infected, her initial thought was, “Of course. *Something* [like this] had to happen.” Vida said that it didn’t feel “very responsible” for her and the rest of the *Backpacker* students to "travel up here and have fun" during a pandemic, and that she, like Lisa, felt "travel shame" at the airport. Nevertheless, she was happy that she had made the trip, for both the *opplevelser* (experiences) and the time spent with the rest of her classmates. Echoing the sentiment that the trip was worth the carbon emissions associated with it, Vida said traveling during the pandemic was also worth the risk of spreading Covid. "It's a little unjust that we get to travel when others have to sit at home," she said. "Like in Oslo for example. But this is a meaningful trip, so it's a little more 'okay' I think." This assigning of meaning to the trip was one that gave teachers, students, and myself the justification we felt was necessary for taking the trip to Alta, as being there in person was an experience we felt could not be replicated elsewhere. And while inequalities outside of the *Backpacker* class were made visible throughout the trip, the students within the group were able to interact with a sense of growing equality among themselves. In the section that follows, I describe how students' engaging in the same activities, dog sledding and snowmobiling, generated sameness among them, as they were made to rely on each other to move forward, literally and figuratively, as a single entity together. I also describe how social formations within these activities, namely, when students were instructed to pair up, left some of them feeling left out and not as equally valued as their classmates.

MOVING TOGETHER.

We are at Rask Hund, the active racing kennel, restaurant, and overnight accommodation facility a few kilometers outside of Alta, where we will embark on a dog sledding experience together. After a short shuttle ride, we arrive at the facility and don the provided matching snowsuits, goggles, and hats trimmed with faux fur to keep the frigid temperatures at bay, before meeting Randi who will give us a tour of the dog yard then lead us on a trail ride in the surrounding area. Randi tells us that she attended the Alta Folk High School years ago, a Christian school under the same jurisdiction as one of Grøndal's parent organizations, Normisjon, and located not far from where we currently stand.[51] Randi had attended the dog sledding program at Alta FHS, she tells us, which was where she realized what she wanted to do with the rest of her life. Her passion for dog racing had taken her to mushing all over Norway and further afield, notably living in Alaska for several years and racing the Iditarod, the world's longest dog sled race. Her love for dog racing had been passed on to her daughter, a junior dog sled champion who had traveled in her mother's footsteps and recently completed the Iditarod herself. We stand in a circle around Randi before entering the dog yard, clapping our muffled palms together in our thick, wool-lined mittens trying to keep warm in the freezing early morning Arctic air, a sense of collective anticipation building. She leads us to the wooden gate behind her before unlocking it and entering, each of us following in our matching snowsuits, one by one.

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[51] https://www.normisjon.no/folkehogskoler/

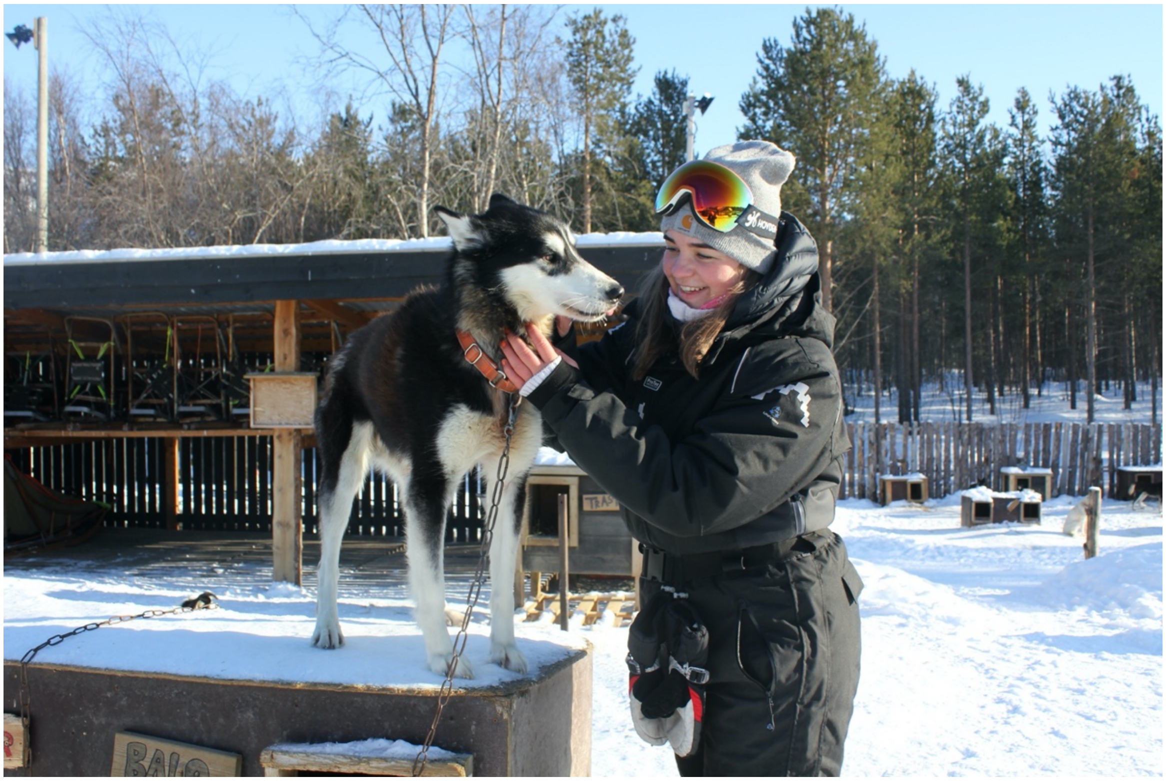

Fig. 23: A Backpacker student and a racing dog.

Nothing could prepare me for the sight, smell, and sound of sixty-seven young Alaskan huskies, each chained to small, wooden huts scattered across the gated yard. As soon as they see us, the dogs erupt into a chorus of barking, their black, white, and grey bodies pulling against their chains in animal energy. Over the din, Randi leads us to the half a dozen dog sleds that are lined up positioned towards the main gate; she shows us how to steer and brake them, and how to affix dog harnesses to the long central rope that will be fastened to the sleigh with a large carabiner. Randi instructs us to partner up, and Harald asks me if I'd like to be his partner. I accept, and we agree that he will drive first; he takes his position, standing with his feet planted firmly on the foot boards, his gloved hands grasping the handlebar at his waist. In between the foot boards there is a brake that can be stepped on to slow the speed of the dogs, or to stop the sled entirely. This is useful information to have in case things get out of hand.

Suddenly, we're off, the dogs careening over the trail through the woods, me clutching my hat, the dogs now silent in their pulling, the only sound the swish of the sled over packed snow. Unlike flying on a plane, this is a version of moving we can feel. As we glide across the same snow that I had seen below from the window of our flight yesterday, we make our mark, carving the vast whiteness with the sled runners and the paws pulling us. After some time, it is my turn to take the helm and we shift positions. I like this better: standing requires more interaction, more intention; the dogs aren't moving particularly fast, but there is still a groundedness that I feel in the responsibility of keeping our vessel upright. As we soar across a perfectly flat, white field, the mountains jut beyond us in majestic, snow-covered splendor. The effects of climate change feel very, very far from us here.

Dog sled is not the only form of transportation Harald and will I take together in Alta; the next day, after we have recovered from the excitement of traveling by dog, our group boards a chartered bus to travel from the Skandinavisk Hotel to the Lohijoki resort several kilometers away, where we will sleep in an "igloo hotel" and take a "snowmobile safari" through the surrounding mountains that tower above the Alta River. As we pull into the snow-covered entrance, we see rows of shiny red snowmobiles standing at attention, ready for our trip later in the afternoon. Behind them is the igloo hotel, covered in snow. It's different than I imagined; from the outside, it looks like elevated snowbanks and mounds with few discernible features. The resort is also much larger than I had pictured: in addition to the igloo hotel, there are several buildings, all in rough-hewn wood, a restaurant, lodge, and equipment cabin filled with snowsuits, boots, and helmets that we will use several times over the course of our stay. We will check into the main building first and tour the ice hotel later. The lodge is spacious and luxurious, with large, framed photos of the northern lights hanging above tartan sofas and chairs that are strewn in front of a massive stone fireplace. We drop our backpacks in the storage room behind reception and meet back outside to walk the several meters to the gear cabin. Upon entering, we find rows and rows of modern snowsuits, ready for our use; students are quiet as they step into snowsuits leg by leg, and locate boots, helmets, and gloves in their sizes. Clad in our gear, we step into the sunshine and walk towards the snowmobiles, many of us chattering and taking photos, most of us indiscernible underneath helmets and sunglasses. In our suits, we are identical, completely anonymous, all exactly alike.

We meet Kjartan, our guide, who will briefly instruct us on what our snowmobiling trip will entail. We learn later that he is the son of Anders, the owner of Lohijoki, who is a tall, formidable man who appears to be in his early seventies and will join us for the trip up the mountain. Kjartan gives us a brief tutorial on how to use the vehicles. Harald asks me if I want to pair up with him again and I accept; the idea is that each of us will drive halfway, one of us up the mountain, and the other back down again, but Harald tells me that he doesn’t have his driver’s license yet, so I will have to drive for the duration of the journey. The start of the trip is a bit shaky; it’s difficult to get a feel for the gas, and I can’t remember if Kjartan told us to lean right when we turn left, or the other way around. Harald and I talk about it, but it’s not easy to hear each other over the roar of the engine. Soon we get the hang of it, and as we screech up the trails, screaming past pine trees and around twists and turns up the mountain, we are quiet. Unlike with dog sledding, our motor requires a louder energy, fueled not by paw but by diesel. I keep my eyes on another student, Marius, fifteen or so meters ahead of us, who it seems has elected to drive alone considering that our group is odd-numbered. Harald and I are in the middle of the pack, and as we turn together, I can see the pairs of students on their vehicles in front of us. We climb the ascent, our tread rapidly eating the snow beneath us. After some time, the pines become sparse, and our landscape transitions to a frozen, vast whiteness: we are suddenly, and without warning, above the tree line. It is windy, and ice crystals dance and stream across the frontier. We speed onward, flying, but this time, I feel the fuel. It is exhilarating, exhausting, powerful. I can see why people do this for fun.

At the summit, Kjartan at the lead slows and stops. He signals for us to turn off our engines and to dismount our vehicles. We gather around him and Anders, the wind whipping around our snowsuits, our helmets protecting us from the worst of it. We take our phones out to snap some quick photos and my fingers freeze the moment I slip off my heavy gloves. Anders tells us that this is the highest point in the region. He says that he will tell us "A story from his youth." In 1980, the Alta hydropower plant was scheduled to build a dam that would assist in meeting Norway's growing energy demands, he says, but would also compromise the salmon populations who were living upriver right where Anders and his family had lived for generations. He tells us that he and 800 others protested the building of the dam, chaining themselves together at the construction site, refusing to be moved, sitting together in the freezing minus 30-degree Celsius weather. "Police officers from all over Norway were sent to break us up," he says. "As the hours passed, we realized that we needed food, provisions. Several of us *ungdommer* (youths) were asked to distract the officers on our snowmobiles. We played a game of cat and mouse with them, turning our headlights off and on in the darkness, confusing them while others went to collect supplies and food. Eventually, most of us were arrested. Some of us were lucky enough to be taken away in police cars, but not me. I was hauled in the back of an open truck, packed in with many others in the freezing wind." As he speaks, I imagine his headlights blinking in the dark, mirroring the flashes of his fellow activists, playing a dangerous game for the sake of their convictions. Meanwhile, the Norwegian *ungdommer* circled around him are jumping up and down slightly, trying to keep warm in the late afternoon chill, their arms held close to their chests. I wonder how they would have fared in the conditions Anders and his friends had withstood five decades ago. Before we return to our vehicles, Lisa suggests that the students perform the school dance they had learned together at the start of the school year so that they can post it on the school's social media profiles. The wind is too loud to hear the song, which is usually played on someone's phone under normal circumstances, and so the students hum the song to themselves, arms swinging above their heads in unison, feet clumsily forming the choreographed dance moves in their heavy boots on the thick snow.

(IN)EQUALITY IN MOVEMENT.

In the case of both dog sledding and snowmobiling, movement made relating happen. Unlike our flight north, which depended on little else apart from showing up on time with an ID card in hand, moving by dog and tread necessitated employing our bodies together in ways that fostered shared effort and inter-reliance. Dog sledding, of course, also depended on the bodies of the canines pulling our sleds in a way that snowmobiling didn't, but both experiences linked the body with movement in a way that was far more palpable than the flight we took together north precipitated. The sensorial aspect of moving together gave us a new way of relating, one that was different to our time spent together in a classroom setting, as we came to know each other through discovering what our bodies were capable of in an unfamiliar context. This meant that we had to communicate how to move with patience, humility, and the possibility of error; in short, we had to look out for each other so that we were both kept in motion safely. "We achieved something together," Harald told me after dog sledding. "And we didn't die," he added with a smirk. "That's a good thing." Driving in pairs was also an aspect of the experience Harald said he enjoyed most because it gave us a chance to chat one-on-one, a communication style he said he preferred. By forming our partnership within the constellation of other partnered students, we were able to interact in a way that bridged communication with shared movement. In order to make our vehicle move, we had to treat each other as equally valuable, both necessary. Keeping our bodies moving depended on us treating each other the same.

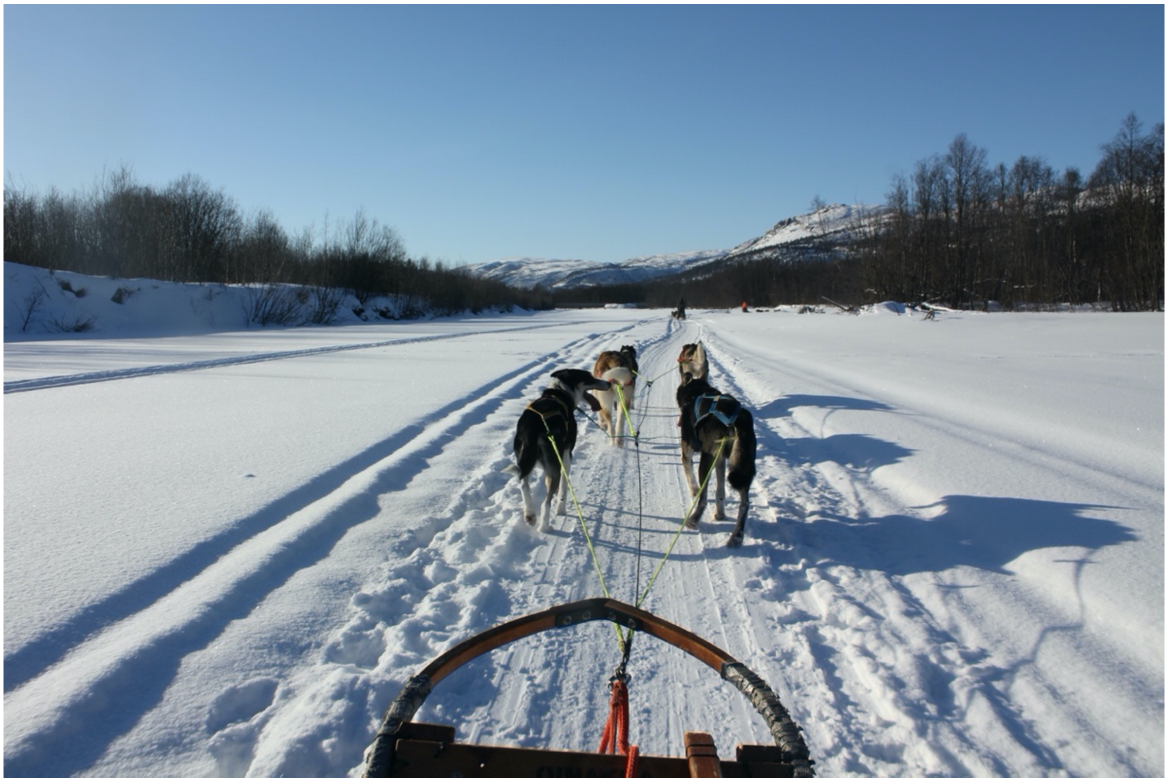

Fig. 24: Moving through the Arctic.

In addition, the gear that we each wore for dog sledding and snowmobiling was identical, a visible marker of our shared sameness during these activities. While each of the students had high quality outdoor clothing of their own, donning outfits that obscured our likenesses muted the differences in appearance we each possessed. Snowmobiling, in particular, required we wear heavy helmets with visors, and snoods that covered the lower halves of our faces completely, which meant only our eyes were visible, but only partly, obscured by the shields of the helmet visors as they were. This sameness in clothing gave us a uniformity that made the communal project of moving together feel, to me, both liberating and challenging. Our bodies covered in gear made their purpose obvious: moving across the Arctic landscape in unison was our goal, and any other considerations about what our bodies could, or should, do was quickly forgotten for the sake of the task at hand. Each of us wearing the same outfit ensured a collective sense of ability, of sureness in our capabilities as a group, all of us on equal footing. Donning professional-grade gear also elicited a feeling of worthiness and possibility, that we were validated by the level of professionalism each piece warranted, and that we could rise to the challenge of deserving to wear them in the first place. Never mind that the outfits would be returned once our activities were over; for the duration of the time we wore them, we were, in some respect, Nordic athletes. Not having to select my own gear for these activities was also a relief, as I often struggled with knowing if my clothing would be sufficiently warm enough during fieldwork, a fear that was exacerbated by traveling further north. Choosing different pieces of the same gear from the equipment room, though, presented its own set of concerns; not knowing how snow pants, jackets, and boots would fit, while trying them on in a group setting, also brought a good deal of self-consciousness for some students, cognizant as they were that requiring larger sizes might draw unwanted attention. As I've mentioned in chapter three and four, students regularly expressed having a range of "body issues," particularly if they had larger bodies than those of their peers and trying on clothing together made these insecurities particularly visible. Not wearing the same, or similar size, as their peers was often met with jokes or laughter by students who required larger sizes, but I interpreted this as a way for them to shrug off the discomfit they felt with their bodies not conforming to the same standards as they and their peers felt were necessary.

Other insecurities about achieving sameness in social interactions also emerged during our outdoor activities. Even though students participated in the same sorts of movement I've described here, that didn't mean that they experienced moving in unilaterally the same way. It's important to note that each of the *Backpacker* students had similar physical capabilities, with none of them having what I would call exceptionally athletic attributes, and none having physical disabilities.[52] They each had chosen the *Backpacker* program because they believed that they would be able to participate in the advertised activities and were eager to do them. In this respect, the students were similar in many ways prior to starting the program, and their sameness in both interests and capacity was reinforced through the movement they were able to access, and displayed together, during their outdoor activities in Alta. While the students I spoke with about our outdoor activities all expressed enjoying them, both Harald and Marius told me they struggled with the partnering aspect of moving by dog sled and snowmobile, which was one reason they sometimes dreaded these sorts of activities in a group setting. I asked Marius, if he felt that his gender contributed to feeling left out, as he and Harald were the only two boys in the group of otherwise girl students. ""Why should that matter?" He said. "Boys, girls, everyone deserves the same respect." "Oh, for sure!" I said. "But I'm just wondering, sometimes with sleeping arrangements and stuff on trips. I guess you usually get paired with Harald, seeing as you are the only boys." "I don't think that has anything to do with it, though," he said. "I've always wondered if there's something wrong with me. There must be if most people don't want me around. I was in special education in *ungdomsskole* (junior high), so I feel like I missed some important socialization skills. I was pulled out of class for extra help. I feel like I'm missing those skills now." Lisa, for her part, believed that Marius had been actively invited into the social dynamic of the class. "He *was* included," she said to me at the end of the schoolyear. "He didn't always understand it himself. He turned it into something more negative. He has something to learn there." I, too, witnessed the rest of the *Backpacker* students including Marius in various activities, cheering for him when he volunteered to buy ingredients for a pizza meal the class planned to have one evening after the trip to Alta, for example, or chanting his name when I asked for students to be representatives for small groups we organized during our debrief of the trip. Lisa speculated that one reason Marius and Harald may have experienced feelings of social exclusion was because the student I wrote about in chapter two, the boy who was expelled from school due to his drug use, had been a part of the *Backpacker* class prior to leaving. "He was a really handsome, tough cool guy," Lisa told me. "But he also had room for Marius and Harald. After he left there was a void." The disruption in the social ordering of the class, however, gave Harald a new perspective on how his own behavior could contribute to the sort of social experience he wanted to have at the folk high school. "Something just clicked during the Alta trip," he said, "and it was easier to hang with people and get along with them. The activities definitely helped."

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[52] Students who had disabilities that would fully impede them from participating in the sorts of activities the *Backpacker* program offered would likely apply to be in the *Botrening* (life skills) class instead..

Malin, the folk high school administrator I spoke to some time after the trip, described how she felt that "moving" the folk high school community off campus "did something" for the students.

She told me how she had experienced this dynamic when she had joined one folk high school class on a trip they took to Los Angeles some years prior, because they didn't have a teacher who could travel with them and they needed a chaperone. "It was really interesting to see what happened to the group when I came in as an outsider," she said. "They were a bit dysfunctional before they went on the trip. There was a [a student] who was an outsider, and the other students said that on that trip he was included in a way that he'd never been before. I don't think that would have happened if they stayed at school. They needed to go somewhere." Malin said that she didn't think it mattered very much where the students went, as long as they were "moved" somewhere else. "It does something for the staff, too," she said. "The students go into a different modus and put more into experiencing something together." By "moving" the school to a new location, Malin speculated, different ways of relating became possible, as students were encouraged to operate out of the everyday schedules, routines, and social relationships they were used to on campus. Lisa also told me that a physical aspect to disrupting these structures was part of the purpose of study trips. By assigning students new sleeping arrangements and chore responsibilities before embarking on the trip, Lisa and Jan hoped students would be encouraged to "break up any cliques" that might have formed within the class through new embodied forms of relating. Lisa said that giving students directives like this, however, didn't always solve the problem, and could leave students dependent on teacher direction rather than able to make decisions for themselves. I could see her point; often, when we were standing together in our group, the students were quiet, waiting for Lisa and Jan to tell them when, and how, to move. As the schoolyear progressed, however, I witnessed students displaying more confidence in their own movement, both through embodied activities and relationships they sought to make. By connecting an embodied movement with social relating, students were able to overcome insecurities in both their physical and social capabilities, and in so doing, became more secure in their configuration as a unified whole.

Sameness and differences between the *Backpacker* students and the figures we met in Alta were also revealed through both dog sledding and snowmobiling together. While most of the *Backpacker* students themselves shared similar attributes when it came to their physical capabilities, both Randi and Anders typified a specific sort of rugged Nordic spirit that contrasted the more comfortable lifestyles most of the students were used to and characterized attributes Lisa and Jan hoped their students would emulate. Steinar Aas (2021) notes that stereotypes like these were integral in the development of Norway's early nation state, where the archetype of a Norwegian "polar hero" was used to emulate "abilities ideal for the future generations of Norwegians" that were related to "distinctive narratives and identity marks" related to meeting specific goals and achievements (240). While Lisa and Jan did not explicitly say that the activities in Alta were designed to be a part of "nation-building" or anything of the sort, a sense of national pride was evident in the way Lisa in particular described how Randi and Anders as "national heroes," and the ways in which dogsledding and snowmobiling was meant to give students the opportunity for achieving goals together in a similar way. This isn't to say that Anders and Randi came from radically different positions than the *Backpacker* students; they were both ethnically Norwegian, had been well-educated, and represented middle, if not upper, class statuses, at least in terms of the financial success they had both achieved through their respective businesses. Still, Randi and Anders both embodied a different sort of Norwegian than the *Backpacker* students represented, as they came from previous generations, made their living in a more rugged Norwegian geographical location, and had overcome the harshness of the Norwegian north for the sake of their convictions in a way that the *Backpacker* students hadn't.

The *Backpacker* students also remarked on the differences they perceived being between them and the "Nordic heroes" they met in Alta. Vida, noting Anders' activism work, said that she believed his regional status contributed to his role in the Alta Controversy protests. "It shows how tough people here are," she said, "but also how different the climate here is compared to the south [of Norway]." Vida said that she had been inspired by Anders' activism, noting that she, a southerner, might not have had the capacity to protest in the same way. "I don't think I would sit there in minus 30 degrees myself," she said. "But I think it's very cool and it makes a really strong statement. More people should follow, maybe not necessarily chain ourselves to each other but make a statement for the climate." Harald described the differences he perceived between Randi, Anders, and his peers as “generational. There’s this saying,” he said, “‘strong men create good times and good times create weak men and weak men create hard times.’ Norwegians haven’t had hard times in a very long time.” I asked if he thought that Norwegians were “less tough” now than in previous generations. “To a certain extent, that could be true,” he said. “Norwegians used to have the skills to make a lean-to and camp for the night with just a small backpack. But now we’ve got to plan ahead [when we travel], pack a suitcase, take a flight. The culture changed when Norway got rich really fast and that gave a lot of jobs and opportunities to a very large amount of people, so travel by plane got more popular and outdoor skills is something that got left behind.” The outdoor skills that Randi, a champion dog driver, and Anders, a figure who had engaged in activism work for the sake of preserving the Alta River, were integral to the sorts of inspiration they provided to students, as they served as potent examples of Norwegians who had harnessed discomfort for growth, for moving from a place of inactivity to mobility. Achievements like these required concerted effort, and while the *Backpacker* students were not expected to produce the same caliber of movement that Anders and Randi had displayed, engaging with dog sledding and snowmobiling, even incrementally, reinforced that students could, with enough tenacity, move their own convictions from ideas into action. Through experiencing the sorts of activities that Anders and Randi were experts in, students could move to a closer place of equality with them, by developing an embodied knowledge of what moving across the tundra by dog sled or snowmobile required. Both Vida and Harald described how Norwegians today have become too comfortable, which is why they felt many of them are reticent to engage with activities they find unfamiliar or difficult. In the section that follows, I examine how both good and bad forms of comfort and discomfort came to the fore during the Alta trip, and how students and staff interacted with perceptions of both as they sought to achieve a greater sense of equality together.

DIS(COMFORT).

In addition to giving students new experiences, the trip to Alta was also designed to emulate Grøndal’s ethos of moving outside of one’s “comfort zone,” an important part of practicing personal development in school culture. In Grøndal's common area back home, for example, there is a framed poster hanging on the wall with a poem by Trygve Skaug[53] that says:

Du snakker ofte
om at du
må komme ut
av komfortsonen din
om du en gang
skulle gjøre det
husk at jeg
alltids
kan rydde plass
til deg i min

(You often say that you need to come out of your comfort zone and one day, if you decide to do it, remember that I can always make space for you in mine.)

Reflecting the sentiment expressed in Skaug's poem, the activities Jan and Lisa had organized centered on encouraging good discomfort in a partnered, or group, dynamic, but also, within the safety of Randi and Anders' leadership. By getting out of their "comfort zones" together with expert travelers, and each other, students were able to move in organized formations, with limits on how far or how fast their vehicles could take them. Doing so together made the experience possible, as students had to rely on each other to participate fully and to develop together as a group. This, too, took effort, some asking and receiving, as finding a partner willing to move across the Arctic landscape with, and trusting that they wouldn't fail in the task at hand, required social, and physical, risk. Harald, for his part, said that with dog sledding, he had "no issues" trusting me, as he still had some sense of autonomy by having the option to brake if things went awry. "But with the snowmobile, it was different," he said. "I was giving away my safety, I had no control. I had to trust you completely." "I had to trust myself!" I said, laughing. "I'd never driven one before. It was pretty intense, especially at the start." "It was!" he agreed. "But you did great, though." "Well, it wouldn't have worked without your leaning," I laughed. Through the discomfort that was necessary for mutual trust, communication, and our shared movement to happen, we became friends.

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[53] *50 kubbiks hjerte*. 2015.

While these activities prioritized good discomfort, they also contrasted the comfort we experienced more broadly during the trip. Our room and board in Alta, both at the Skandinavisk Hotel and the Lohijoki complex, was certainly comfortable, and at times luxurious, with lavish buffets at both locations that boasted a plethora of fresh food options, and rooms that were clean and warm, each with modern Scandinavian design. The elevated accommodations brought some discomfort to Lisa, who regularly remarked on how "fancy" the food and sleeping quarters were during our trip. "It's a bit *overflødig* (excessive)," she said during one breakfast, surveying the dining room loaded with stations for omelets, smoothies, homemade pastries and breads, and breakfast *pålegg* (bread toppings) of all kinds: smoked salmon, sausage, and various cheeses. "I wonder what they do with all of this leftover food, throw it away?" As I have mentioned, she and Jan had hoped to book more "backpacker" style accommodations on the trip, but due to both Covid-19 restrictions and the nature of the extreme cold of the arctic late winter, had decided on the Skandinavisk Hotel and the Lohijoki Ice Igloo instead. "I'm glad we got to stay here, of course," said Lisa, as we settled into the double beds in our shared room one evening at the hotel, "but it's not very 'backpacker.' But they get that all the time, so I guess it's okay."

Supporting good discomfort *ute i naturen* (out in nature) with safe, comfortable sleeping arrangements was a common theme during the multiple trips I took with the *Backpacker* class over the course of my fieldwork. Here, Gullestad's translations of the Norwegian words *koselig* and *hygge* are useful and reveal important parallels between the aims of the *Backpacker* trip (being *ute in naturen*) and the accommodations Lisa and Jan booked for class trips. *Koselig*, a term I heard invoked regularly by students and staff to describe a range of Grøndal's activities, like *Thomasmesse*, boardgame nights, and artmaking activities, is a Norwegian adjective that Gullestad notes is close to the English word "cozy" and, much like *hygge*, describes "comfort, beauty, warmth" and an "emotional closeness" that often correlates with the concept of home (1993: 148). Alternatively, *ute* invokes a sense of excitement but also a degree of "danger," especially for urban Norwegians (135), as moving outside the stability of the home requires effort and engaging with the unknown. For Lisa, integrating both *kos/hygge* and being *ute* in the Alta trip was integral for her students to be able to develop together, as individuals and as a class. While the accommodations we enjoyed on the Alta trip were more comfortable than in other contexts—I also joined the class on trips that featured sleeping in a tent, in hammocks in an abandoned tunnel, and in a converted barn that was certainly more rustic than the Alta Skandinavisk Hotel—traveling this far from Grøndal, with the uncertainty of changing Covid travel restrictions meant that providing a place of stability and comfortable home base was important to balance the unknowns of the trip. Sleeping together in any context, I might add, initially brought some discomfort to me, as the sort of bodily functions that accompany sleep and grooming in such intimate settings is not something I'm used to and doing so during a pandemic made this feel especially heightened. Even so, the sort of relationship Lisa and I formed from sleeping in the same room, and subsequently, the same bed hewn from ice and covered in thick sleeping bags at Lohijoki was special, not unlike memories I have of sleepovers I had as a young girl with my friends or cousins. The initial discomfort I had with our sharing rooms soon moved us from a place of being colleagues to something even closer than friends: in a certain respect, this sort of proximal sharing made us feel like kin.

CONCLUSION.

Moving together, trying new activities, and sleeping in close quarters were all embodiments of the good sort of discomfort necessary for becoming the same in our physical orientations and for achieving equality together. On the other hand, unwanted discomfort, like the kind associated with the emotional or cognitive weight of interacting with the environmental degradation and climate change outcomes associated with our flight north, revealed unwanted differences between the *Backpacker* students and the people they hoped to emulate. While

Anders and Randi were not experiencing catastrophic effects of climate change in ways that caused irreparable damage to their everyday lives, their livelihoods were still being increasingly impacted by global heating in a way the *Backpacker* students did not share. After our snowmobiling tour, I asked Anders if he had witnessed ecological or weather changes in recent years. He nodded. “There’s more wind,” he said, “and temperatures can be minus 30 one day and plus 5 the next. That didn’t happen before. Winter starts 14 days later and ends 14 days earlier now.” Still, both Randi, and particularly Anders, were also contributing to climate change by using vast amounts of energy that were necessary for keeping their respective businesses running. At the time of our stay, Anders was overseeing the massive addition Lohijoki was building, an investment that cost NOK 100 million and would feature a luxury sleeping accommodation that would supplement the rooms in the igloo hotel and ensure that guests could stay at Lohijoki throughout the year. Anders said that the challenge with meeting the energy needs of his business, and the needs of Norwegians in general, was that producing energy always compromises nature in some way. “That’s the problem today!” he said. “We need *clean* energy. But we need a lot of it. [Norwegians] are lucky that we have a lot of energy from water. I think we will have more nuclear. It’s necessary. When you use the sun and the wind, you can’t make as much. We have to change everything. Norwegians have been at the top of the list for traveling.”[54] I should note that Anders didn’t mention how inaccessible his facility was by public transportation and that most guests, like us, would choose to travel to Lohijoki by air. Having the chance to experience the “exotic” beauty of the Norwegian Arctic, and to embark on the sorts of movement Anders’ and Randi’s businesses offered, depended on it.

Similarly, the *Backpacker* students were cognizant of the ways in which our trip was contributing to climate disaster but were not eager to bring them up in discussion. None of the students dismissed my questions about it when I asked them, though, and were forthcoming in their responses. Still, it soon became apparent to me that spending too much time talking, or thinking, about climate disaster was not beneficial to the central aims of the *Backpacker* program as it represented the sort of discomfort that students could not overcome. This discomfort, while acknowledged, could not be engaged with towards a productive end and was therefore minimized for the sake of allowing students to engage with discomfort they *could* leverage for personal, or group, achievement. The most obvious action students could take to alleviate their discomfort over climate change would be to forego the trip altogether, but that would mean that they would miss out on the central goal of the class, which was to develop relationships built on equality together. In other words, students had to minimize the environmental inequality the trip generated in order to become more equal themselves. For all of us who chose to fly during a pandemic and climate crisis, the value of being together in this way on the trip outweighed our concerns. The embodied experience of moving through Alta was worth it, and the sameness we could achieve together in our shared traveling integral to making us feel equal (Dumont 1980).

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[54] And “top of the list” for energy use; total energy consumption per capita in Norway was 5.1 toe in 2022, almost double the EU average. (https://www.enerdata.net/estore/energymarket/norway/#:~:text=Total%20energy%20consumption%20per%20capita,in%202022%20to%2028%20Mtoe)

The forms of movement we encountered on the trip, though, were not viewed as equally valuable, as those that employed the body were privileged over those that did not. Flying, in addition to having the problematic climate dimension, was deemed not sufficiently experiential as it required very little effort and had a detached quality that students described as “weird” and disjointed. Students could not “feel” the distance they had traveled by aircraft and were not challenged to “get out of their comfort zones” in the same way that snowmobiling and dog sledding necessitated. In many respects, flying represented a sort of spectator sport, a type of movement that did little to contribute to the *Backpacker* students’ shared goals of using embodied action to move towards an equal social whole. Furthermore, flying and “packing a suitcase,” like Harald said, had resulted in additional unwanted consequences, as these more comfortable activities had replaced more traditional Norwegian pursuits which meant that Norwegians had lost important facets of their culture. The trip to Alta, then, had been organized by Lisa and Jan in an effort to reinvigorate some of what had been lost for Harald’s generation, a means to redevelop a version of “Norwegianness” that had been diluted by both Norway’s wealth and modernization, and to do so by meeting Norwegians who still, in some ways, remained culturally emblematic of what it means to be Norwegian in contemporary Norway. In the following chapter, I look further to the links between history, Norwegianness, and climate change as they emerged during the *Backpacker*’s Sámi Experience in Alta and assess how students’ interactions with Sámi guides brought forth declarations of shame and inspiration as students negotiated their sameness, and difference, to the Indigenous people we met there living largely under Norwegian state control.

CHAPTER 6/
THE SÁMI EXPERIENCE: INDIGENEITY.

Joik har større kraft enn krutt (Joik has more power than gunpowder.)

-"Sámiid Ædnan" (Sámi Land)[55]

As soon as we arrive in Alta, the *Backpacker* students speak incessantly about seeing the Northern Lights. "We can't control nature," I remind them, but of course I am hoping to see them too. One night Jan takes the group outside, having been notified on his Northern Lights app that there is a good chance they will appear. Lisa and I have just turned in for bed in our shared hotel room when I receive a phone call from Jan: "It's the Northern Lights!" he laughs into the phone, the sounds of students joyfully shouting in awe behind him. "You have to come see!" Lisa and I rouse ourselves from our almost-sleep and groggily pull on hats and jackets over our pajamas. We walk outside the hotel and peer into the night sky for any sign of movement. Nothing. "Was he pranking us?" I ask, shivering through my thin pajama pants in the 10°F night wind. "He better not have been!" Lisa laughs. I take off one glove to press his number on my phone; "Look to the right of the church," he says when he answers. There, we can see them: faint, quick, glowing green and purple swirling flashes gone as quickly as they've come. *Fire foxes*, I think, a term I'd heard the Indigenous Sámi have traditionally used for the aurora borealis: a flick and a whip of a tail across the night sky, here and then gone again. We decide to walk deeper into the woods, farther away from the piercing lights of Alta to see them more clearly. I wade through snow drifts up to my knees, tripping in the dark, my pajamas becoming encrusted with clumps of ice. We come to the field that Jan had been in when I had received his first call; "you should have seen it then," he says. "The whole sky was full of them."

We stand, the three of us alone in a frozen field, our faces lifted towards the night sky. The fire foxes do not show their sparks again.

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[55] Lyrics and music by Ragnar Olsen and Sverre Kjelsberg. 1980.

INTRODUCTION.

Marianne Gullestad (2002) argued that the Scandinavian construction of "equality as sameness" underscores an ethnification of national identity, which minimizes the historical role Norwegianization had on subjugating the Sámi people (Abram 2018). An emphasis on conformity and maintaining "peace and quiet" can also explain why Norwegians avoid discussing the history of racism and colonialism in Norway and how these factors emerge in Norwegian society today (Dankertsen & Lo 2023: 16). In this chapter, I describe how themes relating to Norwegianization and climate degradation emerged in folk high school instruction prior to, and during the, the Sámi Experience (*Den samiske opplevelsen*) tour I took with the *Backpacker* class during their study trip to Alta in Northern Norway. *Fornorskning* (Norwegianization) is a term used to describe a range of initiatives and policies followed by the Norwegian state and other powerful actors from around the mid-1800s until the second half of the twentieth century, in order to forcibly assimilate indigenous Sámi and Kven populations living in Northern Norway into Norwegian society. Henry Minde (2005) argues that Norwegianization ended after the Alta Controversy and subsequent establishment of the Sámi parliament in 1987, but its effects remain as many contemporary Sámi no longer speak the Sámi languages, continue to face discrimination, and experience subjugation by Nordic states as they relate to their land and water rights in the region. As such, I explore how Norwegianization is situated in Norwegian education by assessing how the *Backpacker* students interacted with instruction about what the Sámi experience has been like historically in Norway prior to taking the trip. I do this by examining how reflective learning practices and artmaking activities Lisa and I co-created revealed, and problematized, the gaps in students' prior education on Norwegian relationships with colonization and climate degradation in Sápmi.[56] Next, I assess the Sámi Experience the class took part in during their study trip north, a tourist offering in Alta that featured reindeer sleigh rides led by Sámi guides which culminated in a conversation with them in a traditional Sámi dwelling (*lávvu*) about how climate change has affected Sámi reindeer-herding practices. I describe how the trip to Alta was designed to give students a chance to realize two of Grøndal's core values—*opplevelse* (experience) and *samhandlinger* (interactions)—in an effort to create a greater sense of equality between students and the Sámi people we met during the trip. Achieving these values, though, which were predicated on being in Sápmi in person, also meant that students and staff were confronted with forms of inequality that were produced by the carbon emissions associated with our flight north.

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[56] *Sápmi* refers to the Sámi's traditional land that spans the northern parts of Fennoscandia, including the Kola Peninsula.

Despite these concerns, students and staff viewed the Sámi Experience as an opportunity for bridging the spatial and cultural differences between themselves and the Sámi through what they hoped would be "real" and "authentic" interactions during the event. Due to the nature of the experience being a tourist offering, however, students and staff expressed dissatisfaction with the degree of interactions and experiences they were able to have during it, which offered them a partial understanding of the inequalities that existed between them and the Sámi. By taking the word "shame" as an analytic, I assess how the trip brought to the fore social hierarchies students encountered between themselves and the Sámi that confronted how they imagined egalitarianism in Norway was meant to function. In an effort to alleviate their so-called "shame" over Norwegianization, students and staff described being "inspired" by the Sámi's "different" relationship with nature, repositioning the Sámi in a place of superiority over Norwegians in an effort to create a sense of equality between them (Dumont 1986). I argue that this form of inspiration risked reinforcing how the Sámi have been essentialized in the Norwegian imagination in such a way that discounts the complex intersections between tradition and modernity in contemporary Sámi life, which were revealed to students and staff by "being there" in Alta.

IN THE CLASSROOM.

One afternoon prior to our trip north, Lisa asks me to co-lead a workshop with her about social anthropology and the Sámi in an effort to prepare students for the Sámi Experience we will undertake in Alta. "I don't think very many students have thought about the Sámi," she says.

"Including myself! Was it so bad for them? I didn't know!"[57] She asks me to take the lead on the lecture portion of the instructional material and says that she will take the reins for the artmaking segment of the workshop. Lisa tells me that many of her students have expressed wanting to have the Sámi Experience and that it was a central reason for why Lisa and Jan had decided to organize the trip north in the first place. "Normally, we would be going to Australia to meet Aboriginal people there," Lisa tells me, but because of the travel restrictions in place due to the pandemic, the trip has been cancelled. "We wanted to give them a similar experience in Norway."

I decide to construct a short seminar that includes reflective learning techniques, where I will ask students to get together in groups of two or three to discuss several questions I have placed intermittently throughout the presentation. The lecture will include material on social anthropology, indigeneity, and the role climate change has played on impacting the Sámi way of life. I will also briefly discuss Norwegianization, but I assume that students will have had plenty of information on the subject in their previous education, so I'll keep this portion of the lecture brief.

I begin the seminar by showing the students a clip I've found documenting a knowledge exchange workshop between Sámi and Aboriginal Australians that had been held some years ago in Australia. Lisa is delighted that I have found material that bridges the Indigenous group her class would have normally had contact with in Australia with the group she will take them to visit in Alta. The people in the clip discuss the similarities they share, their relationships with nature, and how climate change is impacting their communities. After we finish watching the clip, I ask students to answer the following question: “What are some qualities that the Sámi and Aboriginal Australians in this clip describe sharing in common?”[58]

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[57] The folk high school system allows for a good deal of freedom for teachers to choose whatever they wish to teach and does not require that staff have specific teaching qualifications on these topics. Lisa had not received training in anthropology or cultural studies, for example, but her co-teacher, Marta, out on maternity leave at the time, did have a certificate in *kulturell forståelse* (cultural understanding).

The students work together quietly, turning to each other in pairs or groups of three, most of them answering the question on their Notes app on their phones. After several minutes have passed, I call students back together and ask them to go around the room and share with the group their answers.

They’re kind to each other and with animals.
Often, they have closer contact with nature and oppose modern society.
Use resources from nature in a sustainable way.
Use the entire animal.
Have a strong community.
Have rituals and traditions.
They have simpler lives. They take care of their traditions.

The next portion of my material describes Sámi culture more specifically, but before I go over it, I ask the students the following question: “What do you know about Norwegianization?”

Norwegianization has happened in Norway against the Sámi. They had to learn Norwegian, live in boarding schools, or with Norwegian families, and become more Norwegian, leaving their old culture behind.
They were taken from their families, houses, and traditions.
Taken to boarding schools where they were given Norwegian values.
Had to assimilate.
It was shameful to be Sámi (and a shame for the Norwegian people that this was done to the Sámi).

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[58] I gave this presentation in English and students answered in a mix of English and Norwegian. I have translated their Norwegian answers here.

The Sámi were not seen as being as valuable as other Norwegians.

I show a clip that describes how climate change has impacted Sámi reindeer herding, as the subsequent thawing and re-freezing of Sápmi has compromised both the growth of and access to lichen, reindeer's primary food source. I ask students to discuss the final reflective question of my lesson: "Considering that climate change disproportionately impacts Indigenous people, write a few sentences about why traveling to visit them should, or shouldn't, be justified."

It's very hard to justify, actually.
Carbon emissions are justified by the fact that you're helping people by sharing about a culture that has been oppressed.
We're helping them by letting more people know about them and support their culture and embracing them so they can feel proud.
And what about workplaces? There are very many places that don't have so many resources, who are actually dependent on tourism; does it help or not? The airplane is going no matter what, but we can't always think that way. It's a difficult balance. We need something to change.

The following day we meet in the art room, located in the main teaching building across the quad. The room is bright and cheery, lined with windows to the back, and filled with large tables draped with tablecloths that are covered with bits of stubborn paint and remnants of various other art materials that have left a faint patchwork of former creative projects in their wake. Lisa had set up supplies earlier that day: paper in different sizes and colors, beads and bits of leather for bracelets, yarn and sticks for what students call, in English, "dream catchers." Normally, Lisa would lead a similar artmaking activity in preparation for her class's trip to Australia, instructing students to paint in traditional Aboriginal Australian dot painting techniques. This time, she encourages her students to google Sámi imagery or poetry to draw from, using arctic nature as a primary motif or utilizing the embossing tools she has provided for students to make leather bracelets with.

As students select their materials and settle into their tasks, Lisa tells the students to think about the colors they might want to use, focusing on ones that are more “natural” or “traditional.” Soon, the room is awash in primary reds and blues and yellows, as most students select materials that mirror the colors of the Sámi flag in their pieces. Audun has connected his phone to a Bluetooth speaker and is playing the song *Sámiid Ædnan* (Sámi Land). “Do you feel inspired?” he asks Irene next to him.

“Yes, actually!” She says grinning, cutting yarn into bits of pieces she will glue to paper in an Arctic landscape scene.

Lisa smiles. “Everyone in Norway knows this song,” she says. The song was Norway’s entry in the Eurovision Song Contest in 1980 and was performed by a Norwegian, Sverre Kjellsberg, and a Sámi, Mattis Hætta, singing together. The lyrics of the song are mostly in Norwegian, with a short piece of *joik,* a traditional Sámi form of singing that is sung without words. The song describes how *joik* is said to have “more power than gunpowder” and references the building of the hydropower dam that Sámi and Norwegian protestors demonstrated against in the Alta controversy in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Finnmark.

I circle the tables, peering over students’ shoulders as they work. Mathilde has painted a Sámi flag and over it has written in Sámi: *Jurddas dan birra mii dus lea, ii ge dan maid don halidat* (think about what you have and not what you wish). “I googled Sámi phrases, and this is one that I liked,” she says. “We should think about that more.”

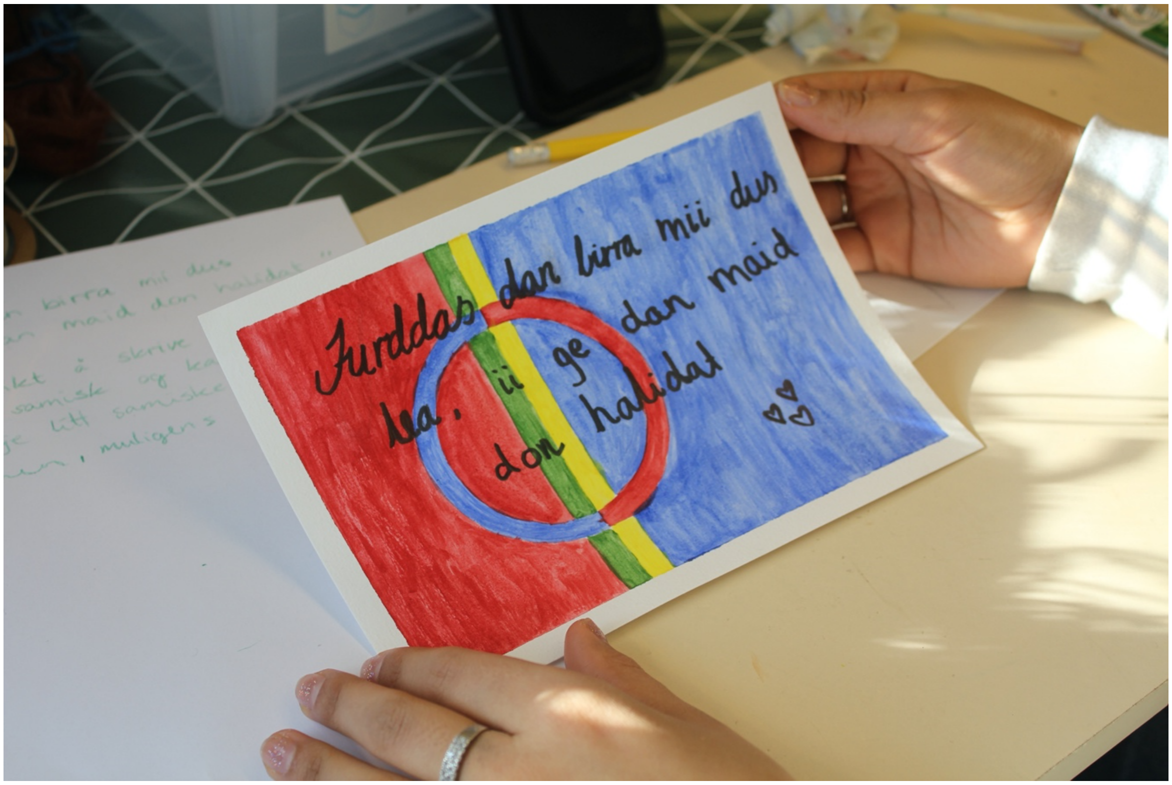

Fig. 25: Student artwork featuring the colors and patterns of the Sámi flag.

Lila, next to him, is tying knots between beads in her bracelet. She has chosen lettered beads, spelling the Northern Sámi word for hope: *doaivu*.

“I wanted to write something meaningful here,” she explains. “To remember we can’t forget what’s happened in the past. Hope is a good word to describe it: we can’t lose hope, even if it’s hard. Hope for the Sámi, for a better life, where they can live with their culture and experience their language and all those things. It was horrible things they did to those people. I wanted to also show that we have moved on but still remember that the two cultures can live together in one country: united.”

I note that it’s interesting she uses the word “they” to describe the Norwegians who enacted Norwegianization, not “we.” “You’re Norwegian,” I say. “Do you feel a disconnect?”

"Maybe," she says. "I think that it's strange that [Norwegianization] was only recently stopped. In our daily life we don't think about it. I haven't really thought about my personal responsibility because I don't come from that area, so the culture is a bit distant to me. If I was from Finnmark, I may have more of an investment. I think the 'real Sámi' live normally and have been assimilated. More modernized with snowmobiles. The don't live as nomads anymore.

"When I think of Norway, I don't think of Sámi culture. When we think about Australia we often think about the Aboriginals. We learn about that in school. But you don't learn that much about the Sámi culture from the start. Why not? Why not in first grade you start with projects like you do about other countries? It was only two years ago that I learned about the Sámi and the Norwegianization and all the horrible stuff that was happening. I didn't know about that before. When you're a kid you hear about the reindeer and the clothing, but not the horrible things. There might be some shame around it. We have to follow the national curriculum."

Vida, knitting next to her, interjects: "That curriculum is changing this year." I ask Vida how much teaching on the Sámi she had at her school in Kristiansand.[59]

"We didn't have that much about it in children's school, but we had more about it in *videregående* (upper secondary school). I don't feel like I've gotten very far into it. I think they don't tell the small kids this because it's so close to us, it's hard for them to hear. But they need to hear it. Maybe it's easier to hear about the Aboriginals because that's far away." She pauses. "But as Lila said, the Sámi culture is also kind of distant."

Mari, next to her, is busy tying yarn together to make a bracelet. "It's not that good," she says, holding it up to me. "It's the thought that counts. The colors are the Sámi flag. And the brown bead is for reindeer. I’m not very artistic. So, I thought a bit about what do I think about when I think about the Sámi? Reindeer, ice, snow, nature. I do think about the history, but I don’t think I know that much about it. I want to know more. The trip will help with that.”

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[59] The students who make up each of Grøndal's annual cohorts come from all over Norway. Most of the students I met attended public high schools which follow the national curriculum. A minority attended private Christian or international schools, but I did not find a significant difference in how these students spoke about their education as it related to Norwegianization and the Sámi.

I ask her if she thinks it would be valuable for the folk high school to give students more historical instruction.

“Maybe,” she says. “But folk high schools are not schools where people should learn so much [academically]. Students are supposed to learn more about themselves. I feel you learn more personal stuff like, *who am I? What do I stand for?*”

I ask, “Don’t you also learn more about yourself when confronting your horrific national history?”

Mari laughs nodding, “Maybe!” and Inga who is seated across the table points her paint brush at me knowingly, eyebrows raised, nodding in affirmation.

Meanwhile, Marius has tapped me on the shoulder, eager to show me the bracelet he has made from strips of leather and wooden beads painted in colors from the Sámi flag. “I used natural wood materials from the earth,” he says, proudly. “It feels original, not fake.” He pauses, turning the beads between his fingers. “It feels maybe they will be glad when I give this to them. They will know that we are thinking about them. I’m going to take it with me to Finnmark and give it to the Sámi man or lady we’re going to meet.” He smiles at me. “I’m very proud of this.”

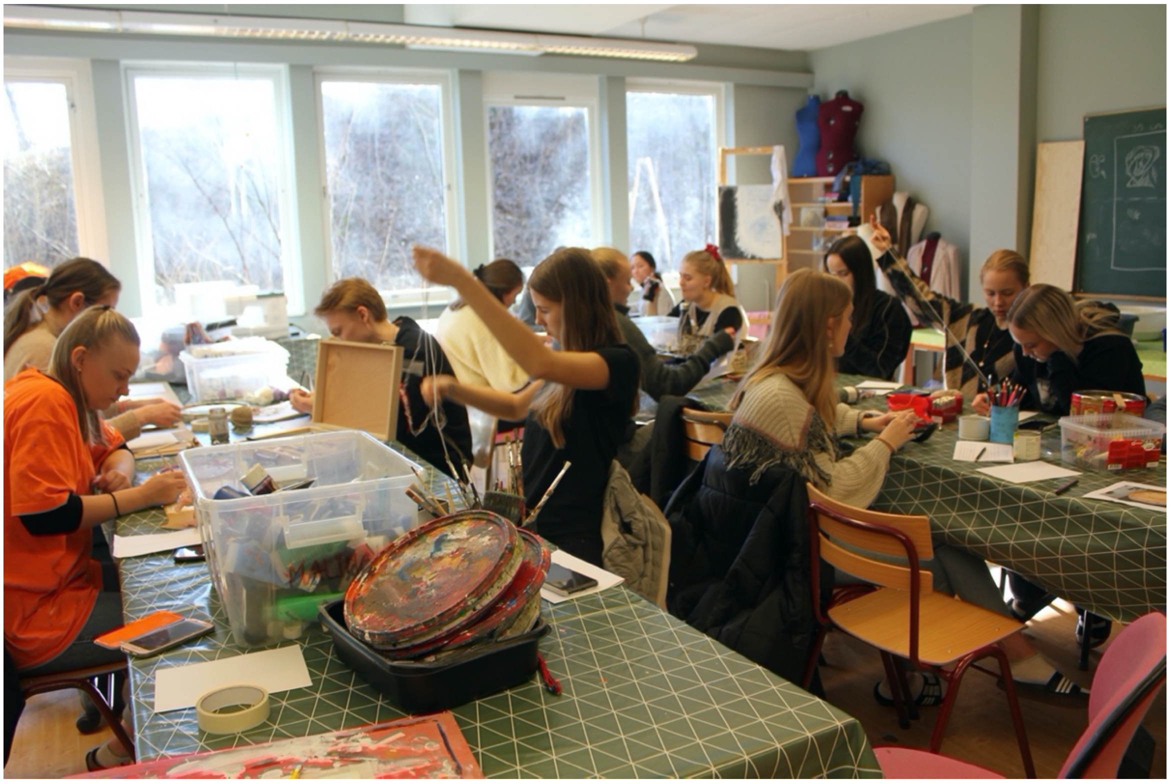

Fig. 26: Students make artwork together.

Irene is also finishing her piece, the glue she has used to affix bits of brightly colored yarn in the shape of mountain peaks to the paper still wet. She has three phrases under the peaks, one in Northern Sámi, *Sámi soga lávlla* (which is “Song of the Sámi People,” The Sámi anthem), and the other two in English: “Even if you are a minority of one, the truth is the truth,” and, “A minority is always compelled to think. That is the blessing of being a minority.”

“How did you come up with these quotes?” I ask.

She laughs. “I googled ‘minority quotes’,” she says. I ask her to elaborate. “A ‘minority’, I just thought it sounded cool. It’s easy to follow what everyone else is doing, but when you’re in the minority, you choose to remain there.”

“Well, I wouldn’t say it’s a choice, usually,” I say. “Your circumstances usually dictate your position. I’m sure there are lots of people who are considered minorities who wouldn’t be if they didn’t have to be.”

“That’s true,” she says.

I ask her if she’s ever experienced being a minority herself and she answers, “No. I’ve never been.”

The hour is up, and Lisa reminds students to clean up after themselves before they exit the classroom and head to dinner which will be served in a few minutes in the cafeteria across the quad. Lisa has also made an art piece, a painting of a Sámi hat which is blood red, embroidered, and shaped with a curve pushing forward at the top like a hook. “[It symbolizes] part of my shame,” she says. “This hat was said to be satanic, and Sámi were banned from using it. So, I’m creating an art piece honoring it.”

She continues, “Sámi had a bad reputation; but was that because they had been treated poorly? That they stole and so forth. It was shameful to be Sámi in Norway.”

SHAME AND INSPIRATION.

While Unni Wikan has argued that “shame” and its opposing force “honor,” are not always dialectically opposed in specific cultural orientations (1984: 636), it’s worth noting that, for Lisa, the pair aptly spoke to the shame she associated with Norwegianization and the inequality it fomented between Norwegians and the Sámi and the action she hoped she could produce in reconciling this dynamic through honoring them. Lisa’s art piece was the most overt example I encountered of any of my research participants acknowledging their own complicity in the historical processes of Norwegianization as a contemporary Norwegian, as she made her piece to synthesize the shame she felt into what she hoped would be an expression of honor. For some students, like Lila, a general sense of hope for a unified Norway seemed to satisfy her discomfort with the hierarchy that Norwegianization perpetuated between Norwegians and the Sámi; for others, like Marius, a gift he would make and give to Sámi person represented a material extension of what he hoped would be received as an offering of friendship, or at least that the recipients would be pleased that he was "thinking of them." It was clear that the majority of the students I interviewed did not fully understand the details of Norwegianization, did not grasp the position of the Sámi in contemporary Norway, and did not necessarily associate the Sámi with being a part of Norway; as Lila said, "when I think of Norway, I don't think of Sámi culture." The disconnect between their own Norwegian-ness and Sámi culture was described to me in terms of differences in language, tradition, and a special closeness the Sámi shared with the natural world, a circumstance that Lisa and her students described as being a matrix from which they could draw inspiration. These forms of "inspiration," would, in turn, reverse the subvalue of difference in equality (Dumont 1980), by repositioning the Sámi "differences" I've listed here positively, despite the knowledge that it was these sorts of differences that led to the inequality the Sámi have experienced under Norwegian occupation.

Being inspired by the Sámi through material processes was also one way Lisa and her students attempted to alleviate the shame associated with the inequality they perceived between themselves and the Sámi. Lisa used the word often during the artmaking exercise and viewed being inspired by the Sámi as a positive position to take, and a way to give them honor. There were limits to acceptable expressions of inspiration, though; Vida said that while she was "inspired by how beautiful" the traditional Sámi dress is, she would never wear *gákti* because it would be "disrespectful." The term "cultural appropriation" did not come up during the artmaking activity, and I heard it used just once during my fieldwork when one student, Emilie, asked me if I felt that wearing cornrow braids as a white woman was an act of "cultural appropriation or appreciation."[60] Lisa said that she had worn them as a child while her family was on Christian mission in Madagascar and didn't see anything wrong with it; Emilie said that she had heard the term "cultural appropriation" on social media and was curious about what it meant. She also said that she wanted to get a Māori tattoo because she was inspired by their values but was afraid that doing so would be viewed negatively. Others, like Irene, took the position of the Sámi as minorities as a qualification that was desirable, valued, a blessing because they were "compelled to think." Even if being a minority was a position she found to be a good one, she admitted she had never been one herself. This rupture between a lived experience and a perceived experience was a common occurrence for most of my research participants, most of whom were nineteen and twenty-year-olds coming from small towns and middle-class families across Norway.

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[60] These terms, and the conversation, were spoken in English.

The goal of bridging the gap between perceived and lived experiences was one reason why Lisa incorporated artmaking into her lesson material in the first place. "The Norwegianization, you have to make it mean something to them," she said. "*Why is this important to me?* What does the history mean today? What are the effects?" Making the material "mean something" through artmaking was one way to do so by bridging more abstract theory with embodied practice. One student, Keilin, put it this way: "I think that when there are things in between the theoretical stuff, it's easier to comprehend everything, you get time to process it more. It's easier to enjoy it if it's some practical, some theory, then you use different parts of your body and brain. It's easier to learn, to create memories. Especially if it's sounds, visuals, theoretical, and practical, you have all these elements, different hooks to connect things together." Keilin said that it was difficult for her to "connect" to Norwegianization because "people often think in our times 'it wasn't us who did this', but it happened before you. Maybe I didn't do it to them directly but people who came before me did and that has affected the whole timeline and the way they live today is affected by how 'we' [she hooks her fingers in air quotes] treated them earlier. They're still affected by it."

(IN)EQUALITY IN NORWEGIAN EDUCATION.

The artmaking activity also attempted to close not only the spatial distance many students described being between themselves and Indigenous groups, but also the informational gaps students said existed in the Norwegian state curriculum on Norwegianization. In a comparative study between the history curricula of Nordic public education in the 1990s, Stein Tønnesson

(1991) found that the Norwegian curriculum was the most nationalist of the five Nordic states, noting that presented “Scandinavian, European and global history from a Norwegian vantage-point, and focusses extensively on the process of Norwegian nation-building” (Eriksen 1993: 34). While the Norwegian national curriculum has been updated since the 1990s, Danielsen et al. argue that an “everyday nationalism” remains in Norway’s public education that appears “innocent” but can still reinforce exclusionary ideas about Sámi difference as it relates to Norwegians (2023: 686) Lila said her reasoning for why the Norwegian public school system hadn’t included a more robust overview of Norway’s colonization of the Sámi saying that “there might be some shame around it,” noting that she had learned about the “horrible things that happened” to the Aboriginal Australians but not about the Sámi. As Vida said, she felt that it was “easier to hear about the Aboriginals because that’s far away,” while also expressing that she felt that Sámi culture was “kind of distant.” The trip to Alta, then, was designed for students to close the distance both temporally and spatially between themselves and the colonization that the Norwegian state enacted in Norway in such a way that the classroom instruction and artmaking activity could not do alone. In other words, “being there” in the body in Alta would bridge the physical and relational distances that existed between the Sámi living there and the students living together on a campus at the opposite end of the country.

Even so, Lisa also used the word “shame” to describe how she felt about leading her students on a trip the entire length of Norway during a global pandemic. “I do have traveling shame; it doesn’t feel right. It would not be a crisis for me personally if I didn’t travel, but for the students they didn’t get Australia. We had to have *something* for them.” She had phoned the local municipality health services about whether or not the class should travel to Finnmark, and they had told her to call the Alta office, but she hadn’t because she was afraid they would tell her not to come. “The hotel knows [we’re coming], the dogsled company knows. They need tourists!” Other students shared similar misgivings about flying, in part because of the risk of inadvertently spreading the disease to a region in Norway that had very few cases of coronavirus at the time, and also because of the carbon emissions associated with the flight. Julie said, “I’m not a big fan of flying, but this is probably my one flight this year. So, I’m okay I with that. I think that if we're going to actually be in Finnmark and see anything, we have to fly. It's so far away." Maren agreed. "It's a little unjust that we get to travel when others have to sit at home, though. Like in Oslo for example. But this is a meaningful trip, it's a little more 'okay,' I think." Even though most of the students described the trip as "difficult to justify" or "unjust," none of them decided to forgo the trip for the sake of their convictions. Instead, any of the shame they associated with traveling was subsumed by the desire to experience the Sámi way of life by having "real" interactions with them in Alta. "I think we really have to be there," said Vida. "That's sad, that we have to. But you don't care as much until you see how it is. I think you need to experience the authenticity of it." Lisa, too, described the trip as an opportunity for students to see "the real culture" of the Sámi in such a way that she could not offer in the classroom. In the section that follows, I describe how students interacted with their perceptions of the authentic and performative aspects of the Sámi Experience they took part in in Alta the following week and assess how these activities revealed power dynamics that existed in this tourist experience between the Sámi guides and the Norwegian students who met them.

IN SÁPMI.

It is the morning of the Sámi Experience and Nils and Per, our Sámi guides, have brought their reindeer and sleighs to the side of the ice hotel in preparation for the trip we will take with them through the woods later today. They have gone inside the lodge for a quick coffee before the tour starts and the students and I have wandered out to take a closer look at the reindeer.

The students squeal with delight when they see them and it's no wonder: the reindeer are stunningly beautiful, other-worldly, their thick coats mirroring the tones of the landscape around us, milk and stone and gold. They wait quietly, shaking their heads in their harnesses, snorting icy air through their nostrils, several of them supporting massive racks in geometric formations that look impossible to hold. We surround them, clad in matching snowsuits from the lodge, some of us taking photos and others grasping each other in delight. Nils and Per, having finished their coffee and now ready to begin the "experience" appear, a double vision of cobalt blue and vermilion red, the silver from their *gákti* (traditional dress) glittering in the sun.

“Anyone know anything about reindeer?” Nils asks, in Norwegian, clapping his hands together in his thick mittens, stomping his pointed, seal-skin boots in the snow. No one speaks.

“Not much, I guess?” he asks laughing. He tells us that the reindeer like the cold. “We only use male reindeer to drive,” he tells us, “They’re a bit stronger.” Nils says that both female and males have antlers, and while they both shed them each year, they lose them at different times. “The ones with the biggest antlers are males who have been castrated,” he explains, “so they lose them at the same time as the females, which is two weeks after they give birth.”

Vida whispers next to me, “it must be for tourism,” she says. “The big antlers are more majestic.” She muses. “It could be other reasons that they castrate them. Maybe it has something to do with breeding and controlling the population.”

He pauses, asking us if we have any questions so far.

“How many reindeer do you have?” asks Rona shyly.

Nils smiles in a way that indicates he’s used to this question. “We never tell how many we have,” he says. “That would be like me asking you how much money you have in your bank account.” He tells us that they do need to tell the Norwegian government how many reindeer they own, and that the Sámi are the only people who are allowed to own reindeer in Norway. “When we’re at a party we say we have ‘a lot’, but at home we say we have ‘enough’.” He tells us that they no longer use reindeer sleighs for transportation, but instead rely on snowmobiles for moving themselves and the reindeer.

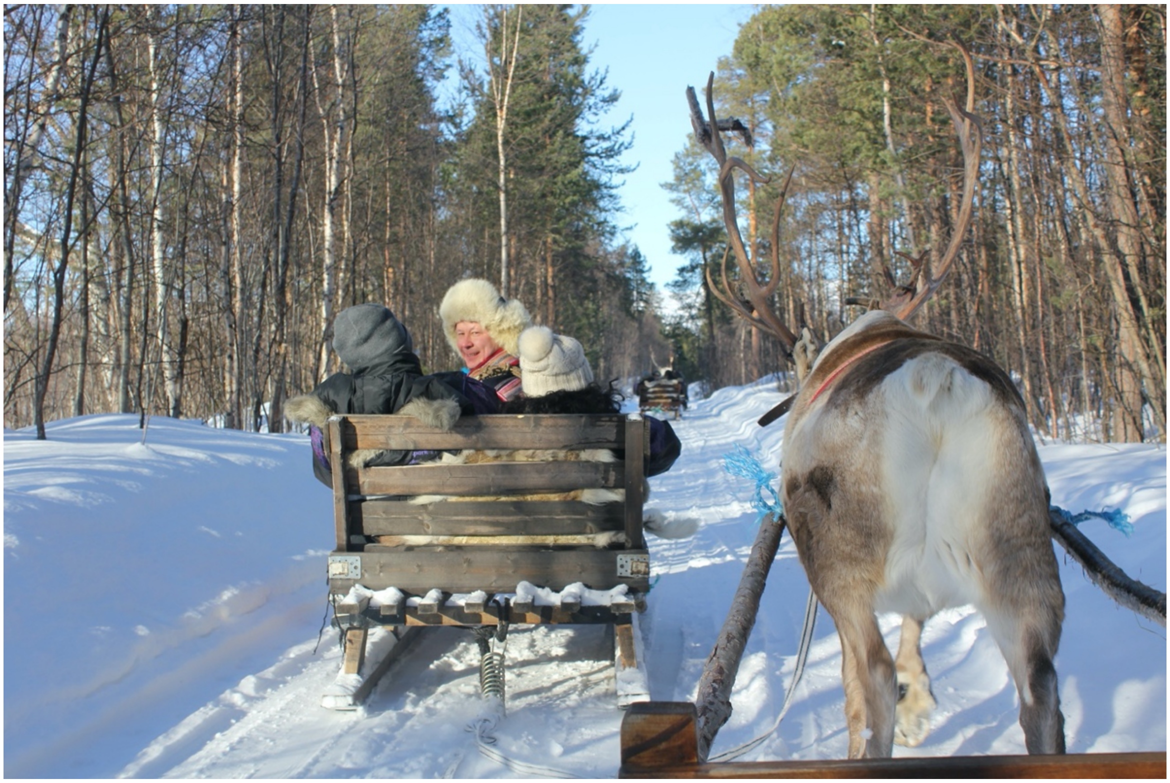

Fig. 27: Per leads us and the reindeer.

Nils instructs us to pair up and board the reindeer sleighs, and after a brief ride over a trail through the woods arrive at a clearing, the banks of the frozen river opening in front of us. Here is a *lávvu* where we will share a meal around a fire with Nils and Per. Sámi traditionally lived in *lávvu* like this one, its cone-shaped structure fashioned from wooden poles made from birch trunks that provides a stable shelter against Arctic weather. *Lávvu* used to be draped with reindeer skins, but this one is covered with a thick water-repellent fabric, easier to care for and transport. We enter through the flap of fabric that's been secured open at the entrance, each of us maneuvering through in the identical thick boots and snowsuits we've borrowed from the lodge, gingerly stepping onto the reindeer skins that line the floor. A small fire crackles cheerfully in the center of the dwelling surrounded by a circle of smooth, round stones with a pile of split birch next to it that will be fed to its flames.

As we settle next to each other, leaning gently against the tarp at our backs, Nils tells us, "In the olden days, it would be normal to have eight to ten kids in here, all living together." He pauses, pushes a stick in the fire, coaxing a flame to catch a new piece of birch. “My grandmother had fifteen.”

The students look at each other, wide-eyed; there are about a dozen bodies encircling the flame, limb touching limb. It seems impossible to imagine adding any more.

“Now, of course, we don’t live in *lávvu*, but in houses with electricity and internet,” says Nils. “We used the *lávvu* for many generations because they’re easy to pack up; it just takes 30 minutes, and you can do it on your own.”

Nils tells us that there are rules for who sits where in the *lávvu*. There’s a special place reserved for the matriarch of the family to sit, with her youngest child positioned at her right hand. On her left, her eldest child sits and makes space for any guests that may pay them a visit. “It’s the guests’ job to keep the fire going because they sit right next to the wood,” Nils explains, passing a tray of butter cookies and smoked reindeer jerky to the student sitting to his left. “You cannot cross the *lávvu*, you must go around ‘the kitchen’,” he says, gesturing to the fire. He pours coffee from a kettle that has been warmed by its flames into paper cups that he passes to us, as we thoughtfully chew the salty dried flesh of the same kind of animals that have transported us here.

“We like to cook,” he says, “and we always eat the whole animal.”

Maren asks incredulously, “even the eyes?”

“Oh yes!” he says. “Every part. The brain is used to waterproof the skins,” he says, running his hands over the reindeer hide beneath him. “We use the blood for sausages, and we make our trousers out of the reindeer leg skin, that’s the strongest part of the skin. We also use that for the boots.” He clicks his boots together, which are adorning his outstretched feet by the fire; they are not made of reindeer skin, but seal skin, made by a popular Norwegian brand that emulates Sámi style. I know this because my *bestemor* (grandmother) gave me a very similar pair from the same brand for my birthday some years ago.

Nils gestures to the embroidered collar of his ornate overshirt that extends over his shoulders and to his waist, its pewter thread running through cheerful reds and golds and blues. “Our clothes, the *gákti*, is not something we use every day. It’s for weddings and big parties. We use them more than you guys use the *bunad* (Norwegian traditional dress) though,” he says smiling.

Vida asks from across the fire, “Have they always been so colorful?” She tells me later that she wondered if the bright colors of the *gákti* were more modern.

Nils tells us that in the “olden days” the *gákti* used to be greyer, as there wasn’t the same availability for bright material like there is today.

“Each line is sewed row by row,” he tells us. “It takes a very long time. The seams used to be made from reindeer tendons, but now it’s just thread.”

He pauses, adding a log to the fire. “What do you all know about the Sámi in Norway?” he asks, scanning our circle.

No students offer any answers and so Lisa clears her throat and says, “We spoke a bit about Norwegianization in class. I’m wondering, do you feel like it’s still difficult to be Sámi in Norway today?”

“Not for us, but our parents felt that way,” says Nils. “Youth today are very proud to be Sámi.”

Lisa asks if he speaks Sámi at home and Nils says he does. He tells us that those who, like his family, work with reindeer have their own special *joik* (traditional song), too. “A *joik* is a very personal thing. So, when someone is creating a *joik* for you, they use it to reflect your personality; maybe someone is more peaceful, and they use a peaceful tone. You can't make a *joik* for yourself, it's given to you. And it's not words, but tones. You have to memorize it. A *joik* follows you the rest of your life and no one else can use it. It's a very beautiful way to remember those who have gone before you." He pauses. "And now I'll sing you mine."

Loi-lo-le-lo-loi-le-lo-lo-lei-lo
Loi-lo-le-lo-loi-le-lo-lo-lei-lo
Loi-lo-le-lo-loi-le-lo-lo-lei-lo

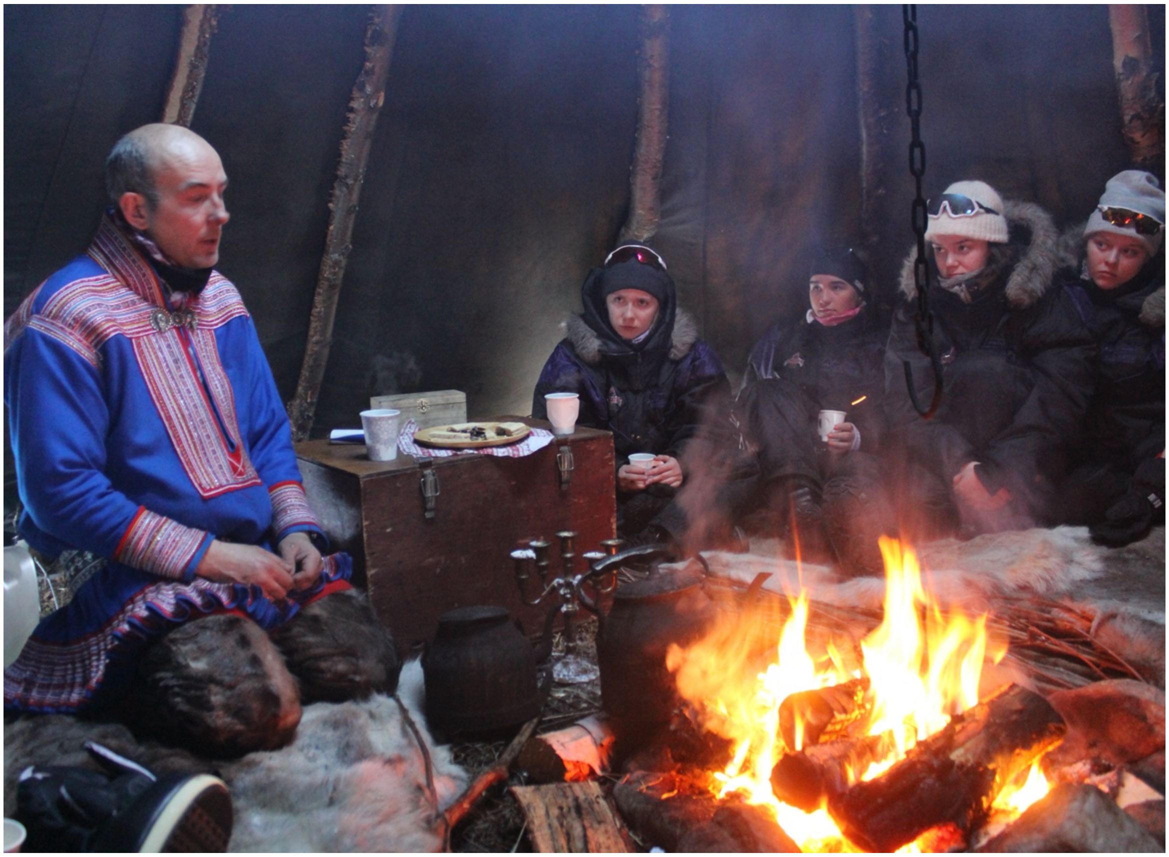

Fig. 28: Nils sings his joik while we listen.

While Nils sings, he holds the stick he's been using to tend to the fire across his outstretched legs, his crossed feet swaying slightly to the beat he is making with his voice. His singing is not particularly beautiful or clear but there is something so simultaneously wistful and steady to the quality of it that I instantly feel tears spring to my eyes.

He finishes his *joik* and asks if the group will sing *Sámiid Ædnan* (Sámi Land) with him, which we do.

Once the song is over, Nils asks us if we have any more questions for him and Per, and when no one speaks, I do: “We’ve been talking in class about how climate change has impacted the Sámi way of life,” I say. “Have you felt the impact personally?”

Per, next to me, says that he would like to answer. “Reindeer herders are the group of Sámi who have experienced this the most because we are dependent on nature. And the reindeer need stable weather conditions, especially in the winters, because all the winter food for reindeer is in the ground under the snow. The worst for reindeer is if there is an ice layer on the ground or in the snow and then it’s difficult for them to dig through the snow to find food. We have experienced that the last five years, more often the ice layer [has formed] and I think that’s because of climate change. The weather is not so stable anymore. The temperature is going up and down all the time. And also, the migration route for us, we need ice on the rivers and lakes to cross them. The time when the waters are covered in ice is later and later in the year. So, the migration is also later and later every autumn. This has been a good year. Good conditions. Last year was a catastrophe. I think the reindeer will need more and more help from us to survive. That is one of the impacts of climate change.”

He gestures to the fire crackling in the middle of the tent. “It’s very important to us, that we respect nature,” he says. “When we leave a place, if there is anything left from the fire, sticks we’ve used, we mark the space. And then people know who has been there before them.

“There are signs in nature that we can read. For example, the weather, if it shifts, we can read those signs, before a storm is coming, the calves in the reindeer flock will start to move in different directions. Then you can be totally sure a storm is coming, or the weather will be bad the next day." He pauses. "We think that people who live in towns are maybe not as *nær med naturen* (close with nature)."

We've finished eating our jerky and cookies, our paper coffee cups are empty, and the fire is beginning to wane. The Sámi Experience is over and as we trudge out of the tent into the brilliant winter afternoon sun, I can't help but feel that I've barely scratched the surface of understanding what the Sámi experience in Norway has been or is really like now.

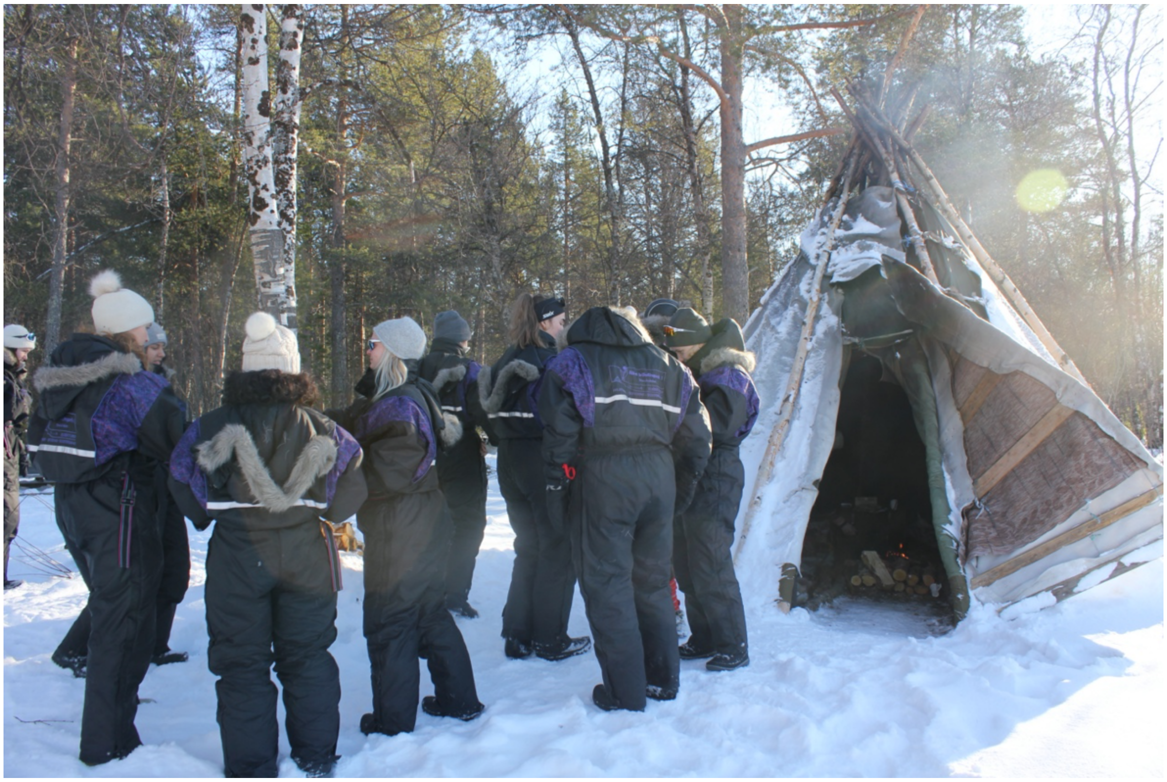

Fig. 29: Students in matching snowsuits outside the lávvu.

Boarding the bus back to the hotel in Alta, Marius tells me that he has given the bracelet he made to Nils. "I think he really liked it," he says. "I hope so, anyway. I'm the only one who gave him something."

We find our seats, Marius heading towards the back, and I sit in the front, across the aisle from Lisa and Jan who are seated directly behind our bus driver, Petter, and have already struck up a conversation with him. Petter is a jovial middle-aged Sámi man who had been a reindeer herder for most of his life until recently, when he started his family bus company as reindeer herding had become more difficult to financially sustain. The Norwegian government had limited the number of reindeer Sámi herders could own, he said, as the populations had outgrown their natural food supplies. “The earth has to recover and rebuild what they’ve eaten,” he says. But because three Sámi families in Alta have “pushed [the limits] over the mountain” with flocks that are too large to feed sustainably, other Sámi herders have suffered from the same laws even though their flocks are much smaller.

As the bus twists through a landscape of pure white, I imagine Petter in his previous profession driving a snowmobile, herding his reindeer home. As he steers us in our seats in rows two by two, I wonder if some of his herding skills are somehow transferrable: while he was used to guiding reindeer to their destination, he now is guiding us.

He says that he likes owning and driving for his family bus company which he had named after his family name: *Báltu Northern Lights*. “It’s fun to see the older generations represented that way,” he says. He pauses. “My grandparents’ generation wouldn’t have liked us to use the Northern Lights for business, though. For them, the lights were our ancestors. You aren’t allowed to wave at them; that makes the ancestors angry.”

Petter describes how his bus company primarily focuses on taking tourists on “Northern Lights safaris” and even offer a rebate on the ticket price if they don’t end up seeing them. “We can’t guarantee it, of course, but we often find them. We don’t use the apps or anything like that. We know the best places to go.” This year, when tourism has been drastically reduced by Covid-19 restrictions, Petter says that he has driven mainly for the Alta Folk High School nearby. Lisa says that she’s glad that our folk high school had the chance to drive with him, “even though we were supposed to be in the Philippines and Australia!” she laughs. “But this is wonderful, too.”

Petter says, “I was supposed to be on a trip to Cape Town!”

"This is an experience we wouldn't have had otherwise," says Lisa. "We are very glad to have had it."

(IN)EQUALITY IN SÁMI TOURISM.

Unlike the other activities at the folk high school meant to create a sense of equality between students, the Sámi Experience was not designed to bridge the gaps in perceived differences between the Sámi and Norwegian students in the same way. Rather, the trip was meant to give students a "cultural experience" that would allow them to interact with their own cultural *utvikling* (development) and give them "new perspectives"; it was meant to, as Lisa said, get students to think about the Sámi people through interacting with several of them, even if these interactions were in curated tourist scenarios. In this way, the folk high school values of "interactions" and "experiences" were realized, even if the broader value of egalitarianism could not be fully achieved. The goal for students to "be there" in an embodied experience of Sámi life, even if limited, was enough to satisfy most of the students' desires for enrolling in the *Backpacker* course and to fulfil the overarching goal of the folk high school more generally: to bridge a more theoretical understanding of an element of Norwegian history, in this case, Norwegianization, with an embodied experience of meeting Sámi in the north.

The strong desire to "be there" in the body took Norwegianization from "out there" or "in the past" to "here" and "in the present," crossing a spatial and temporal distance that relied on the carbon emissions associated with the trip and gave way to the discomfort that arose from students' having to interact with Norway's historical legacy of colonization and continued environmental degradation of Sámi land. The distance between themselves and both the environmental degradation and colonization that came to the fore during the trip, though, remained present; as Vida said, it was unfortunate that the students really needed to "be there" in order to "care" about the Sámi, but it was true for her all the same. Without "experienc[ing] the authenticity of it," Vida said, the Sámi would remain distant to her. And while students had told me in the reflective learning portion of our in-classroom workshop that it was “difficult” to justify the trip north, they each decided to take it anyway. The cognitive dissonance that coincided with the environmental impact of our trip on the Sámi way of life was referenced, but not disproportionately; students were not asked to interact with the discomfort of Norwegianization or climate change in such a way that would detract from their overall enjoyment of the trip. Students were meant to be pushed, but not to the point of contributing to any meaningful changes in dismantling the power dynamics between the Norwegian state and the Sámi, for example, or being asked to forgo the trip for the sake of preserving Sámi reindeer populations. This understanding, that our trip contributed to climate change but was worth taking anyway, was justified by ideas that the trip was supporting Sámi businesses or making them “proud” of their heritage, a power dynamic that undergirded both the trip and the Norwegian position of superiority in Norway more generally.

Even so, our Sámi guides disrupted these power dynamics, in subtle and more obvious ways. Throughout the tour, Per and Nils made their own differentiations that privileged themselves over the Norwegians seated in their tent. Whether it be their special ways of reading nature, their deeper connection to their customs, or the students’ general lack of knowledge about reindeer, our Sámi guides regularly referenced what makes Sámi life distinct from that of Norwegians and even though there were overlaps between traditional and modern practices embedded in the Sámi everyday, the message was clear: the Sámi culture remains unique, distinct, largely inaccessible to Norwegians. Certain details of Per’s and Nils’ lives were omitted, the contours of their “real lives” were opaque: they wouldn’t reveal how many reindeer they owned, didn’t describe the members of their family, and wouldn’t tell us the extent of their own interactions with the Norwegian state. The Sámi Experience was scripted, bounded, constrained; in this way, it did not, as much as Lisa had hoped it would, facilitate entirely “real” interactions between them Sámi and her students. The parameters of the experience were very much bound by contractual agreements, by an exchange of money, and by a limited time frame, as most tourist offerings are. Vida expressed her dissatisfaction with the experience saying, “It wasn’t their real life that we were seeing. It felt like it was putting on a show for tourists.” She did, however, acknowledge that it wouldn’t be possible to experience Sámi life “naturally. We can’t just walk into their houses. But at the same time, it was cool to learn about. And it felt like we were learning a lot. They know their stuff because they’ve experienced it.” The Sámi had a certain sense of “knowing” they had developed from their lived experiences that she and her peers could not fully access. That much was clear.

Claudio Minca and Tim Oakes, however, argue that tourist activities are “real” insofar as they encompass substantive social, political, economic, and material forces for the people who produce and engage with them (2012: 1). Even within the performative aspects of the Sámi Experience, real interactions and exchanges happened; when Marius gave his bracelet to Nils, for example, or when Lisa asked Nils and Per if being Sámi was still difficult in Norway today. The discussion we had about climate change was also unscripted, off the cuff; Per hadn’t offered much to the program prior to this question, and it was clear that the issue was important to him when he chose to speak on it. In this way, the folk high school values of both interactions and experiences were not fully realized, or at least, were limited in the scope of how they could be socially accessed, but that didn’t mean that they weren’t valuable, educational. As I see it, the wish my participants had to have an authentic or real interaction or experience came from a place of sincerity, of genuinely wanting to learn from the Sámi, to forge connections they felt would disrupt the inequality fomented between them by Norwegianization, even within the limitations of our brief tour. The goal of the trip was learning, not reconciliation, and the students expressed that the Sámi Experience provided a new dimension to their understanding of both Norwegianization and the impact of climate change on the Sámi way of life. The Sámi Experience, despite its problems, had satisfied the objectives of the *Backpacker* course. It had brought folk high school’s values to the body, and students said that it offered a form of experiential learning they could not have achieved in a classroom setting. By eating reindeer meat together, sitting closely around the fire inside the lávvu, and sharing in song with our Sámi guides, the *Backpacker* class was able to experience in their bodies a small part of what it feels like to be Sámi in Norway today.

The Sámi Experience also problematized certain preconceived ideas students had of the Sámi people, most notably that the Sámi are especially attuned to nature and lived simpler lives than Norwegians. Smithers (2015) describes how Indigenous people have been characterized as "ecological noble Indians" since the early modern period in Europe, a prevailing narrative that emerged in early colonial contact between Europeans and Native North Americans. "In the minds of Europeans, and later Euroamericans, the ecological Indian represented a softly spoken 'noble savage,' a natural conservationist who was attuned to the earth's rhythms…" (2015:83). Smithers writes that this "racial trope remains alive and well" in contemporary indigeneity discourses and impedes "meaningful dialogue" from happening between White North Americans and Indigenous people when it comes to environmental issues or climate change initiatives in North America (2015: 83). This trope also exists in how Norwegians perceive the Sámi and has become a point of critique in Sámi tourism in recent years. Alvid Viken writes that the correlation between cultural appropriation and Sámi-produced souvenirs reinforces the "noble Savage" trope in Norway, as they fulfill tourism's predilection for the "different" and "exotic" in ways that can also reproduce uneven power relations between the Sámi and Norwegians (2022: 104). The Sámi's so-called "closeness" with nature was a theme that emerged in much of the *Backpacker* class's content on Sámi indigeneity, in the film I showed prior to the trip, in the artmaking activity students took part in, and, certainly, in the Sámi Experience itself. Vida, a vegetarian, was especially impressed that the Sámi used "all parts" of the reindeer, a theme that had also come up in Marta's elective on sustainable food practices. "Even though I'm a vegetarian I fully support that," said Vida. "It's not like they harm the environment the way they eat meat. They don't produce any waste." The value of, not being wasteful was a theme that came up regularly when students described what made the Sámi special or unique. This respect for nature was a general stereotype students invoked when describing the Sámi way of life and presented another realm of good differentiation they placed between themselves and the Sámi.

The Sámi we interacted with, however, also reinforced and utilized certain motifs or points of difference to support their businesses. As John Urry and Jonas Larsen argue, the "tourist gaze" is constructed through marked difference developed in contrast to non-tourist “routines and practices of everyday life” by producing experiences that contrast the ordinary and mundane (2011: 2). From Petter’s assertion that he has a special knowledge when it came to finding the Northern Lights to Per’s statement that the Sámi are particularly “close with nature,” the Sámi we met during our trip leveraged these tropes that privileged difference for their financial gain. At times, utilizing these stereotypes for profit brought some moral ambiguity for them, most notably for Petter, who admitted that his grandparents wouldn’t have liked that he had used the Northern Lights for financial gain. For Nils and Per, however, tourism presented a supplemental income to their livelihoods, one that allowed them to continue to practice reindeer-herding in addition to their Sámi Experience duties, a circumstance that Müller and Huuva write is increasingly common in Sápmi today (2009). Even so, tourism represented a double-edged sword for Per and Nils, as the land used for tourist offerings encroaches on the herding pastures necessary for sustaining their herds in the first place (Viken 2022). It’s also important to note that, while Petter, Per, and Nils used tropes to sell their tourist offerings, they weren’t *necessarily* more environmentally conscious than the Norwegians I traveled with were. Petter flew internationally, for example, and made his living off of transportation, while Per and Nils used snowmobiles and lived in “houses with internet.” In this way, the *Backpacker* students perceived the Sámi as having assimilated into Norwegian society, giving them a sense of shared relating that downplayed the historical and contemporary ways in which Norwegianization had subjugated and oppressed the Sámi people.

Sámi “assimilation” was also one way many students were able to imagine that they were equal, or at least similar, to our Sámi guides; “They felt like normal people,” said Vida. “They were wearing the costumes, but they don’t usually wear them.” Here, Vida’s comments reflect her wish for establishing sameness, an integral part of the value of equality (Dumont 1980), despite the differences she perceived existing between her and Nils and Per. Still, the way that the Sámi themselves contributed to environmental degradation was a topic that my research participants avoided or downplayed in other ways. Even in fuel usage that could be considered environmentally unfriendly, like snowmobile use, Vida explained how “different” it was for her and her fellow students to use them for “fun” as we had done the previous day, as opposed to the Sámi who use them for transportation. “I don’t know if snowmobiles are really bad,” she said. “It felt kind of weird. But it was really cool at the same time.” There was value adjudication happening, here for Vida, too, though: using snowmobiles for transportation needs was considered better than using them “for fun,” even though both usages negatively impacted the Arctic environment. The ways that the Sámi themselves contribute to climate degradation, however, was never acknowledged by any of the students or staff on the trip. Petter’s use of petrol to fuel his business, for example, or his plans to travel to South Africa were not viewed critically by my research participants. It was, in a way, a place where relating could happen, a shared commonality, a dissolution of some of the perceived differences that Lisa, Jan and their students had imagined existed being between them and the Sámi. Instead of being viewed with the same sense of critique that Lisa and her students had leveraged against themselves for flying, for example, Petter’s contributions to tourism and Norway’s capitalist enterprise were viewed favorably by Lisa. “We talked about how Sámi have been stereotyped as having a bad reputation, being lazy,” she said. “But the ones we’ve met here, having a reindeer herd is *a lot* of work. And our bus driver, creating a new business. They’re not lazy at all!” None of the teaching staff or students, however, noted that these businesses had been developed to satisfy Norway’s capitalist markets or to adhere to the laws imposed on Sámi reindeer herding practices by the Norwegian state. Petter, however, said that it was several Sámi families who were to blame for “pushing it over the mountain” with their herds that were too large to sustain. These families, then, in their pursuit of capitalist expansion, perhaps represented the Sámi assimilation into Norwegian enterprise more than any of the Sámi people we met on our trip.

CONCLUSION.

Much like my experience seeing the Northern Lights I described at the start of this chapter, the trip to Alta gave me and my research participants only a glimpse of Sámi life, and as educational as it might have been, it still felt fleeting, inconclusive. Our experience was limited, and our interactions brief. I left Alta feeling that I hadn’t grasped what the Sámi experience has really been, and continues to be like, under the shadow of the Norwegian state. My aim in this chapter, though, has not been to describe what the Sámi experience more broadly is really like in Norway; the Sámi were not my ethnographic subjects, and our time together, though informative, was constrained by the parameters of a tourist performance. Rather, my aim has been to critically engage with how Norwegians view their role in the forms of colonization and environmental degradation that remain ongoing in Norway, and to make the case that their wish for cultural experiences, like those of many wealthy, powerful people in the Global North, supersedes the shame or discomfort they may have about perpetuating inequalities that happen because of them. My goal has also been to reveal the ways in which the Sámi have adapted to and contributed to the structures of capitalist enterprise that exist in Norway, and to problematize the perceptions my research participants had of the Sámi as being wholly removed from these constraints.

Both the artmaking activity and the trip north also revealed the discomfort my research participants had with the limitations of their interactions, or experiences, with the Sámi. I found that students, in particular, very much wanted to do things well: answer the workshop questions correctly, do the art project fully, be polite and not offend our Sámi guides. Vida said students didn't ask questions during the Sámi Experience because they didn't want to "say the wrong thing," and this dynamic was also present during my reflective learning workshop. This discomfort, though, also meant that sometimes students didn't contribute at all, either to class discussions or in group activities. The fear of making a mistake or looking foolish was a reoccurring theme in my fieldwork, and I found that students were often reticent to take risks and that the folk high school, by design, asked that they do so but within limits the school deemed to be "safe." The goal of the trip, though, was not to do things perfectly, or unproblematically; students and teachers knew the problems associated with our trip and decided to take it anyway in an effort to experience, interact, and develop. I, too, had discomforts of my own deciding to take the trip fully aware of the environmental degradation that coincided with my flight North. Like my research participants, I hoped the trip was worth it.

Hope is a slippery thing. Lila's assertion that she hoped the Sámi and Norwegians could be "unified" despite Norwegian occupation of Sápmi, for example, also reflects broader Norwegian views of the Sámi position in Norway, where Sámi land rights and reindeer herding practices still remain under the authority of the Norwegian state. This value of perceived equality in Norway supersedes Sámi sovereignty, a prevailing attitude that came to the fore during Sámi protests in September 2023,[61] when protesters were forcefully removed from their encampments in the lobby of Norway's oil and energy ministry after demonstrating their opposition to Statkraft's[62] proposal to construct the largest wind power plant in Sápmi to date. The message, here, is clear: as long as the Sámi way of life is not viewed as a threat to Norwegian enterprise, so called "equality" is possible. Instead, state educational projects and tourist experiences that generate a general sense of inspiration or pride for the Sámi obfuscate the shame associated with Norwegianization and Norway's continued occupation of Sámi land. In this way, the Sámi Experience could be interpreted as representing an opportunity for unifying Norwegians and the Sámi, but one that superficially transcended the power dynamics that continue to exist between them. Like the ancestors represented in the flickers of the Northern Lights, the colonial legacy of Norwegianization remains in the Sámi present, and no amount of singing *Sámiid Ædnan* together changes that. Still, the interactions students had with our Sámi guides, even within the constraints of a tourist experience, were valuable to them insofar as they gave a human shape to both the historical distance of Norwegianization and the geographical distance of the effects of climate change on Norway's Arctic region. They also offered students the chance to move from a place of superficial inspiration, as seen in their artmaking activity, to real-time interactions, which could challenge some of the preconceived ideas they had about the Sámi way of life. The aim of "being there" to experience and interact with Sámi people was what ultimately led the *Backpacker* teachers to planning the trip north, even if flying the entire length of Norway led to environmental ramifications for the very people they hoped to learn from. It was this aim of "being there" that also forged a specific relationality between Jan and Lisa and me as educators and as observers in our own right, in the middle of a frozen field in Finnmark, our faces turned toward the Arctic night sky, our eyes hopeful and searching for even a glimpse of the flickering foxtails of the elusive Northern Lights. In the next chapter, I return to Grøndal's campus to explore how Rakel and her students in *Action og Bistand* (Action and Aid) attempted to replicate a similar sense of "being there" in East Africa when their annual trip was canceled due to Covid-19 related travel restrictions.

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[61] https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/sami-activist-sets-up-camp-outside-norway-parliament-protest-wind-turbines-2023-09-11/

[62] Owned by the Norwegian state, Statkraft is Europe's largest generator of renewable energy.

CHAPTER 8/
THE BODY IN DEVELOPMENT: GIVING.

Nestekjærlighet er helt sentralt i hva det vil si å forholde seg til kristen tro i praksis (Charity is totally central to what it means to relate to Christian faith in practice).

-Grøndal's website page on the Run for Tanzania project

INTRODUCTION.

In this chapter, I explore how *Action og Bistand* (Action and Aid, which I refer to as *A og B*), interacted with the school values of *utvikling* (development) and *fellesskap* (community) through Run for Tanzania [in English] a school-wide charity event the class organized each year to raise funds for a Norwegian NGO I call *Empower* that supports local projects in East Africa. Normally, *A og B* students host the run after they have returned from their study trip to Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, but in 2021 the trip was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In the weeks leading up to the run, *A og B*'s teacher, Rakel, and her students were concerned that they would not be able to motivate the rest of the student body to engage with the run as well as previous classes had because they had not been to East Africa in person and lacked the experience of "being there," a circumstance Rakel said normally contributed to how students persuaded the broader school community to participate. In this chapter, I describe how Rakel and her class prepared for the charity run by utilizing techniques that foregrounded the body in order to motivate the rest of the school community to raise as much sponsored funding as possible from students and their contacts through competition, inspiration, and promotional materials prior to the event. I argue that these strategies contributed to realizing three of Grøndal's core values—community (*fellesskap*), experience (*opplevelse*) and development (*utvikling*)— as Rakel and her class provided ways for students with different physical abilities to contribute to the run in a range of ways that developed a sense of equality through difference on campus. On the other hand, students' skepticism about the efficacy of international aid organizations, and the problems associated with representation and agency in the promotional materials used prior to the event, inhibited students from fully realizing these values as inequalities between them and the people they sought to help were reinforced through these aid initiatives.

Charity and gift-giving are perennial themes in anthropology. Jeremy Benthall writes, “The word ‘charity’ in English refers to almsgiving and freewill offerings, but it also has connotations of spiritual love, the highest Christian virtue” (2017: 3). Despite this Christian connotation, acts of reciprocity and gift-giving span religious, cultural, and social categories, with aspects of this form of exchange found in virtually every people group. Recalling Marcel Mauss’s “The Gift” (2016 [1925]), Benthall writes that “Mauss’s claim that the principle of exchange penetrates every aspect of social life, in the ‘atmosphere of the gift …, of obligation and of liberty mixed together’ (2016: 177). Edvard Westermarck, in his comparisons of charitable traditions (1909), attributed charity to selfish motives, a form of “sacrifice” associated with religious penance (Benthall 2017: 2). Despite the self-serving aspects of charity, Benthall writes that a “free” gift necessarily lacks reciprocity. Erica Bornstein, through her ethnographic analysis of various forms of charity and philanthropic work in New Delhi, India, suggests that this lack of reciprocity can result in problematic power structures between donor and recipient. “Philanthropy is an impulse,” she writes, “a focus on the kindly desire to end misery and suffering, yet it does not offer any rights to its recipients who can make no claims on donors” (2009: 623).

By virtue of these power dynamics, forms of social stratification, and indeed, inequality, go hand-in-hand with charity and aid. Bornstein assesses how these stratifications emerge in charity organizations, where bureaucracy, systemization, and state interventions regulate individuals’ “impulse to give” (624). She writes, “If gratitude is a social emotion (Appadurai 1985), giving requires a proper attitude. In giving, with both the impulsive type of spontaneous compassion, and the more calculated form of donation to formal organizations, both the intent of the giver and the worth of the recipient are scrutinized” (2009: 629). This observation provides important insights into the ways in which Grøndal appealed to the emotional, affective, and individualized qualities of its student body meant to override students’ disconnections and skepticism over the aid organizations the school partnered with. By challenging students to work through their skepticism, and participate in the charity event despite their reservations, Rakel and *A og B* acted as a liaison between the individual and the collective, the body and the NGOs they partnered with. As Peter Redfield has noted, "Humanitarianism identifies a fundamentally moral standpoint…" which "prescribes instrumental action, and expects its practice of value ethics to be consequential" (2012: 463). Like Christian practice, faith without works is dead, and for Grøndal, the charity run was both a forms of religious expression and a physical and financial transaction, meant to strategize students' "impulses to give" through any means necessary, religiously motivated or otherwise.

Humanitarianism, Redfield writes, while perceived as a secular enterprise, has its roots in Christian practice. Oivind Fuglerud suggests that the Nordic societies view themselves, and are generally viewed, as egalitarian and humanitarian, and that Norway, in particular, has promoted an image of itself as a "humanitarian super-power" when it comes to international aid (2005: 295). Marianne Gullestad notes that this reputation stems from Norway's historical ties to Christian missionary work,[63] which, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, saw Norway sending the most missionaries per capita in the world (Berg 2010). Even though all of Grøndal's students, irrespective of their faith positions were expected to contribute to the Run for Tanzania campaign, Christian faith in practice was central to the school's fundraising aims. In an effort to practice *nestekjærlighet* (charity) a concept that had Christian connotations relating to "loving your neighbor," students could mobilize their physical labor in such a way that would bridge the spatial and economic distances between then and the Tanzanian children they were "running for." By "running for the kids," Grøndal's students could have an embodied experience with aid that would contribute to equality in both the folk high school community and the global community more broadly. Ultimately, I argue that while the Grøndal community itself was strengthened by the run, disparities between the folk high school's students and the recipients of the funds they raised challenged how they viewed equality as a social value by revealing unwanted forms of difference between them (Dumont 1980). I suggest that these realities complicated students' views of how egalitarianism should play out in global relationships and presented risks for perpetuating a sort of “White Saviorism” that is sometimes associated with aid work (Richey 2016; Wearing et al. 2018) as articulated by both *A og B*’s primary teacher and a representative from the folk high school network. I assess how Rakel and her students interacted with the problems associated with international development and describe the ways in which the ethos of Scandinavian egalitarianism became problematized for them in the face of global inequities.

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[63] https://www.easaonline.org/downloads/Gullestadeasa.pdf

PREPARATIONS.

Each day the week prior to the run, the *A og B* classroom is a flurry of activity. Rakel and her students are working tirelessly, planning morning assemblies that will instruct students how to ask their friends and family for pledges, organizing how to collect and distribute payments, and strategizing ways to motivate the rest of the student body to raise as much support as they can in the days leading up to the run. The students have used the school common fund[64] to buy supplies for posters, balloons, and beads for bracelets, material markers they hope will generate school unity and collective motivation for Grøndal’s student body. By Friday, the classroom has devolved into what Rakel calls *helt kaos* (total chaos), a mess of half-finished posters and art supplies strewn across students’ desks above a sea of balloons scattered on the floor that pop sporadically and elicit shrieks of surprise and subsequent laughter from students holding scissors, markers, or face paint.

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[64] The common fund is a small pot of money the school allocates for student-led projects and activities.

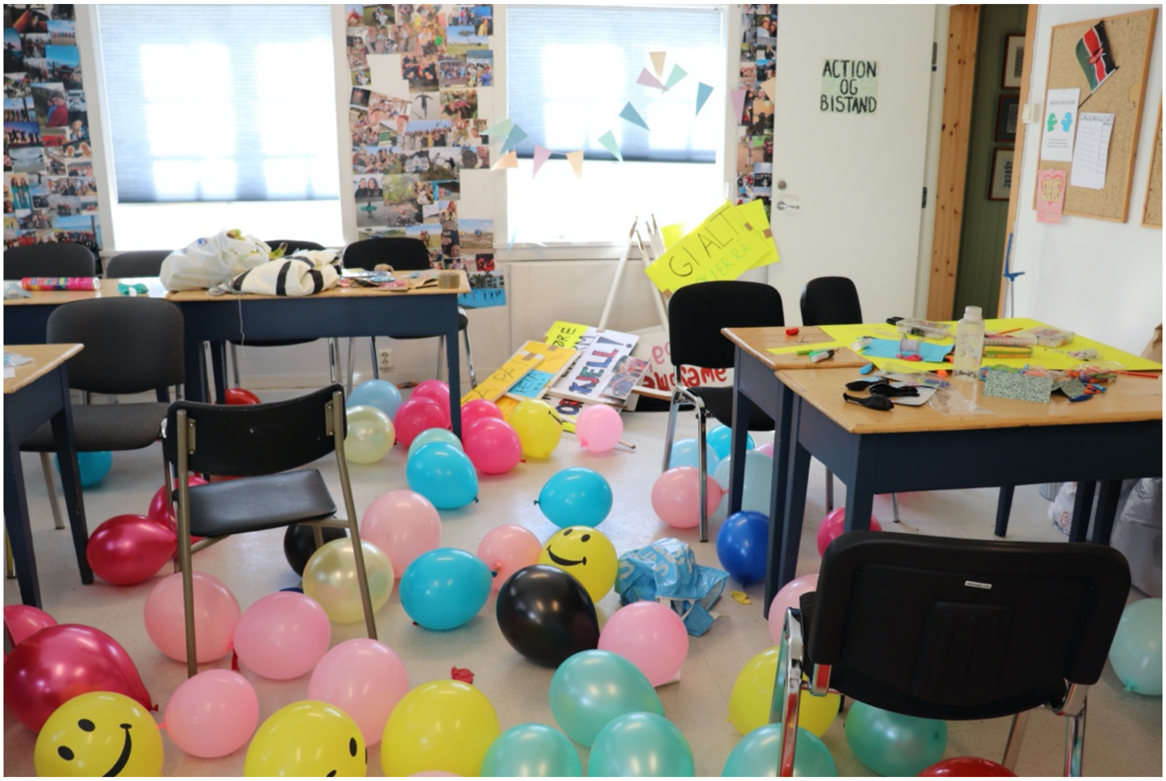

Fig. 30: The classroom in creative chaos.

Rakel asks the allocated "press" students to update Grøndal's social media sites with messages to remind following sponsors that tomorrow is the "big day." Two others are brainstorming what to write about for the school blog. Students are fully engaged, bent over their tasks, speaking quietly to each other but only when necessary. Their excitement is palpable.

Maartje, her hand holding a marker and poised above a poster that says simply, in English, "Do it!", says to me, "I like this. It's cozy and wholesome. It makes preparing more motivating for tomorrow. It'll be great. The others, when they see the decorations, they'll be more motivated."

Rakel scans the room, and says, "Let's take a temperature on motivation; is the school excited about tomorrow?"

Karl answers, “There are some who are very motivated and then there are others who don’t care.”

Rakel says, “We really need to get the spirit up then!”

Karl asks if they should set up everything this afternoon, but Rakel says that it’s best to wait until the morning. “I was thinking, Hans, that you and a couple of others can make sure that music speakers and everything are set up tomorrow. We have used everything here we have for Tanzania. This is an event that should be *heard*.”

Meanwhile, the three students who are on social media and the school blog duty, Silje, Gunn, and Elin, are unsure of what content they should put online to encourage more sponsorship. Rakel suggests that they use pictures from last year’s run, as well as images from the previous class’s trip to East Africa. They nod in agreement and set up their laptops in a corner in the classroom, pouring over photos from last year’s blog posts; they find one of Mia, one of the class’s *stipps,* surrounded by Tanzanian children.

“We could post this one,” says Silje.

“But what about consent?” I ask. “Does Grøndal have any policies when posting pictures of children?”

“We’ll have to ask Rakel,” she says. “I don’t really know what else we could post.”

Elin adds, “I think it’s important that we show who the money will actually go to. At *morgensamling* (morning assembly), we told a story about a boy who received money from last year’s run, and we were able to talk about how much it meant to him. This is what people need to hear.”

Gunn agrees. “It’s important to hear concrete stories. And what the organization has actually done. I think *Empower* is a good one. That’s what Rakel says, at least.” Currently, they are watching a video a student from last year’s class made, who is talking about the organization and how important its programs are for the people who utilize them.

I suggest, “Maybe you could reach out to *Empower* and see if you can interview one of their students and then write something like: ‘Meet Ramona, she was able to go to school in part because of the work we’ve done through our sponsored runs in previous years. Tomorrow, we run for people like her.’ Something like that?”

“I don’t think we have time to do an interview,” says Gunn. “The race is tomorrow. But I can ask Rakel what she thinks.”

She and I approach Rakel, seated at her desk at the front of the room surrounded by a flurry of check lists and various art supplies. When we describe our idea to her, she immediately begins to rummage through her desk for previous issues of *Empower*’s magazine. “It’s too late to do an interview,” she says, “but maybe I can find something already published.” She tells us that normally *A og B* students interview the students who receive funding from the run while on their study trip to Tanzania, which is a way they can ensure their consent has been received, but because this year’s students were not able to go on the trip, they’ll have to find a way to share information about them in another way.

“Normally, I’m interested in personal stories,” Rakel tells us. “But if you are telling someone’s story, they should know *why* we are doing that. It’s an ethical question.”

As she flips through the magazine, she stops briefly at an article about a young Tanzanian girl, an image of her displayed smiling shyly into the camera.

“We can’t show her story,” Rakel says. “She was raped and forced into a young marriage.” Rakel says that a previous class had thought about asking *Empower* if they could use her picture, seeing as her school fees had been paid through donations from the run, but that the students had ultimately decided not to tell her story because it was too “traumatic” to share.
Rakel keeps turning the pages of the magazines, searching for what she feels will be a suitable candidate to be featured on the school’s blog site. “She might work!” she says, tapping her finger on the page of a young girl who is also a student at the school *Empower* supports. “I’ll call Jan and ask now.”

Jan, the director of *Empower*, answers her call within one ring. “*Hei du*!” (Hey you!), she says with a laugh. “We were wondering if there was someone we could showcase as a personal story for the run,” she tells him, “But we’re concerned about the ethics. Those that you write about in the magazines for example, is there someone that our students could highlight that you’ve already written about?”

I can hear his response through the phone: “Oh yes, that’s possible! When we ask people if they want to be showcased, we have to be absolutely sure that participants are certain they want to be. We talk about privacy and safety with them first.”

Rakel says, “We don’t need so much, just for an Instagram post, someone you can think of who has a concrete story. But still protecting privacy and ethics. We need to have a post ready to go for us to motivate the school. We need to ‘spam’ as much as possible before tomorrow!”

It’s almost time for dinner, and Rakel suggests that the group take a “chaos photo” to commemorate the activities of the day. They quickly position themselves in between balloons and art supplies, gathering in a group at the front of the room, arms slung around each other. Silje holds a sign she has made that says, “we can make an enormous difference!” Underneath it, she has affixed photos of Tanzanian children looking somberly into the camera.

TEACHER INSPIRATION.

I was often told by Grøndal's staff that out of all of its programs, Action and Aid (*Action og Bistand*, or *A og B*) was the class that required the most of its students. The goal of the program, Rakel said, was to bridge physical activities, like skiing, kayaking, and surfing, with volunteering opportunities and fundraising work with NGOs based in Norway that had projects in Eastern Europe and East Africa. "Students want a break [after high school]," Rakel told me. "They want to have fun. We want to attract students who might not be that interested in aid through the activities." Rakel said that she believed "something happens" when students are able to overcome challenges physically, that they are able to gain a "motivation" to be *på* (on) and to do more, a phenomenon she believed would translate to how they viewed their roles in the school community, Norwegian society, and the world more broadly. While the overarching goals of the course were tied to volunteering and gaining global perspectives, Rakel was quick to remind me that *A og B* was first and foremost a sports class (hence, the "action" part of its title preceding the "aid"), and that while she hadn't been formally trained in international development, when the opportunity presented itself for organizing the course, she took it. The program had emerged from the popularity of one of Grøndal's electives called *Prosjekt: Moldova* (Project: Moldova), a program that worked with a local Christian NGO up the road from the school, to fundraise for, and travel to, community centers in Moldova each spring. *Prosjekt: Moldova* had been so popular with students that Jens, the school priest, suggested a program that focused on aid more specifically should be incorporated into Grøndal's offerings. He asked Rakel, who had been a teacher responsible for organizing *Prosjekt: Moldova*, if she would consider taking the new program on.

"When they asked me to do this, at first I said 'no'," she told me. "I'm a sports teacher. Folk high schools have the stereotype that you can teach whatever you want, but it's important to be qualified." Despite her reservations, Rakel took on her new role with fervor, attending courses and seminars both organized by the folk high school network and eventually earning a certificate in cultural studies from *Høgskulen i Volda* (Volda University College). At the time, Rakel was co-teaching Grøndal's volleyball program with a colleague who was both Norwegian and Ethiopian, and I asked her if that's where the new program's focus on East Africa came from. "Yes and no," she said. "I had several cousins working in aid in East Africa and I wanted to draw from some of their contacts. They got me in touch with local organizations, and that's how the trips to Africa started." Rakel said that she and her students had a number of "bad experiences" during those early trips, but that with each return to East Africa, the trips improved. As she made more contacts in Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, she was able to work more with local aid organizations, which she said was important to her. Rakel said that her passion was to "find the best local organizations where locals receive the most of the money. That the workers are taken care of." The school's fundraising activities, then, were central to her program's pedagogical aims, and an avenue for linking her students' self-development with the international development these projects supported. While the name of the course had been recently changed from "Bistand/action" to "Action and Aid" in an effort to attract students who might be intimidated, or put off, by the precedence of development, Rakel said that the name was less important to her than the experiences with aid it offered. Lots of folk high schools have programs like 'Global experience,'" she said. "It's not many Norwegians who have it."

Rakel, in addition to having ample "global" experiences from traveling and studying in Africa and Australia, was regularly described to me as "fearless" and an "inspiration" by Grøndal's staff and students alike. Whether it was through her penchant for slalom skiing, windsurfing, or sleeping outside in freezing weather, Rakel was the type of person you trusted to know what she was doing and invited hope that you could somehow rise to her challenge. Being an inspirational figure, though, wasn't only about her physical skill and general sense of toughness; she was also widely regarded as being a role model for her students in her engagement with international development work. One of her students, Hilde, told me, "I don't think there is anyone as inspiring as Rakel in the whole world. We understand that aid is her passion, her whole life. She wants to make a difference. And that impacts us." Gunn agreed. "Rakel has been so inspiring; you can see her eyes light up when she talks about this, she has so much to say. Through the classes we have had earlier, and hearing her stories, it's so strong. We believe it because we know her." This sense of knowing Rakel, though, hadn't only been established through classroom interactions; rather, the folk high school model of action-based learning gave Rakel's class plenty of opportunities to know Rakel in contexts outside of the classroom. Each fall, as I have mentioned, Rakel drove the entire class in a school minibus the nine hours northwest to her home village where she hosted them at her parents' farmhouse, and later, in the home she built on her parents' property. During this visit, students worked in her parents' commercial-scale greenhouse, earning further funds to send to East Africa by picking cherries and cucumbers to pack and sell to Norwegians that traveled far and wide to purchase her family's produce. Rakel's love for her family, her appreciation for her village, and her full-on engagement in the activities associated with farm life gave students further proof that she was a trustworthy, inspiring figure. "When you spend that much time together," the *Backpacker* teacher, Lisa, told me, "Students get to know who you really are. There's no hiding that."

It was clear to me that knowing Rakel in multiple contexts contributed to how students were influenced by how engaged she was in her own activities and life at Grøndal more broadly over the course of their year together. This word, "engagement," was an important one for Rakel; at the start of the school year she led a workshop on the theme, telling students that engagement was what made Grøndal work as a school community. "We don't expect you to always be 'on'," she told them, "Or that all of you will always want to be the ones performing on stage, for example, but it's important that you try. You engage. That engagement can *smitte* (infect) all of us who live and work here together." Rakel often told me how frustrating it was for her when students wouldn't engage; laziness, complaining, and a lack of independence were qualities that she found least acceptable in her students, and she had little tolerance for excuses or avoidance. Rakel sometimes said that students needed to *skjerpe seg* (sharpen up), and this phrase, to me, encapsulated in very many ways who she was to the school community: a sharp figure who inspired students to rise to the challenge of the task at hand, while still maintaining a sense of compassion and joviality. She was, in many respects, an exemplar of Grøndal's values (Robbins 2016) and very much the kind of person the school hoped their students would become.

RUN FOR TANZANIA

Fig. 31: Rakel instructs.

Emulating Rakel's engagement, though, required at least some social risk for students. Admitting that something was important to them and being tasked with "infecting" the rest of the school with this commitment to involvement was, they told me, sometimes a challenge. Karl, the only boy in the *A og B* class said, "[Norwegians] are not good at showing that we care about things." Trygve, a football student at the time, told me that Norwegian men in particular "don't want to appear incompetent so often they don't try; they don't do their best just to make a statement." Going to the folk high school, Trygve said, was an experience that lent itself to students getting of their "comfort zones," where students could "expand" themselves and "reach new heights" which, in turn, would make them better people. "When I came here," he told me, "[I thought], 'no one knows me, why wouldn't I just go all in?' That was a whole new thing for me." Trygve and Karl were chosen to be *stipps* the following school year, and this positivity and willingness to fully engage with all of the social aspects of folk high school life was partly why they received nominations from Grøndal's staff. Karl, however, hadn't always been a shoo-in for the role; Rakel told me when I first arrived on campus that Karl was the type of student who could “go either way.” In other words, he could use his charisma to influence others positively, or he could instead choose to contribute to a *dårlig miljø* (bad environment) that would negatively impact the school community. Karl himself knew his own social power; when I asked him why he hadn’t taken his role in a debate on vegetarianism he participated in during Green Week very seriously, for example, he said, “You’re right. I’m a leader and I agree I could do more. I’m a lazy person. I could have prepared a serious debate but sometimes I’d rather just hang out with the guys.” His time during *A og B*, however, had contributed to his own personal *utvikling* (development), as he came to understand the significance of the influence he could extend to his peers. Being a “good influence,” Karl told me, had been strengthened through the knowledge he gained about aid in *A og B*’s curriculum, which had led him to taking the problems associated with global inequities more “seriously. It’s a motivation to do more,” he said. In anticipation of the run, he told me, “I’m going to work really hard to get sponsors and run with all I’ve got.”

While Rakel’s commitment to local East African organizations was her priority, *A og B* worked most closely with two Norwegian NGOs: *Empower* and *Across Borders.* “*Empower* is registered here in Norway,” she told me. “The board is composed of people living in Norway and Denmark, but all of the projects are run by locals [in the target countries], there are no Norwegians there. Sometimes there might be some that join for a few months, but it’s locals who run the daily operations.” While Rakel said that she felt *Across Borders* used a more sustainable NGO model, she was impressed with how *Empower* managed to deliver 100 percent of the funds it received from donors to recipients. “That’s incredible and not usual,” she said. “I was so skeptical the first years, I couldn’t believe that could be true.”
Despite Norway’s involvement with international development work, several students told me that they felt that Norwegians shared a general sense of skepticism towards international aid. “A lot of people are skeptical about aid and where the money is going,” Silje told me. “You always hear these stories about organizations just taking the money to pay their staff, and nothing goes to the people who need it.” Rakel voiced similar sentiments. In a *morgensamling*

(morning assembly) that preceded the day of the run, Rakel told the student body that she felt a healthy skepticism towards aid work was important, and when it came to the *Run for Tanzania*, she told me that if students did not want to participate in the event because of their concerns relating to international aid, she would respect that. “I asked them to decide for themselves if it was just laziness or a real reason to be against aid,” she said. “For so many of the students, this is their first engagement with aid, and I want them to know it’s possible to be critical—and that’s my personal stance too—but I also want them to be engaged despite their skepticism.” Sara put it this way: “It’s good to have a bit of a critique of aid and go a bit deeper in the organizations to see where the money actually goes. But we have to find a balance. Not be so critical that we end up doing nothing.”

Positioning the run as a competition between classes and individual students was another tactic *A og B* used to generate school engagement. In addition to spending funds on the decorations and signage they had made for the day of the run, *A og B* planned to award prizes to the students who raised the most funds (NOK 3,000),[65] and the boy and girl who ran the most laps (NOK 1,000 each); they would use the money that usually went to paying Grøndal’s “Saturday seminar” guest speakers.[66] A further prize would be awarded to the class that raised the most money, a dinner party prepared and served by the *A og B* students in the student kitchen. In addition, a prize for the most creative costume would be given out, providing students who were not as athletically inclined as the others a chance to also compete. Rakel told me that the competitions had garnered the most amount of student engagement in years past, and that the football class usually raised the most funding because of them. Prior to the run, however, while tallying the number of pledges coming through, Rakel was surprised to see the football class had the lowest total amount raised, with less than NOK 1,000. “Somebody needs to go talk to the football guys,” she said. “They’ve got a reputation to uphold!” Through competition, students’ individual development was recognized, within the place of school community. In other words, student difference was noted positively for the winners, their sense of engaging further or more completely with the task at hand than their peers, a place of honor, a difference meant to be celebrated.

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[65] Approximately $285 and $95 respectively, per May 30, 2024, exchange rates.

[66] I discuss Grøndal’s Saturday seminars more fully in chapter four.

DIFFERENCES IN REPRESENTATION.

In addition to utilizing Rakel as a role model and positioning the run in a competitive frame, *A og B*'s use of promotional materials, both online and in posters they made and displayed the day of the run, was also designed to encourage student engagement. These materials, as I mentioned above, presented students with some concern over how best to portray the Tanzanian children the run would be raising money to support. While it was important to Rakel that individuals who had their names and stories shared had expressed their consent, the same concern was not extended towards the images of the children *A og B* used for the posters they had affixed to stakes they planned to plant along the trail of the run. Rakel and I disagreed on whether or not it was appropriate to use photos of Tanzanians, particularly those who were children, in this way; during a class I taught the *A og B* and *Backpacker* students the following spring on anthropology and research ethics, I told students that my personal stance was that these types of images should be avoided. "I think back to my days doing volunteer work in Thailand," I said. "And I absolutely posted pictures on social media of me with Thai kids, and now I wish I hadn't." I told them I regretted posting these photos of children, especially without their consent, because I could see now that I had done so to appear a certain way. I spoke about Teju Cole's work on "White saviorism," [67] the complex he suggests runs rampant in humanitarian work, in which Black and Brown people are "saved" by White aid workers and said that I had been ignorant of my own complicity in perpetuating stereotypes that further harmed marginalized people. Rakel, who had been sitting quietly during my lesson, raised her hand from her seat. "I worry about the other way, though," she said. "The stigmatization. We are meeting people with darker skin, yes, but maybe there shouldn't be such a division between North and South. I just think you can be too avoidant that you don't do anything because you're afraid of not doing it completely right." She told students that the organizations the school works with want volunteers to come home and share what they've experienced and that it's important to show locals in a positive light. "Sometimes you can show a bad image of Africa, that it's just poor," she said, "and it's really important to also show what people are proud of." In other words, the promotional materials the Run for Tanzania used risked highlighting unwanted forms of difference between Grøndal's students and the Tanzanian students that could not be overcome and would produce inequality, rather than equality, between them (Dumont 1980).

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[67] https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/

In Marianne Gullestad's (2007) work on photographic practices of Norwegian evangelical missionaries in Northern Cameroon during the early 1920s, she observed that images taken then have had lasting implications for Norway's contemporary international relations. While these images have contributed to the advancement of Norway's welfare society and developmental aid initiatives, they have also inculcated racial and ethnic representations of Africans in Norwegian media that have produced "asymmetrical relationships" between them in the Norwegian imagination today (Gullestad: 2007: xii). Hillary Kaell observed similar themes in her work on Christian child sponsorship programs in the United States, noting that "bodies are fundamental" in how photos and promotional materials are positioned to garner support. These images, she writes, "shatter differences by emphasizing what are assumed to be common human experiences, such as hunger, sadness, or hope, along with common human aspirations, such as education and financial security" (2020: 4). Positioning the sadness of poverty in contrast to the freedom of education was central to the Run for Tanzania's promotional materials. Despite her wish for avoiding perpetuating a negative image of Africa that focused on poverty, the primary photo Grøndal used for the flyer for the run was a closeup of a single young African boy with dust smeared on his face. "Education is the way out of poverty!" the flyer said. "Support schooling for orphaned and poor children." The materials, while highlighting the stark contrasts between Grøndal's students and the students they were raising money for, also served as a potent reminder why the run had been organized in the first place: the goal was not solely for students to achieve personal *utvikling* (development) or school *fellesskap* (community), but to raise as much money as possible for students in Tanzania who needed their school fees paid. "It's so important for the students to see how people rely on this support," Rakel told me. "I know the money is going directly to the people who need it, and we're paying the school fees for 22 girls now. It's so concrete, it's so they can avoid early marriages." On the other hand, the promotional materials associated with the run revealed how different the lives of Grøndal's students were from the children they planned to donate the funds from the run to. Even though the class struggled with how best to represent the Tanzanian children they hadn't met but would be sending their financial support, many of them said that having their images displayed would motivate the school to engage more fully with the run. "We're not telling someone's story," Rakel said. "Then I think you have to actually be there, to have a relationship with them, to have their consent."

The circumstance of not "being there" in Tanzania, as previous classes had been, also presented a good deal of ambiguity for *A og B* students in how they imagined their capacity for motivating the rest of the school to fully participate in the run. Hans, one of *A og B*'s *stipps* who had been a football student the previous year told me, "None of us have had the experience of meeting the people in Africa. But tomorrow when [the rest of the school] sees all the things we have made, the motivation with be higher, hopefully." Mia, the *stipp* who had been to Tanzania with Grøndal as an *A og B* student the previous year, said that she felt it was difficult to "inspire" her fellow students this year to participate in the run because they hadn't "experienced the culture" in the same way as she had done on her trip. "But the rest of the school doesn't usually go anyway," I said. "It's just *A og B*, right?" She answered, "I feel that Rakel is very good at motivating us. But there is actually a difference being there and not, of course. It's harder to get the rest of the school engaged." The disjuncture between "being there" and having the capacity to motivate the rest of Grøndal's student body to engage with the run was most evident in how students outside of the *A og B* class perceived its overarching aims. The images of the children used in the promotional materials for the run and the videos shown of previous trips *A og B* students had taken to Tanzania during morning assemblies, for example, gave students in the rest of the school a sense as to why the run was happening and where the funds would go, but for some of them the details remained opaque. When I asked a *Backpacker* student, Jofrid, on the day of the run if she thought the *A og B* students had done a good enough job motivating the rest of the school to get excited about it she answered, "Perhaps they could have done a bit better. It feels like they've focused more on the competition and the run itself, rather than where the money is going." When I asked her if she had seen *A og B*'s blog post with additional information on the run, she said, "I'm not online very often," her cell phone in hand. Silje, an *A og B* student, expressed her commitment to motivating the rest of the school to participate, but said there was a "boundary between what we can do and what people need to do within themselves to find the motivation." Hilde, also an *A og B* student, agreed. "It feels great that we can motivate people. It's really important to make it a fun race. It's a lot of colors and balloons, and people will run longer." Inga, her classmate, expressed similar sentiments. "Tomorrow when they see all the things we have made, the motivation with be higher hopefully. I also think it's a bit important that the school really takes us seriously. You can feel from the teachers and earlier students' pictures: this is a very important event. That really affects the students." Despite not "being there," *A og B*'s students had been motivated by Rakel to devote themselves to the task of spreading that same level of engagement to the rest of the school to the best of their ability. In the section that follows, I describe how motivation and engagement translated to student development and community the day of the run.

THE RUN.

The day of the run dawns bright and clear. Rakel has told her students that they'll have to have an early start, with plans for setting up campus directly after breakfast. I awake at 7 am and look out my bedroom window; students are already busy at work creating a makeshift track around the school's property just beyond my building, a wobbly line of balloons and rope snaking around the perimeter of the school. I open my door and step onto the balcony, blinking into the early morning spring sunshine. "Looks good!" I call to them below. "How are we feeling about today?"

"Great!" They say, smiling up at me. "We have lots to do, though!"

I eat a quick breakfast and suit up in athletic pants, a hoodie, and sneakers, and, grabbing my camera walk out my front door, downstairs and outside. The *A og B* students have already set up their signs around the track, the route the class had decided was the best path through campus. “You’ve done the research,” Rakel had told them the day before. “Go ahead with what you think is best.” In front of the dining hall, a large sound system has been set up, a hand-painted banner with the words, in English, “Run for Tanzania!” emblazoned on the front. Clusters of balloons in green, black, blue and yellow, the colors of the Tanzanian flag, surround the banner, completing the finish line; a couple of students mill around the setup, assessing the overall effect of their display. Across from the setup, students have positioned several long dining tables from the cafeteria in a neat row, where the majority of Grøndal’s staff will sit and count the rounds of individual students while offering them moral support. Usually, Rakel tells me, she asks students who are not planning on running to join in on the counting, but this year she’s struggled to find volunteers. “Everyone wants to run!” she says, her eyes wide. “That almost never happens!”

Meanwhile, students from other classes are preparing for the run in their own ways, inside their dorm rooms fashioning outfits out of items they’ve found from the school’s costume closet and applying face paint in Tanzanian colors or are grouped outside seated at picnic tables and in lawn chairs chatting quietly and waiting for the run to begin. Someone is testing the sound system; the thumps of pop songs, mostly from the United States and remixed with club beats, reverberate across campus.

I approach a few students still in their pajamas, who have shuffled outside to assess *A og B’*s flurry of activity. I ask the *Backpacker* student I mentioned earlier, Jofrid, if she’s ready for the race. “I guess so,” she says with a small laugh. “I’m nervous about running in front of everybody.” She pauses. “I used to be a lot bigger when I was younger,” she says. “I was the worst at sports. I train now quite a lot, but always on my own. I got teased a lot; I don’t really want to run in front of other people. It happened a long time ago, but that kind of thing stays with you.”

Jofrid is not the only one who is nervous about running in front of the other students; as we talk, Jannicke from *A og B* stumbles out the front door of the dorm rubbing the sleep from her eyes and asks if Jofrid will run with her. “But I’m only running, like, one round, just so you know,” she says.

“What, no!” I say playfully. “You all have to run on your own and just do your best. See how many rounds you can do!” Later during the race, I catch glimpses of Jofrid running confidently, either alongside a friend or on her own. It doesn’t seem to matter to her in the moment; any prior misgivings she may have had appear to have been alleviated, as she is one of many, all with the same goal: run as many laps as you can before the hour is up.

I decide to run at least the first lap with the students, to feel alongside them the same nerves, excitement, and self-consciousness many of them seem to be experiencing. As we round the school buildings, smiling at each other, our legs pumping in unison, lungs heaving, the same becomes true for me: all that matters is heeding the call of the message on one of the posters close to the start of the track: *en runde til* (one more round)!

I do not run consistently for the duration of the hour-long race. Instead, I weave in and out of the group taking photos, coming alongside students who are walking or look as if they are ready to give up. One such student, Linus, a part of the *Botrening* (Life Skills) class, gasping for breath, has slowed to a walk and tells me that four rounds is enough for him as he heads for his dorm room. “Linus!” I call. “Just stay on the track! Even if you’re walking, you’re raising money. You can do this!” He rejoins me and soon enough, he has picked up his pace to a determined jog. Later, he finds me, beet-red and triumphant: “Jamie, I got twelve rounds!” he gleams. “And to think, I almost gave up after four!”

Several students have decided to focus on their costumes rather than running, hoping for an award for creativity instead of highest number of rounds completed. A couple of students have blown up purple balloons, attaching them to their clothing, and are jogging as bunches of grapes, a decision that presents a fair bit of difficulty for maintaining a consistent stride. Four girls are dressed as wizards from Harry Potter; two others have opted to “run” the race on street skis, while others still are dressed as Disney characters or other assorted cartoon figures or animals. The student who ultimately wins the creativity award is dressed in a sandwich sign that says, “run past me!”, a stroke of genius in its own right. As we run, we pass by signs decorated with printed photographs of Tanzanian children looking back at us, wide-eyed and somber; one sign reads, *Gi alt! Du er* amazing! (Give everything! You are [in English] amazing!)

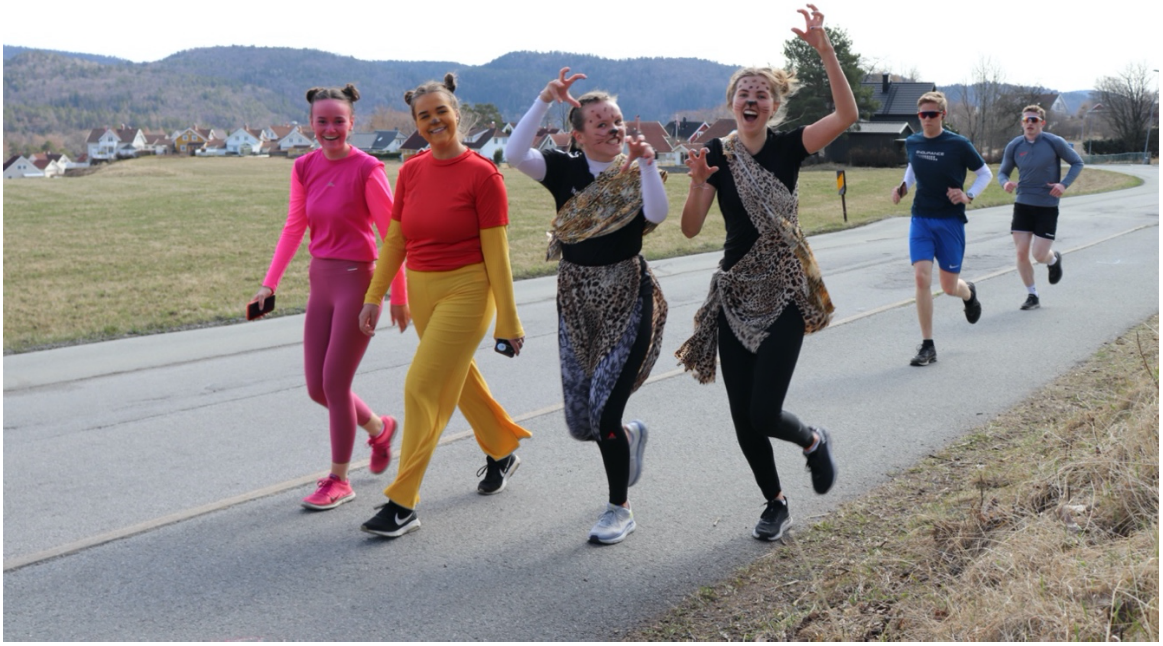

Fig. 32: Students compete for the most creative costume award.

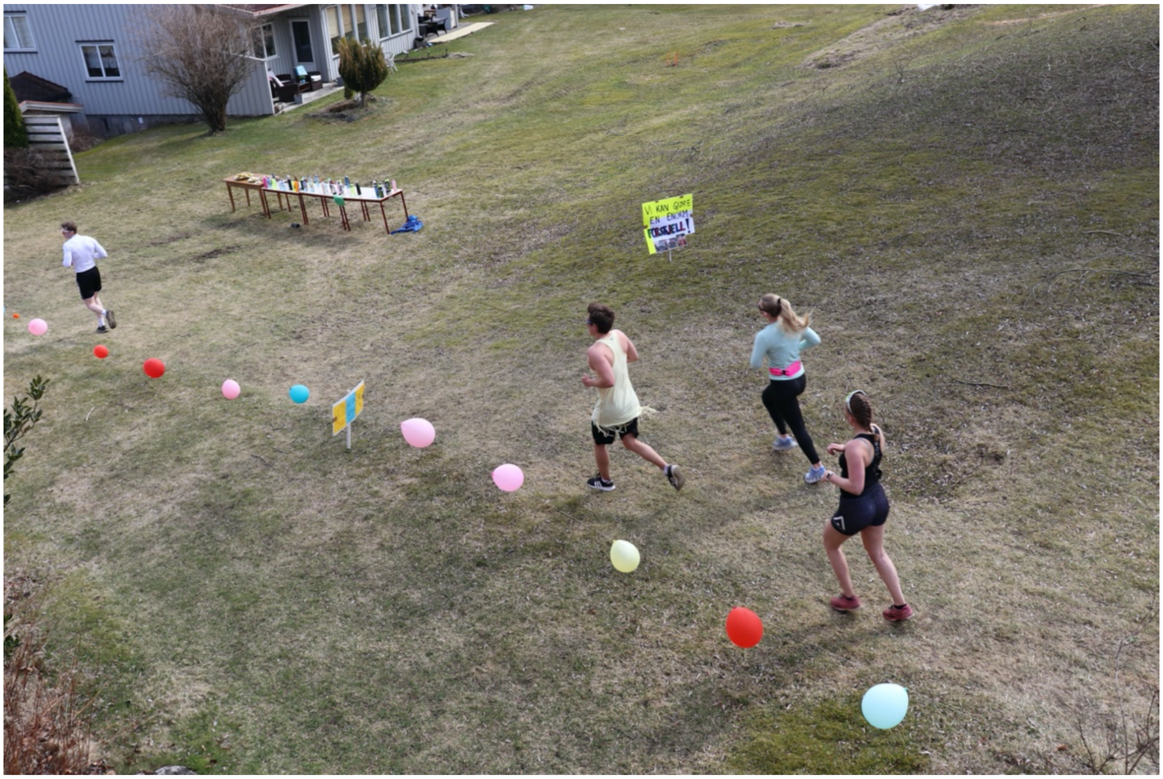

Fig. 33: “We can make an enormous difference!”

After the race students collapse into each other, laughing and crying tears of joy. Several have slumped on the ground completely spent; other students check on them to make sure they are okay. Some of the boys have removed their shirts, impervious to the chill of mid-April in southeastern Norway and have lain next to their discarded garments, eyes closed, chests heaving. Karl, not wasting a moment, holds up his phone and records a message of thanks to his sponsors. All across the quad students are congratulating each other, grasped in sweaty, joyful embraces, glowing with pride.

THE EXPERIENCE OF GIVING.

Asking and receiving, both on campus and in extended family and friendship networks, was an important part of the Run for Tanzania. By giving money to students in need, a sense of sameness could be established in the service of equality (Dumont 1980), even if it was impartial and temporary. Still, asking for money, even on behalf of others who needed it, was not a practice students were generally eager to undertake. Vike and Lo have argued that Scandinavian conceptions of egalitarianism may be more linked to "a profound respect for individual autonomy, and an emphasis on avoiding personal dependencies," than to equality as an intrinsic value (2023: 11). In the case of garnering sponsorships for the Run for Tanzania, this meant that students were reticent to ask their friends and families for them as it felt like they were asking too much of their contacts. "We've had so many events this year raising money," Jofrid told me. "I feel like the only time I get in touch with some of my more distant family members and friends, it's asking for money. That's not great." I asked a group of teachers during lunch the following Monday if Norwegians tend to have a hard time asking for things. "Oh definitely," Kristoffer, the music teacher said. "At least I do. I hate to ask for help." I asked if encouraging students to reach out to their contacts for support was a part of student development and he said, "Yes. And they're often surprised by how many people *want* to contribute, who are happy to get involved. It really shows that you never know unless you ask." Egil, a *Tourism* class teacher next to him, his mouth full of liverwurst, nodded. "It also shows how much money these kids' families have." I'm struck by the irony of it; originally, folk high schools were designed to make education available to students from the Scandinavian peasantry who couldn't afford formal education; today, as I've mentioned, the majority of folk high school students in Norway come from middle to upper middle-class families.

The Norwegian state, and Norwegians, are among the wealthiest in the world.[68] Students and staff, though, usually made a distinction between Norway's wealth and personal wealth; I heard them describe Norway as a rich country consistently over the duration of my fieldwork, but rarely heard an individual describe themselves in similar terms. At times, my research participants talked about how they thought Norway should give more to international aid projects, but "giving" was usually a state issue, not an individual one. Maja, a *Backpacker* student, however, expressed a more personal relationship with Norwegian *overflod* (abundance). "We have too much in Norway. I want to give it away. I want to give clothes, and we do, to other people who don't have the same sort of stuff like us." Keilin, another

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[68] https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/richest-countries-in-the-world

Backpacker student, said that she wanted to give but didn't know how. "So much happens in the world. It's overwhelming. It hard to know how to help. Many feel like what you do doesn't matter or actually help, but it's easier to feel a closeness with a specific case, where you can put your energy or where you can donate to." This was one reason why Rakel had decided to work so closely with *Empower*: to give students the chance to build on interactions with local contacts so that they could have the experience of giving within the context of relationship. Annette, Grøndal's director, said that she felt Grøndal had a responsibility to give the students an "experience with giving" from Norwegian abundance that many of them may never have had before. "We understand that we are a drop in the ocean," she said. "But it's still something, and it's important for students to know that they *can* contribute."

Marianne Gullestad (1996) writes that notions of giving in Norway involve tensions between equality and hierarchy. "Giving can be interpreted with an emphasis on sharing, involving equality and mutuality," she writes, "but also as 'giving away' (*gi bort*), involving a possible unidirectionality and hierarchy, one which Norwegians tend to avoid" (Gullestad 1996: 28). For Grøndal's students, the act of giving money to Tanzanian students raised similar discomfort to asking their families and friends for it, as doing so reinforced asymmetrical relationships between them and the recipients they planned to deliver these funds to. This was especially the case if students hadn't interacted with charity work before, though several students did have previous experiences with giving to charity. "It depends on your community back home," Jan, a *Backpacker* teacher, told me. "Christians are more used to the thought of collecting money at meetings, so we've seen it from students coming from Christian communities, they often raise a lot of money." Indeed, the concept of *nestekjærlighet* (charity, loving your neighbor) often had religious connotations when spoken about on campus and was regularly used to describe what "Christian values" encompassed when I asked about them. "It means you have love for the next ones," said Bjørn. "You don't need to have Christian faith to it. It's not necessarily different. It's something that everyone should think of." Herman agreed. "*Nestekjærlighet* is about being kind to others. Taking care of those who need it. But then again that's not only Christian that's just good values." Bjørn said, "It's sort of like love/respect for people you don't know." Klara interjected, "—And people you *do* know." For Tone, a *Reiseliv* student who came from a Christian family, practicing *nestekjærlighet* through giving was a way for her to make connections between people she knew intimately—her family—and people she had never met but she felt needed her help. Tone told me that in addition to her previous experiences with fund-raising for Christian missions work, she also had a personal relationship with Tanzania; as one of the few self-identified Christians at Grøndal that academic year, she said that her grandparents had been missionaries there years ago. "I've been there," she says. "It means more to me. My uncle was born there. He's sponsoring me 50 crowns per round!" She told me that overall, she'd raised NOK 5,000;[69] "It means extra to me," she said. "So, I did it for me and my family, and the [Tanzanian] kids." Linking her relationships with her family, and their history with Tanzania, to her body was an important part of the run for Tone, and one way she established a sense of equality between herself and the Tanzanian students she was raising financial support for. She'd run so hard that she was bleeding but laughed it away when I mentioned it. "It's a big part of my grandparents' life and I was thinking of them while running," she said, removing her sneakers after the race.

RUNNING FOR OTHERS.

Tone wasn't the only one who had lost blood for the sake of Grøndal's fund-raising efforts; Karl told me that during a previous event that Grøndal had sponsored to raise money for *Prosjekt: Moldova* (Project: Moldova) which happened before I entered the field, he'd been "egg-bombed" by other students who paid for eggs they threw at him in exchange for donations. "I literally bled," he said, laughing. "One [student] paid 100 crowns. He got [the eggs] and I did the service. So, I've given my money and my body to the children of Moldova," he said with a grin. While most students did not experience similar embodied expressions associated with Grøndal's aid projects, many students said that the connection they encountered between the "action" of their bodies and the funds they were raising was an important part of the run. Hilde, an *A og B* student, said, "everyone's that chosen *A og B* likes to be active. You get more energy when you're active, and you have more energy to put into a project like this." Ingrid, also an *A*

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[69] 450 USD per August 5, 2024, exchange rates.

og B student put it this way: “I think it’s more fun than just asking for money and putting it in a donations box and walking away,” she said. “I feel like when people are sponsoring me, I do more for the money than just asking them.” Ingrid noted that this wish to do more contributed to how fast, and far, she ran the day of the race. “I ran for my life!” She said, pausing. “For *others’* lives.”

Trygve also articulated a similar experience of “running for others.” He, and most of the rest of the football class, had been up through the night before the run in a rush of last-minute fund-raising efforts, motivated as they were to maintain their reputation for normally being the school’s highest-earning class. He said that at dinner the afternoon prior to the run a member of the kitchen staff, Inga, had announced in “front of everybody” that they “had a reputation to uphold” and the class had taken the admonishment to heart, messaging “everyone” they knew on social media for sponsorship. “We went from NOK 1,000 to 140,000[70] overnight,” he told me laughing. I wondered how being up all night had impacted his running capabilities and he answered, “I’m a bit tired, but in a run like this, it’s the least we can do. You suffer for half an hour and [these kids] maybe suffer their whole lives. I don’t see why we can’t just try our best. It’s such an easy thing for us to do. But it can make a whole life better for someone. I hope so.” Silje, a *Reiseliv* student, echoed similar sentiments, telling me that she got “goosebumps” after the race, having witnessed everyone doing their best. She told me, “I just kept repeating to myself over and over, ‘keep running, don’t think!’” Silje had suffered from exhaustion for several years prior to attending Grøndal and was anxious about how much she would be able to participate. She told me that when she had asked a former teacher to sponsor her, the teacher had asked if she would be able to run, and Silje had responded, “Yeah, I can! Of course I can run for the kids!”

“Running for the kids” was a common phrase I heard the day of the race, and the embodied expression of development, both in the international and personal sense, gave most students a shared pride and feeling of achievement. There were others, however, who experienced the run differently; Jannicke, the student who had prefaced the race by saying she would only run "one round" had changed her mind during the race, deciding she would push herself to see how many rounds she could manage. "My body just stopped working halfway through!" she said, through tears, after the run. "I just couldn't run at all, I had to walk. It was so frustrating!" Another student had also pushed herself to tears but had managed to secure the most rounds of any girl on campus. I found out later that she also had an eating disorder at the time and struggled with over-exercise; in addition to pushing herself to run the most, she had also earned the highest number of sponsorships in her class. While it was unclear to me if she had "run for the kids" or for other reasons, it *was* clear to me that students' wish for their own personal development during the run also had the potential for yielding unfavorable results. Even so, the race was designed to give students with all levels of physical capacities the opportunity for participating, irrespective of their athletic capabilities. Students could engage by making costumes, asking sponsors for a lump sum for their entire run rather than per lap, or could serve as "lap counters" with staff at the tables set up at the finish line. Even students who felt that they weren't capable of running very far, like Jofrid, Linus, and Silje, were surprised by their capacity for movement during the run, and the shared development they built together was palpable through the entirety of the social process they were engaging in. The costumes, the music, the words of encouragement, all contributed to students discovering that they could utilize their bodies in ways they hadn't thought possible and created a sense of community among them that was palpable. This *fellesskap* (community), however, was reserved for the students on campus in ways that did not fully extend to "the kids" students were running for, a circumstance I describe in the section that follows.

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[70] $13,275 per May 30, 2024, exchange rate.

THE RESULTS.

The remainder of the afternoon, Rakel and her *stipps* tally the last of the sponsorships, preparing to announce the final results at dinner. Rakel sits in the teacher's lounge next to the cafeteria, flanked by Mia and Hans, each hunched over laptops and cell phones, carefully crunching the numbers. It's just before 15:30, and we can hear the students who are gathering outside the door to the cafeteria, which is locked as usual prior to meals, waiting for a member of the kitchen staff to unlock it once dinner has been set up; on the menu today are burgers, a treat to reward the students for their hard work and an offer of calorie-laden energy meant to refuel them after their exertion from the run. Students are chatting excitedly still in high spirits, perhaps abuzz with some leftover endorphins or maybe the feeling of their shared development together as a school community.

The kitchen staff unlocks the doors and Rakel and I watch the students stream in from where we sit in the lounge; they murmur when they see the cafeteria bar laden with burger fixings on their way to sit at the rows of tables and chairs that are lined up and down the room. A few of them still have face paint left on their faces, but otherwise, all traces of the run have been showered away. Once the students are seated, Rakel walks to the bar and takes hold of the handbell on top of it, giving a quick ring, which is always done before dinner, signaling it's time for the end-of-day announcements. This bell ring is different, though, more weighty than usual, and students hush each other abruptly, eager to hear the outcome of the run they've become firmly engaged with.

Once everyone is quiet Rakel pauses before she speaks. "It's not so often that I am in front of you without very much to say," she says, laughing, her eyes scanning the room. "I've been sitting with Mia and Hans in the other room, tallying the numbers and I just, I don't have words, and that's not often. But I want to say something to you all, very briefly. We have talked a bit about the *fellesskap* (community) that we make here, and what really defines a *kull* (cohort) is this: what you all have done today, you're going to take with you for the rest of your life. This *opplevelse* (experience), what *fellesskap* (community) can do.

"I was wondering if I was a bit too strict with you, that I've pressed you a bit too much, but I really mean what I said about the organization we partnered with today, I know them very well. I never would have said we would partner with them if I didn't think you all were capable of meeting each other here," she levels her hand, palm down, to her forehead with a grin. "And you have."

She pauses. “I’ve been super motivated by you all. I know many from *A og B* had wanted to go to Africa, of course, but maybe some of you others will also be inspired to go someday, maybe for internships*, utvikling* (development) as a teacher or nurse someday, and you will have the chance to have a ‘link in’ with this organization if that’s something you want to do. I want you all to remember that.

“As far as *fellesskap* (community) goes, I want that absolutely all of you, whether you were able to contribute a little bit or a lot, know that this wouldn’t have worked if each one of you didn’t do what you did today. Absolutely all of you should be very, very proud of what you’ve done. I heard a few comments today, there were several of you that said, ‘I didn’t know I had this in me!’, and ‘I’m actually so proud of myself!’ and that, you should be. This has been the goal I’ve pushed you for: that you really, really could believe that you could do this. I know with this project, that if you wanted to do it, you could do it. So,” she pauses, smiling, a glint in her eye. “The results.”

Students shift in their seats, murmuring with anticipation. “I can begin by saying that last year we had a new record,” she says. “Bearing in mind, there were twenty or so more students than we have this year, and also, we had *A og B* students that had just come back from their trip and were very, very, eager to share what they had experienced there with the rest of the school. The results last year were 311,000 crowns. I’m not kidding, I had said to the other teachers this year that if we made 50,000, I’d be happy. But you all,” she pauses, “have broken that record.” The room erupts in cheers, gasps and delighted laughter. “You all have raised,” she pauses. “346,000 crowns!”[71]

Afterwards, Rakel, still beaming, sits with me in the staff lounge as we eat our burgers; she says that she is amazed by the results, especially considering how low her expectations had been. “Without the students going on the trip this year, I thought motivation would be low, and we’d get fifty, one-hundred thousand at the most," she says, tucking into her burger. "I've never been in this position before starting with my class for motivation. I told them that however it went, I would be proud and happy. But we should ask ourselves, 'why do we have excuses for not having sponsors?' *Empower* is really dependent on our support; I talked to the director, he was so happy with what we've raised, he was in tears. This is not a big organization with regular sponsors. It's so important to see how people rely on this support. I really met myself and my own motivation this year. I feel a big responsibility to the organization. Where is my motivation? It's only been one year since I've been [to Tanzania] but human beings are so complicated, how we forget. You need reminders constantly. I always feel like there will be ten or twenty students who have no interest, but I want to try my best to explain this to the school and tell them that it's so, so important. It's the most important day for the whole year and that's *not* an understatement."

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[71] Approximately $32,900 per May 30, 2024, exchange rate.

WHAT COMMUNITY AND EXPERIENCE CAN (AND CAN'T) DO.

Some time after the run, I scheduled a video call with Birte, the international advisor for the Norwegian Folk High School Council. I had met her during a virtual conference Grøndal's school priest had organized in his emerging role as director of the Folk High School Pedagogy program at a local university earlier that winter; the conference was called "Education for Sustainable Development," and Birte had spoken about the Council's goals for reducing carbon emissions across the folk high school network. In our conversation together, I noted how many folk high school courses had the term "solidarity" in them, twenty-five in total, and was curious to know more about how the Council oversaw the relationships between solidarity and the aid projects most schools organized. "Firstly," she said, "it's important to note that we are not aid organizations. We are schools. So, if you plan to be involved in an aid project, what kind of competency or learning experience does that give students?" Birte noted that without developing these competencies in students, the folk high school pedagogy risked "strengthening the 'us/them' dynamic" between Norwegian students and the recipients of charity funds delivered through these sorts of projects. "If you're taught the way to contribute is to collect money and send it to someone in the Global South, then you're just repeating the knowledge students already have," she said, which could contribute to a "save the world" mentality among students. "What are the students learning from the *Run for Tanzania*?" she asked. "Are they learning to run fast or are they learning something for global issues?" She said that she agreed that "immediate needs around the world" required action, but that she was wary of the fundraisers folk high schools organized, as they risked reinforcing inequality between students and aid recipients. "That's my personal view," she said. "In my experience the main thing I feel [when participating in charity work] is good about myself. Because *I've* done something good. I believe our involvement should be a cultural meeting."

Karl expressed similar views. "That's the thing I can't seem to understand," he said, when I asked him how he felt the funds raised during the run would impact the Tanzanian students in the context of broader problems associated with aid. "I think it's super, super complicated. Especially when Rakel had a class with us explaining to us how we're helping. I don't think there is a solution." Karl told me that he felt it was "kind of cheap to just give them money" but said that it was what they actually needed. He said that he felt raising funds for school fees, in particular, was important; "Then they can build a better society where more people are educated." He said that one reason he was disappointed that *A og B* wouldn't be able to visit the school in Tanzania was that he was hoping that the class could do more than just "give money. We could give them knowledge as well. I personally don't know what I could teach them, but we could also learn from them. For me, that's a motivation to do more." This motivation would have been reciprocal, Karl said: "Rakel says it also motivates them because they're being seen." Echoing Birte's suggestion that folk high schools' international development projects could often be more about the folk high school students themselves than the people they were raising funds for, Karl said, "I can see how some of this is also self-serving. But I'm paying a lot of money for this year, so I do want to have a good experience, too."

The experience of privileged Norwegian students visiting poor students in East Africa, Birte said, also risked reinforcing existing inequalities between them. She told me that another folk high school had originally planned a similar trip where they visited Mathare, and would, in the same fashion, go on a safari afterwards. “The teacher said, ‘no this is wrong,’” Birte told me. “He changed the scope of the trip, instead renting a facility where Norwegian and Kenyan students who were the same age would have ‘folk high school’ for two weeks together. They all went on the safari. Most Kenyans from the slums hadn’t done that. Then they were more on equal terms. They connected.” Birte said that this lack of connection was why she was skeptical of young adult folk high school students meeting children on these trips. “If you’re doing solidarity work, then meet a young person you’re the same age as, someone who is engaged in the same way in their own community.” She said. “I think democratic participation is at our core. We need to build competences that increase students’ participation. If you want to involve yourself in solidarity work, then focus on Norwegian politics.”

CONCLUSION.

The Run for Tanzania was designed to produce equality among Grøndal’s students through a range of methods that made space for their differences in their physical and social capacities. Through engagement and motivation, individual students were asked to support the Run for Tanzania to the best of their abilities, by running as many laps as possible, raising as much money as they could through their social networks, or by contributing to the run through creative means like costume-making and designing promotional materials for the event. In this way, students and staff were able to generate a sense of community together on campus that was contingent on individual and collective development, with the overarching goal of leveraging an embodied experience with aid that meant to bridge the inequalities that existed between them and their Tanzanian contacts. By organizing a community event that pushed students to get out of their comfort zones by asking their families and friends for support, and through exploring the limits of their physical capabilities the day of the run, students were able to utilize good discomfort for the sake of equality outside of Grøndal’s campus. These types of discomfort, however, were not without their problems. Students who struggled with eating disorders, orthorexia, or compulsive exercise were placed in a difficult position the day of the run, one in which the pathology of their disease was inadvertently celebrated through competing for the prizes associated with winning. On the other hand, students who said they had poor self-image or other types of physical limitations also described the empowerment they experienced through challenging themselves to do the best they could during the run, even with the eyes of their peers on them. Through Rakel and *A og B*'s inspiration, students were emboldened to do their best for their own self-esteem as well as for the sake of the Tanzanian children who needed their school fees paid, in such a way that revealed both good and bad forms of difference while still strengthening Grøndal's community.

This *fellesskap* (community), though, was not unilaterally translated to the recipients of the funds raised through the Run for Tanzania. The social and economic inequalities between the Norwegian and Tanzanian students that were displayed through the promotional materials *A og B* used created a visual marker of inequality that was too stark to mediate, differences these images invoked too great to bridge. Problems about representation and consent were also very much a part of these efforts, as the challenges associated with representing recipients of aid in ways that tell the truth of their experiences while preserving their human dignity brought disagreements between me and Rakel and elucidated the sorts of questions Birte articulated about reinforcing "us versus them" dynamics in global relationships. While Birte said that folk high schools are not aid organizations, and Rakel agreed with this claim, Rakel's commitment to the NGOs she and her students had worked with for nearly a decade prior was evident. Her personal relationships with both the organizations and the aid recipients who depended on them were the driving force in how she developed the run, and the reason why skepticism over her tactics, or aid more broadly, was a secondary consideration to the task at hand. In addition, the problems with aid were reduced to a general skepticism about how NGOs misappropriate funds, rather than a critique of how international development reinforces colonial and capitalist paradigms that foment inequity in the Global South by funneling resources into the Global North (Ferguson 1990; Smith 2008; Hickel 2018). While Rakel said that she considered taking a more critical approach to aid more broadly and felt that it was time to update *A og B*'s curriculum on the matter, Birte had studied international development and had the training, and the vocabulary, to describe these dynamics in this way. As I have noted, Rakel was forthcoming in her qualifications in training as a sports educator, and the scope for developing

A og B was not meant to replicate a university-level curricula, but rather, to give students the chance to have an embodied relationship with aid work before deciding if they would like to pursue the field further after graduation.

Still, the run was able to satisfy a certain sense of *nestekjærlighet* (charity) for students by linking Christian faith, or secular ideals, with practice through collective activity. As Benthall noted, humanitarian work has a moral dimension to it, and the students I spoke with during and after the race had similar goals in seeing their "care for the kids" through, whether it be religiously or secularly motivated. The "secular-sacred entanglements" that emerged in Thomasmesse rituals were also present in the ways in which students invoked their reasons for running–*nestekjærlighet*–which meant caring for their Tanzanian "neighbors" and was a central goal for students no matter their relationships with Christian faith. Even though the overarching aims of the run were achieved–developing community through embodied experiences on campus while raising funds for students outside of Norway who needed them–the limits to the sorts of relationships students were able to make with the run's recipients were apparent throughout the planning and implementation of the event. As Rakel, Birte, and Karl noted, charity events like these risked being self-serving and could reinforce hierarchies they found uncomfortable, as they produce an exchange that lacked the relational component they believed was essential for establishing more equitable relationships between donors and recipients in charity initiatives. The ways recipients were characterized in the run's promotional materials mirrored Bornstein's claim that aid does not "offer any rights to its recipients who can make no claims on donors" (2009: 623), but rather, reinforced the differences in such a way to appeal to students' "impulse to give" that risked reducing the image of recipients to "suffering subjects" (Robbins 2013). In the next chapter, I assess how Rakel attempted to alleviate this stereotype by scheduling a virtual live stream she organized between her students and her contacts at a community center in Nairobi, Kenya, in such a way she hoped would present her students with possibilities for developing relationships based on mutuality and shared learning rather than financial transactions alone.

CHAPTER 8/

THE VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE: TECHNOLOGY.

We are the nation, a new generation, we need attention, education, protection.

-Barasa Music Family "We are the Nation"[72]

INTRODUCTION.

Virtual technologies and digital communication have garnered significant attention in anthropology in recent years, themes that became increasingly relevant during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some anthropologists suggest that assessing virtual worlds "in their own terms" (Boellstorff 2008: 4) is critical in thinking through how social life emerges in solely digital spaces, while others argue that digital ethnography is best served taking into account how online and virtual technologies are mediated by other social factors (Horst & Miller 2012). Hine proposes that taking both online and offline forms of sociality together is a productive way forward, as doing so can illuminate how virtual experiences become "embedded, embodied" and enmeshed in the "everyday" of people's social lives (Hine 2016: 21-22). In this chapter, I follow Hine's methodology by examining how virtual meetings the *Action og Bistand* class had with local contacts from the Barasa Music Family community center in Nairobi, Kenya, translated into the in-person discussions Rakel and her students had after these interactions. Normally, the Action og Bistand class would visit BMF during their study trip to East Africa each spring, but due to Covid-19 related travel restrictions, the trip was cancelled for this year's students and Rakel organized a series of virtual events meant to emulate "being there" in Kenya instead. Through these virtual interactions, the *A og B* class sought to achieve a sense of equality between the two communities that was based in relationality, mutuality, and shared experiences despite the spatial and socioeconomic differences that existed between them. The limits to the sort of equality Grøndal's students and staff hoped to achieve, however, were revealed most acutely during a live stream video they watched filmed by a local community center worker on the back of a moped while driving through the streets of a slum in Nairobi, Kenya. After the session, students said that the virtual meeting was no replacement for “being there” in person, as not having the chance to “feel” the inequality between them and their Kenyan contacts “in [their] bodies” prohibited them from achieving the sort of “real” relationship they hoped to establish. The virtual experience, they said, was not a sufficient format for them to share their similarities and appreciate the good differences that existed between them and the Kenyans they hoped to befriend. Instead, the virtual live stream reinforced the stark contrasts between them, highlighting the economic and social disparities they sought to minimize and establishing a hierarchy between them that problematized their egalitarian value orientations. To alleviate this discomfort, students and staff spoke about their Kenyan contacts as “inspirational” figures, attempting to shift the imbalances that existed between them. These invocations of inspiration, though, reinforced the power dynamics the folk high school students and staff sought to disrupt in the first place, as what constituted inspirational characteristics was rooted in their own culturally specific values and mostly lacked any meaningful engagement with social justice. Even so, regarding difference as a positive, integral aspect of equality was an important part of how students and staff conceived what equality necessitates and positioned the folk high school as a social object that runs counterculturally to the dominant Norwegian value of social sameness.

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[72] Billian Okoth Oljiwa 2017, produced by R. Kay.

In a further effort to bridge the spatial and socioeconomic distances that existed between them and their Kenyan contacts, *A og B* students organized a bracelet-making activity where they sent bracelets they had made to BMF along with funds they had earned working in Rakel’s family’s commercial greenhouse earlier in the schoolyear. The bracelets, made from lettered beads that spelled out words the *A og B* class hoped would encourage and inspire BMF’s students, became a site of material friendship-making, and a place of embodied connection. While the activity was a valuable one for the class, insofar as they were able to develop *fellesskap* together, this same sense of community was not able to be equally shared with BMF. Despite limitations in these forms of relating, Barasa expressed gratitude for *A og B*’s involvement with his community and hoped that they would continue to be involved in ways that would generate further understanding between the two communities. Even so, Barasa said that, ultimately, the differences between them produced an inequality that *A og B* would “never understand.”

ACTION AND AID.

Doing activities together was an important part of how Rakel conceived *A og B*’s pedagogical model where embodied “action” brought forth a relationship with “aid.” During camping, swimming, and hiking trips the class took together Rakel was known for encouraging her students to “get out of their comfort zones” in a range of ways; one such tactic included her instructing students to line up at the dock on the fjord by the school each December and telling them, one by one, to “jump!” into the freezing waters below. One student, Malin, told me that her wish to be challenged like this was the reason she enrolled in *A og B* in the first place. “I wanted to be tougher,” she said. “Things that I’m very afraid of—heights for example—it was a big deal for me to climb a mountain [on our hiking trip] in Vestlandet (Western Norway). Rakel didn’t think I’d be able to do it, so it was extra fun that I was able to. I’ve become way more sure in myself. I know now that I can do more than I thought I could.” Through embodied activities students engaged in together as a class cohort, a sense of trust was established in the face of discomfort or skepticism, in both their own capacities and in each other, as their social connectivity as a group was strengthened by meeting challenges together. The goal of these activities was to strengthen the social equality among students by presenting them with challenges they could overcome as a group—lighting a campfire, getting the hang of windsurfing—and in many ways, the students grew together as a single organism made of their collective individual selves through activities that required both cooperation and their own self-development.

Fig. 34: Development in action.

Traveling internationally during the pandemic, though, was a challenge that students had no way of overcoming and presented a good deal of work for Rakel in determining how to best convey a sense of "being" in East Africa while also being constrained by the parameters of the *A og B* classroom. While students said that they enjoyed the outdoor activities and athletic challenges the class provided, most said that the primary reason they enrolled in the program was *A og B*'s three-week trip to East Africa scheduled each spring. In light of the pandemic, though, students understood that this trip might not be possible, but had enrolled in the program anyway. "We cannot survive without the trips," said Rakel, and the numbers proved it:

In the 2020/2021 academic year, enrollment was down by 30% across the board at Grøndal, with its travel-based programs impacted the most. For every ten students enrolled at Grøndal, the school would receive a million Norwegian crowns[73] from the state and taking the financial hit of losing this support threatened the viability of Grøndal as a business. Indeed, the trips represented what I viewed to be the most central point of tension for the folk high school staff between providing students with the "experiences" (a school value) they expected while considering the impact of the trips on both the climate and in the possibility spreading corona to unvaccinated populations. Despite her concerns about the "ethical question" of traveling to East Africa during the pandemic, however, Rakel said that getting her students there was her *kamp* (struggle) an experience that was critical for students to develop relationships with themselves and with her contacts in East Africa. Being there in person, she told me, made her students "tougher without pushing them. I'm not telling them I expect them to be a certain way," she said, "but they *become* that way. You need to start with a personal connection in order to get students to care." In the section that follows, I describe how Rakel used virtual methods in an effort to get her students to "care" about her local contacts in East Africa when it became clear to her that a trip there would be not possible in the spring of 2021.

LIVE STREAM.

It's a Tuesday afternoon in late February and I'm in the *A og B* classroom with Rakel and the rest of her students waiting for her friend, Barasa, to enter the Zoom live stream session she has pulled up on the room's projection screen. The plan is that Barasa will give us a "tour" through his camera phone of the Barasa Music Family community center he founded in Mathare, Kenya, a slum[74] community that is home to over one million people and the place where he was born and raised. We have already watched a documentary about BMF in a previous class, a film that was produced by a Norwegian director some years ago that focuses on how Barasa, a young Kenyan man in his late twenties, founded the organization through his extensive networks with local and international partners and developed programs for Mathare’s children that focus on dance, music, and education.

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[73] Equivalent to approximately USD 95,000 as of July 2024 exchange rates.

[74] I use the term "slum" in this paper because all of my research participants, including those who lived in Mathare, used it.

From my seat at the back of the room I observe that, in addition to being mostly women, the *A og B* students are also mostly Norwegian with one exception: the school’s only international student, Damaris, is from Germany and is also a part of the class. She doesn’t speak much Norwegian yet and Rakel teaches mostly in Norwegian, but she’s picking up what she can and is learning fast. All the students are dressed casually, wearing athletic pants or wide-legged jeans and slide sandals with socks, most of them wrapped up in sweatshirts or wool sweaters. The young women aren’t wearing much makeup, if any, and most of them have pushed back their long blonde or light brown hair into ponytails or messy buns. I lean my shoulders gently against the back wall covered in tacked photos of last year’s class; looking at the backs of the heads of the students in front of me, I note that they look quite the same.

Presently, Barasa’s face and torso have appeared onscreen in front of us; he has arrived for our Zoom call. He’s wearing a simple T-shirt and a cap and as he greets us with a wide smile, we all wave back from our seats calling “hi” or “hello” softly to the screen. Barasa tells us that he will show us the BMF community center and then his colleague, Ojwang, will take over and take us on a tour of Mathare outside the center’s walls. Barasa rises from his seat, holding his phone turned towards his face, filming himself as he speaks.

He takes us through the center, stopping in each room. First, we enter the dance room. There are several teenage boys practicing their routines, grinning and sweating with exertion.

The *A og B* students watch quietly while Mai Kristine, one of the class’s *stipps* (student-workers), holds her hand on her heart, nodding to the beat of the dance and smiling softly. Chosen from last year’s class to be a current *stipp* for her exemplary behavior, Mai Kristine has experienced what the *A og B* course has to offer without the pandemic-related restrictions in place, including touring the BMF center in person.

Rakel laughs lightly and says to Barasa, “I wish they could try this, our students! It’s very difficult for us to dance like that.”

Behind him there is a mural of Mother Theresa painted on the wall that says, “God, when I’m busy give me the strength to serve.” Each year Grøndal’s students add to the growing list of signatures that have been written around the mural. Barasa gestures to it. “Every year you come, you put a new signature.”

Rakel says, “We’re sad to miss that this year. I keep telling my class they really have to go in the future.”

One of our students is filming the live stream with her iPhone. It strikes me how many screens are facilitating this viewing. I count five: Barasa’s phone, Rakel’s laptop, the overhead projector screen, Silje’s phone filming in front of me, my phone filming all of it from the back of the room.

The tour of the center has concluded, and Barasa looks for Ojwang who will take over and show us Mathare from the back of his moped. Ojwang’s smile fills the screen, his sunglasses tilted downwards slightly. He hops on the back of the moped—his friend will drive while he films—and with a massive *vroom!* and cloud of dust they’re off peeling out of the gated center and into the muddy dirt roads of Mathare. The lack of colors on the projector screen shift into a stark contrast with the brightness of the *A og B* classroom, the slum unfolding before us in a patchwork of mud and rust. Ojwang’s moped snakes through alleys covered in trash and lined with shacks, the sound of its engine drowning out everything else. Streams of people walk by, many of them stopping at the roadside markets that are fashioned out of large swaths of rusted tin or aluminum and propped up with wooden stakes. Sellers display their wares: carefully positioned bunches of leafy vegetables, bottles of Coca Cola, a tangled jumble of rusted kitchen utensils while customers stop to peruse their goods, many of them holding the large yellow jugs most residents use to transport their drinking water.

The moped crosses over a rickety bridge where a stream lies beneath it, clogged with so much trash its water is no longer visible. Karl whispers to Rakel from his seat, "is it safe to drink that?"

"No," Rakel answers, "but people do."

I look around our classroom, the students silent. Most of them have pulled out their phones to film by now, several more than had done during the tour of the center. Jannike takes a long sip from her large water bottle, but otherwise, students are motionless, watching, silently filming.

Presently Ojwang has walked over what appears to be a body in the street. Our students whisper to each other wondering if the body is dead or alive. Meanwhile a small girl onscreen walks by alone, carefully clutching the straps of a large pink backpack that rests on her small frame. She steps gingerly around the body before Ojwang and his camera move on.
Rakel says quietly, "because of corona they leave the bodies in the street sometimes."

Ojwang is back at the center and the tour is over. Rakel thanks him noting how it's a "difficult experience" for her students to see the slum but that it's equally important for them to see it. Barasa has re-entered the screen and Rakel says to both of them, "I'm really happy about the center you have. I have a previous student who said that your center is an oasis. You can feel the joy and the happiness you bring to these kids. I'm very humbled and grateful for you to show us this, where you've grown up. So, thank you."

Barasa says, "thank you so much. I hope someday your students, even in a personal way, can visit us. We'll support them. The center is here for them."

We wave goodbye and his face fades from the screen.

Rakel says to the class, “This is why I say the trips are not just about experiences, but about keeping these projects going. The needs are still so big especially in *koronatida* (Corona time).” She dismisses us for a ten-minute break and the students and I trudge out of the classroom through the building’s front door and into the icy blast of Nordic air that surrounds us, shaking slightly from the cold.

SAMENESS AND DIFFERENCE IN WEALTH.

The *A og B* students, like all of Grøndal’s students, primarily came from two-parent, middle class families. Most of them had received public education, but some had attended private Christian schools; all of them had traveled before with their families to Spain, Thailand, Greece, the United States. Each of them had appropriate clothing for Grøndal’s frequent outdoor activities: layers of wool underwear, high quality ski jackets, boots, goggles, and mittens. Damaris, from Germany, was the only exception and she and I would often borrow gear from Rakel, trading long johns, wool sweaters, and ski helmets during our outdoor trips together. This was sometimes the case with international students who came unprepared for Norway’s freezing winters; most of us hadn’t taken the traditional Norwegian saying “there is no bad weather, only bad clothes” to heart, and came to school with not nearly enough wool to comfortably take part in all of Grøndal’s activities. “Good” clothing was also name-brand: Helly Hansen and Fjällräven for outdoor-related items, Adidas, Nike, and Puma for indoor gear. Students generally dressed the same and had the same; there were several students among Grøndal’s student body who displayed alternative fashion choices, like Damaris, who favored thrifted clothing and expressive makeup, but students like her were few and far between. In short, sameness in appearance was favored over creative expression; conformity was, by and large, prioritized.

This sense of sameness in under-stated material wealth was also apparent in both the classroom and the activities students did together both on and off campus. On hiking or kayaking trips in the local area each student generally helped themselves to the same amount of food—hot dogs or *matpakker* (packed lunches)—and no one took more than their share even though there was usually plenty of food leftover. In the classroom, too, each student had their own desk with their own name card, and no one decorated their space any more or less visibly than the others in the room. Norwegian abundance—*overflod*—was not overtly revealed in the classroom and obvious displays of wealth were not common among students. Simplicity was prioritized, with everyone having the same amount as everyone else but no more. Much like the invisible support of the state to fund their education, though, so too were the visible markers of material resources necessary for funding *A og B*'s activities subdued. Everyone had the requisite expensive wool underwear, for example, but no one talked much about it. It was only mentioned in its absence, when Damaris and I froze unduly without it and the Norwegian students asked why we hadn't thought to buy ourselves sets. Similarly, the photos tacked on the classroom wall of students engaging in activities across Norway, like skiing, white-water rafting, and kitesurfing, all incurred significant costs, but students rarely discussed this. Money was not generally talked about, but students always seemed to have enough of it. If anything, the photos reinforced the message Grøndal shared on one of their Instagram posts with a photo of students on safari in Tanzania: "travel is the one thing that you spend your money on that makes you richer."

The wealth of experience *A og B* students had been able to engage with starkly contrasted the types of experiences Barasa's students displayed onscreen. Seeing their Kenyan peers with far fewer resources than them, and living in far worse conditions, even virtually, caused a great deal of discomfort for the *A og B* students I spoke with after the live stream session. "When I saw the kid with a pink backpack," said Hilda, referencing the girl they had witnessed step over what appeared to be a body in the street in Mathare, "she was like a normal Norwegian kid coming home from school. But the conditions are so different." Damaris agreed. "We have such good conditions, and they have such bad ones. It's not fair. The man lying on the ground, he's probably dead or on some drugs. Nobody cares. It's normal for them. It's crazy." Both Karl and Malin said that viewing the live stream made them consider their own behavior, and how often they complained about their lives despite how good they had it in Norway. "The stupid things we complain about makes me feel ashamed," said Karl. "But then there are people who are literally starving in the streets." Malin put it this way: "That would have never happened in Norway. Think that so many live this way. Altogether too many. We never think about how good we have it, and we complain about such small things." Developing gratitude for how "good" they had it in Norway was one outcome Rakel hoped would come from the trip to East Africa. She, too, referenced the complaining she had witnessed students do on trips in Norway, and told the class that this was one reason why she would consider quitting her job at the folk high school. "You all are so spoiled!'" She told the class with a laugh. "When you complain it makes me so angry! But I also fall into the same patterns; these trips remind me of the perspective I need to have. I've been to Mathare eight times. And I've realized that sometimes it's important to complain. But I think it's super important that we train ourselves to process things. Now we have a way stronger feeling that we need to be thankful. When you have a folk high school experience where you want to develop yourself more, this is an important part of that."

Rakel said that she was fully aware that the differences between the *A og B* students in the classroom and the Kenyan contacts onscreen made her students "uncomfortable" but said that was necessary for the kind of personal *utvikling* (development) she hoped students would engage with in the first place. "They *should* feel uncomfortable," she said. "This is how the world really is." This discomfort with inequality, though, was one that Rakel did not hope would transfer to her Kenyan contacts; when I asked her if there was a way that she and her students could share some of their world with BMF in an effort to practice a greater sense of mutual sharing, perhaps by giving them a similar live stream tour of Grøndal's campus, she said no. "The kids there don't want to see our lives. Why should they? They have so many other problems. How does that help them?" Rakel said that she did not want to "highlight the differences" between her students and Barasa's or make the situation "more black and white." "I don't want to hide the way we have it, I'm not like that at all. But when the differences [between us] are too big—and in many ways they are—there are no solutions, there is no correct answer." I asked her if Grøndal had considered hosting some of Barasa's older students, similarly to the practice more common in the 1970s and 80s when the folk high school network received funding from the state to sponsor international students. “Yes, but it’s hard for some of them,” she said. “I’ve seen [international students] being in Norway for one year at a folk high school, then they really know what they’re missing. They see how unfair life is. That’s something I really want to handle with respect. Sometimes I think life is better for them when they don’t know the options because they don’t have a choice.”

The differences in socioeconomic status between her students and Barasa’s, however, were not the only ones Rakel wanted to draw attention to through the live stream. Another reason why Rakel decided to organize the meeting was to show her students the admirable traits of the BMF community, ones that she felt her students lacked. “Many of the problems [my] students have here, we really have some tough work to do,” she said. “Students have to step up and put themselves in a vulnerable position. They can learn so much from BMF; how the dancers there are communicating with our students, for example. I really want my students to see some of the really good things, that they can be more outgoing, they can be more confident in how they dance, how they communicate. It’s important for them to take themselves out of their comfort zone.” In this way, the “good” differences the BMF community members exemplified were also perceived as being favorable ones for Rakel’s class to emulate, a realm of inspiration in which young Norwegians could be encouraged to be more engaged, more *på* (on). Rakel’s message to her students was that they were not, despite having financial or material advantages, superior to their Kenyan peers but rather, quite the contrary; instead, they were “spoiled,” unworthy of many of the privileges they had received by no merit of their own doing. Karl, a student, expressed similar sentiments. “I feel I don’t understand that every single person there is just like me, but they’re just born another place,” he said. “I don’t feel like equals. It’s a strange thing to say. It’s not a race thing or anything, I just can’t comprehend that they’re the same as us. If I was there and I was able to get to know them, I would understand.” This sort of “understanding,” of being made more “equal,” Karl said, could only be expressed by “being there” and by building relationships with Kenyan contacts in real time. In the section that follows, I assess how *A og B* students described the efficacy of “feeling” East Africa “in their bodies" and imagined how this would contribute to an understanding and mutuality that could only be achieved by "being there."

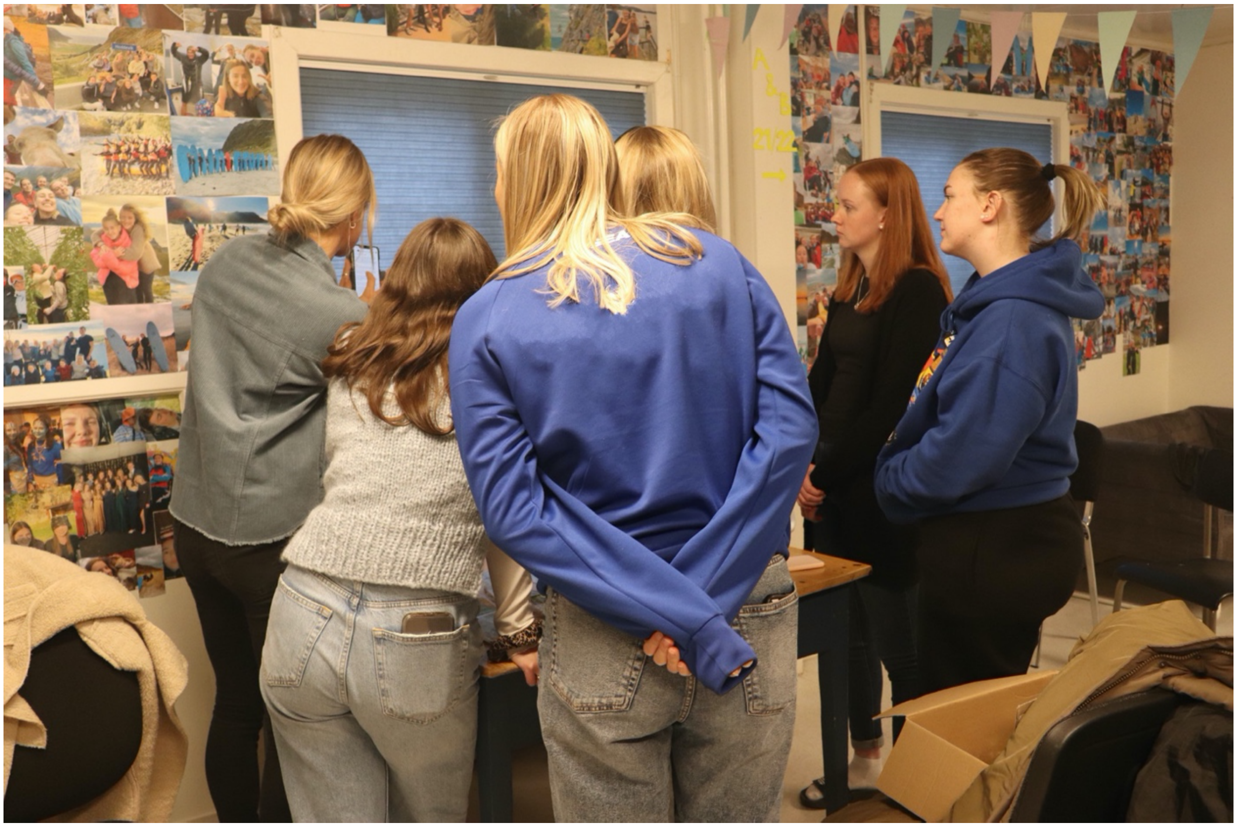

Fig. 35: Rakel surrounded by her current students and photos of previous classes.

FEELING INEQUALITY IN THE BODY.

While Heather Horst and Daniel Miller argue that privileging "real" offline experiences over virtual interactions undermines the complexity of virtual social life (2012: 13), my research participants regularly used the word "real" to describe what they imagined being in Kenya would be like in contrast to viewing the virtual live stream from the confines of their classroom.

Karl said that, while the live stream being in real time made it "seem more realistic," than watching a documentary or pre-filmed video, the experience still left him feeling like he couldn't get a "complete grasp" of the situation, a circumstance he found troubling. "That's why I'm really sad we can't go," he said. "It was more personal to see them live but I don't think it was enough. I didn't get the experience I wanted or needed." The experience of being in Mathare, Karl said, would provide a sensory dimension that the live stream lacked. "It gets so much more real when you're in the atmosphere," he said. "You can smell the shit, touch everything. You don't get the atmosphere [on a live stream]." Malin agreed, saying that "being there" would yield "stronger impressions. To sense how it smells, to see with my own eyes. It's so weird that this is live while we just sit here watching." Mai Kristine, who *had* been in East Africa the previous year as an *A og B* student, expressed that the live stream experience was "completely different" than being there. "[When you're there], you smell it, you feel the heat, see how they look. I felt as Ojwan was driving through the slums like I was there again." Mai Kristine said that she felt like her peers couldn't "get it" in the same way as she had; "I was sitting there with tears in my eyes, looking around at students wondering, 'are people getting this?' I understand for me and Rakel it's a different experience to see it again, we've been there and experienced all of it." Hilda put it this way: "I think I need to know more about inequality to have to experience it with my eyes and not just hear about it in the media and the news and from my parents. Then maybe I realize how bad it is. I *know* how bad it is but it's a feeling I would get that I would understand it." Vida, who had been to Zambia with her family several times prior, expressed a similar relationship to "knowing" through embodied experience. "We know that people are starving or dying and there are poor people in the world, but we're living our lives like in a big bubble here in Norway. It's really hard to really understand if you haven't been there and felt it in your body. Here in Norway, we have the systems that have our backs. That's typical Norwegian, nothing really affects us that much."

Similarly, Grøndal was often described to me as a "bubble," a social container where students had every material aspect of their lives equally provided for and relied on each other for additional social support. The international trips, then, were meant to give students insight into how the world outside of Grøndal, and Norway, operates where social inequality, poverty, and a lack of resources are the lived experiences for most people. By placing students in these types of settings, even for a short period of time, Rakel hoped that students would experience what inequality could "feel" like "in their bodies" in such a way that would contribute to their overall *utvikling* (development). “If we’re thirsty or hungry, your body can handle more. That’s what I want the students to actually feel.” When I asked her if students could “feel” poverty in a similar way in Norway, she said, “Not at all. It’s not even close. And that’s because of the people we’re meeting and the way they’re living. I have no words to describe how important I think the trip is.” Replicating a similar experience in Norway was out of the question; when I asked her if poverty exists in Norway and if students could interact with similar service trips within its borders, Rakel said, “of course, but you can’t step into their lives in the same way in Norway. We still have the same comfortable things.” By providing students with an experience that was meant to be uncomfortable, Rakel believed that “something would happen” to them. “One of the biggest goals is for students to be more grateful,” she said. “But the most important thing when we’re on the trip is the relationships we make with locals.” Rakel’s students being able to make relationships with her Kenyan contacts was what the live stream experience lacked and what made her “so angry” watching the session in her classroom. “It feels like it’s working against the eight years that I’ve been visiting BMF, that we are just sitting here watching this,” she said, directly after the live stream. “When they haven’t met [Barasa], they just don’t understand. The things he is telling them are so far away from their lives.”

By bridging the gap between their daily reality and a curated short-term lived experience in Mathare, the *A og B* class would have a chance to relate to their Kenyan peers in such a way that would provide a sense of equality, at least temporarily, despite their differences in social and economic status. Silje said, “It’s just an experience for us and they have to live with that every day. They can’t run away from it and travel back to a place. Even though knowing that’s the case, it’s still worth it to go.” Despite knowing that the experience of “being there” was a finite one for her and her Norwegian peers, Silje still felt that the relationships they could begin to build with their Kenyan contacts through embodied activity was worth it. The school value of *samhandlinger* (interactions) could also be realized in person in a way that the live stream could never replicate; *A og B* students could not speak with BMF’s community members, could not dance with them, could not learn from them in a meaningful way. The distance, both spatial and affective, that existed between the screen and students' bodies resulted in a disconnect that impeded "real" interactions from happening.

Experiencing Mathare through embodied affectivity, on the other hand, gave Mai Kristine an additional dimension of care that she felt her classmates lacked. "I understand that the class doesn't feel the same way," she said. "I know Barasa and Ojwan, I've met them. It feels so close." This "closeness," developed by her body "being there" in Kenya and in the relationships she established with members of the BMF community was one that Mai Kristine had maintained long after the trip had ended. "The people I met on the trip were so open and welcoming and I'm still in touch with them," she said. By meeting Kenyan contacts in real time in an embodied space, Mai Kristine was able to establish a relationship with them that transcended temporal, spatial, and cultural difference, and through simple interactions maintained by virtual mediums she could develop the friendships that she had established in Mathare. In this way, Mai Kristine was able to maintain a sense of relationality that persisted despite the differences that remained between her and her Kenyan friends. Even so, Rakel knew that these differences could not be fully bridged between her students and their Kenyan contacts. "We are the group having money," she said. "We will never be equal. Never. Even though I like them very much, in some ways, it will always be unequal." In the section that follows, I describe how students attempted to further bridge this sense of being unequal with their Kenyan contacts by organizing a bracelet-making activity that would result in a material product that would add a more meaningful dimension to the funds they also planned to donate to the BMF community center.

BRACELETS.

On the Friday evening several days after the live-stream, *A og B* meets again in the classroom to finish making the beaded bracelets to send to BMF. It's also Green Week,[75] and the school is a flutter of activity; each class has their own specific service project to plan and implement and must also attend evening activities that are scheduled for Grøndal's entire student body. For their service project *A og B* has decided to focus on poverty per Rakel's suggestion; in class on Tuesday, she showed them a slide of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, noting how often poverty is overlooked. "In Norway, there are many things we talk about—climate, plastic—but *do not* forget about poverty, these hang together." Rakel is away for the weekend and has left her *stipps*, Mai Kristine and Hans, in charge of leading *A og B*'s service project. Hilda, one of *A og B*'s students who will eventually become a *stipp* herself, has also shown initiative with the activity, suggesting that the class make bracelets out of simple lettered and multi-colored plastic beads which they will then send to Barasa who can distribute them to the children who are a part of the BMF community. The class has utilized the class fund to purchase beads, elastic string, and poster paper they will use to make a large card they plan to send along with the bracelets. Mai Kristine has also bought ingredients for brownies, which she has made and will serve along with ice cream during the bracelet-making session, an added incentive to get students to make as many bracelets as possible in the time they have allotted in between their other scheduled activities.

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[75] I write about "Green Week," the week devoted to sustainably focused activities, in chapter five.

While the students have been working on the bracelets during class time this week, the task isn't yet finished, and so the students have pushed their desks together in the center of the room to create a shared workspace that is presently covered in beads, string, and half-drunk energy drinks. "The thought is we wanted to do something a bit concrete," Mai Kristine tells the class. "So, we're making bracelets and we can write some words with them that would be nice to send. Something we stand for. This is *koselig* (cozy), but we should be a bit serious about this, too, as it's for people who are having a hard time." On the blackboard at the front of the room Mai Kristine has written a word bubble with suggestions that students can use for their lettered bracelets: "love," "smile," "hope," "joy," and "happy." Next to the bubble is the class's itinerary for their trip next week, a replacement for the trip to East Africa, which will take them along the southern coast of Norway and back again in time to catch a flight to Svalbard from Oslo. Thursday will be the zoo in Kristiansand; Wednesday surfing in Bore; Saturday, go-karting in Stavanger; Sunday travel day to Oslo, and so forth. I will be traveling with *Backpacker* on their study trip, as *A og B*'s Svalbard trip requires a chaperone who is licensed to carry a gun in case of a polar bear emergency, and I don't fit the bill. I've been bouncing between both classrooms this week, co-teaching with Lisa about the Indigenous Sámi in the *Backpacker* class, then observing the live stream and service projects in *A og B*. It's been difficult to keep up and I'm cognizant that there are still five other classes engaged in their own activities with their own aims. The entire school feels like a hive, alive and buzzing, a warm glow in an otherwise cold, dark, and quiet landscape.

Soon piles of bracelets have collected on *A og B*'s pushed-together desks, some in rainbow colors, others reflecting the red, black, white and green of the Kenyan flag. Words jump out from the tangle: "strong," "music," "big boss," and "king," with one simply stating "Barasa." The students are all working in unison, heads bent around their individual beaded circles, tossing them into the collective heap quickly before getting to work on the next.

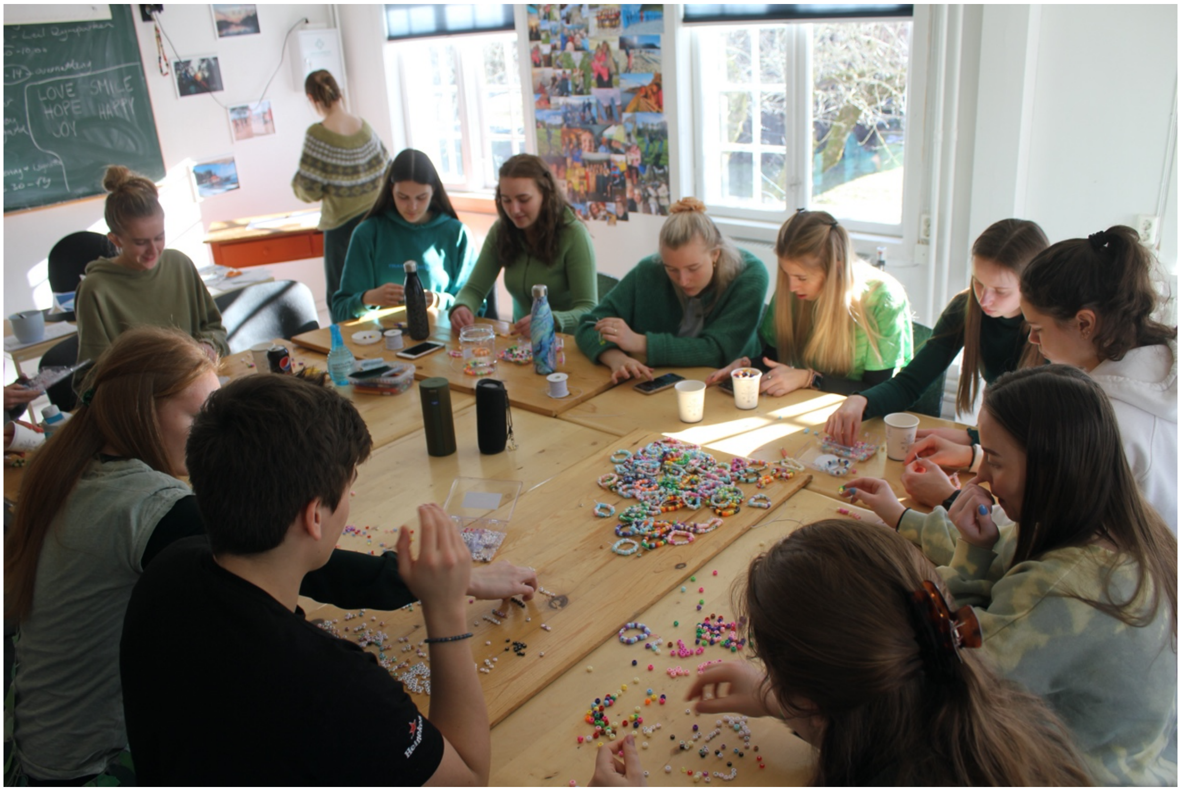

Fig. 36: Students, beads, and bracelets.

Hilda is working on the massive card the class will send to BMF, a piece of posterboard she's folded in half. On the front she has drawn a guitar, a keyboard, and musical notes around the large, colored bubble letters that state simply, "To: Barasa Music Family." Inside, she has written a message to the community in English; later, students will add photos taken during their bracelet-making, which will be printed and glued to the inside left of the card. They will add their signatures, individually, around the photos in an attempt to replicate the wall-signing of previous classes on the Mother Theresa mural back at the BMF center.

Dear Barasa Music Family,

We hope you are all doing well, and keeping healthy and safe. We are super sad that we can't visit you this year and see the good work you are doing in person. But we are very grateful that we are getting the chance to know you through Zoom meetings, and learn more about the situation in Mathare. It's inspiring and motivating for us to see how hard you guys are working to help others.

The idea with the bracelets is to hopefully spread some hope and happiness. We would also like to make a connection with you guys, even though we can't come see you in person. But when the situation with the pandemic gets better we would love to come visit you!

Keep up the good work with spreading love and opportunities to the people in Mathare <3

Janicke, next to me, has taken a less earnest approach to her bracelet-making and is collecting beads in formations of curse words before showing them to me with a snicker. When I report back to Rakel later about this she'll laugh, knowing right away who it is I'm talking about without me having mentioned her name. "So many of them could go either way," she says. "You see both sides, when [students] make selfish decisions, or when they choose to be better. They go back and forth with it."

Rakel had struggled a bit with Janicke, who had experienced some bullying in junior high and had developed what Rakel called a “tough girl” persona to combat it. “That kind of a thing totally doesn’t work at the folk high school,” said Rakel. “But she’s finding that out and becoming more secure in who she is.”

I show Janicke the bracelet I am currently working on, simple colors surrounding three letters: “BMF.” She asks what it means, and I can’t tell if she’s being facetious or not. “Best Mates Forever?” she asks. I ask her to tie the end of the bracelet I’m working on because I can’t seem to manage it on my own. I carefully pass it to her before she accidentally drops it, half of the beads sliding off with a scatter across the floor. “Best mates forever, more like Big Mess Forever!” I exclaim, and we laugh falling into each other. “BMF could stand for lots of things,” I say. She looks it up on *urbandictionary.com*. Several less positive entries present themselves, but one stands out: “Be My Friend.” We read it in unison and exclaim “awwww!” together in one voice. As it stands, this is when the tide turns from my ambiguity about her to a form of closeness, indeed, of friendship. We don’t speak together much over the course of my fieldwork, at least certainly not as much as I do with several of my other more loquacious research participants, but we have an understanding. We can, at the very least, laugh together.

It's late and despite the sugar from the brownies and the caffeine from the energy drinks, students’ productivity is starting to wane. We will pick up the activity again tomorrow after the Saturday seminar and before they begin practicing for their upcoming *elevkveld* (student evening). At the folk high school, students often say, there isn’t much time for thinking when there’s so much time spent doing.

BRIDGING INEQUALITY THROUGH MATERIALITY.

While Mai Kristine described the bracelet-making activity as a *koselig* (cozy) activity, it was important to her that students took it seriously. Similar to the other action-based activities I described in the start of this chapter, making bracelets brought students together to contribute to a shared goal by using their bodies and working as a single unit. Unlike hiking or kayaking, however, the bracelet-making activity was meant to have "meaning," a purpose beyond students' individual, or collective *utvikling* (development). When I asked Mai Kristine how she felt about the activity after it was over, she said that she was glad that it had given students a way to relate to BMF beyond the live stream. "With the bracelets we're here, we're making it together, you can touch it, you can feel it, we're going to send it and see them wearing it. I feel like it's a symbol, with them wearing the bracelets and we're wearing them as well, it creates *samhold* (unity, solidarity) between us." Silje also said that she felt like her body was a part of the bracelets they were making for BMF; "we're sending the part of ourselves that show that we care about them," she said. "I think about them all the time. It's overwhelming, so often we feel like we can't do anything to help." Mai Kristine also said that she felt "frustrated" by how little she could do to positively impact the BMF community. "It's more a symbolic gesture," she said, "it doesn't change their lives in any way. It's frustrating, we want to help so badly. But it's hard. That's the feeling I'm left with. I'm so frustrated, I want to do something; what can I do?"

Despite feeling like there was little they could do to bridge the inequality between themselves and their Kenyan contacts, Mai Kristine said that making the bracelets was a way to draw attention to what *A og B* and BMF students shared in common. "These words on the bracelets are supposed to be encouraging, with hope and love and smile and joy, they are *felles* (common) things we share, for all of us. It brings us together." Malin said that her favorite words were "smile, happy, and hope" and Silje said hers were "strong, hope, and happy." This sense of "happiness," she said, was something she hoped the bracelets would bring to BMF's students. "I'm sure that even though it's a little thing to do," she said, "it'll still make them happy to have a little bracelet. So they can feel special and that there is someone who is thinking about them." While *A og B* students expressed the smallness of sending bracelets to BMF's students, Mai Kristine said that they served an additional purpose, that wearing ones themselves could be a "reminder" for her and her Norwegian peers to remember that "we are here for you, rooting for you. We're in this together." Through the material process of bracelet-making, *A og B* students were able to establish *samhandlinger* (interactions) among themselves meant to translate into further interactions, albeit virtual, with their contacts from BMF. In this way, making bracelets together for others outside of their social group and wearing similar ones during their daily activities became a visible marker of the values they stood for together as a class. Through bracelet-making, relationships among *A og B* students were developed like the friendship that came to be between me and Janicke; our interactions, small as they might have been, generated a sense of trust, of mutual respect. Students could have elected to opt out of the activity, after all, spending their Friday evening playing video games or volleyball with students from other classes, but because of their shared identity built through hiking, kayaking, and watching the live stream together, skipping out on making bracelets was out of the question. Most students shared the load of sorting and stringing beads equally because they mattered to each other, even without Rakel's supervision, and students like Janicke rose to the occasion when she realized that she, too, was an important part of the group.

While Mai Kristine and the other *A og B* students had expressed a sense of "togetherness" with BMF, it was clear that that the two communities remained distinct. Rakel was pragmatic about the *fellesskap* (community) that was happening in her classroom, and the *fellesskap* happening within BMF. "Barasa and me have the same goal," she said. "Even though we have different possibilities. My goal is to build something in *this* community. He knows all of this. I'm not afraid of showing that to him. Me and Barasa have totally different positions, but we have goals for our own jobs. He knows that this is *my* job." Despite how much Rakel believed that the trips were necessary for her students, she also said that she believed they benefited her students more than they did BMF's community members. I asked Barasa if that was the case, on another virtual meeting I scheduled with him shortly after the live stream. After some considerable difficulty establishing a secure connection, we chatted for over an hour, him seated next to his wife on a couch in their home in Mathare, me in my apartment in the building next to the one that housed the *A og B* classroom. When I asked Barasa if he felt that the trips were beneficial to his community in the same way that they were for Rakel's students he said, "yes, I think it's a mutual benefit. The trips are very important." Even though he expressed a shared mutuality happening between his and Rakel's students, he referenced her students more than his during our conversation. "When you come to Mathare and get on our level, you become changed because of what you saw," he said. "For [the *A og B* students], I believe it's a life-changing experience. Unless you get to see it actually you aren't able to imagine it. When you get to travel and meet [Africans], you understand that Africa has many different countries. As much as [traveling] is costly, you look at the pros and cons; it's an experience that you will never have otherwise." In the section that follows, I assess how Rakel, Barasa, and the *A og B* students articulated how the *opplevelse* (experience) of being in East Africa would have brought forth the relationships they hoped would come from meeting each other in person, ones that were developed through shared inspiration and motivation.

(IN)EQUALITY IN INSPIRATION.

Grøndal's students and staff often tried to offset the discomfort they experienced meeting people who were different than them outside of Grøndal's campus by positioning these contacts as inspirational figures. In the card that the *A og B* students planned to send to BMF, Mai Kristine wrote, *It's inspiring and motivating for us to see how hard you guys are working to help others*, and through the bracelet-making activity, the *A og B* students were able to link their inspiration with action and motivation with movement. The words they chose for their bracelets— such as "joy, happy, smile, hope"—were meant to encourage the BMF community to continue embodying these attributes, but also to position them as archetypes for how humans *should* behave under difficult conditions. "I want to give them motivation to keep on hoping and to stay strong," said Silje, "to hope that things will get better. I think it's so unfair that there's such a big difference between my life and theirs. The live stream doesn't motivate me in the same way [as being there] but it does motivate me in another way, to give *them* motivation and to listen to them. That they know that we are here for them." Malin expressed a similar relationship between inspiration and hope. "Hope is maybe the best [word]," she said. "Even for those who are struggling. I'm very impressed and inspired that they smiled so much [in the live stream]. They seemed very happy, and they don't have it as good as we do. The thing is that children, and actually everyone who has it tough, can find joy in small things. Norwegian young people really have something to learn here. We live in the richest country in the world, for us it's completely usual to be spoiled. This has given me a lot to think about. It's really challenged me.” Being challenged in this way, as I’ve mentioned, was part of Rakel’s pedagogical plan and one reason why she said the trips were so important to her students in the first place. “That’s the twist,” she said. “When I bring the kids to [East Africa] we’re supposed to be ‘the lucky youth.’ It’s a stupid thing to say, but we’re supposed to be more confident than we are. [My students] are so used to things being good enough. This is what we learn the most from traveling to these countries: maybe they are a poor country on paper, but they have so many resources that rich countries don’t have. The values that people have there, the confidence, that’s who they are. And I can’t just talk to the students about this. They have to experience it. You have to have faith in yourself to do something good.” Mai Kristine, who had the benefit of experiencing the sort of “confidence” BMF community members exhibited when she met them in person the previous year, said that she was also inspired to be more like them. In her numerous virtual conversations with several of them she said, “They’re always like, *how are you? What’s new in your life?* That gives me so much energy, it inspires me. Why aren’t [Norwegians] like this? That type of interaction is so easy; why don’t we do that?”

Barasa, too, saw the trips as an opportunity for Norwegian students to be inspired by what they experienced in Mathare, but hoped that this inspiration would extend beyond their own personal development and would contribute to the forms of development he was leading more broadly at BMF. “In Mathare, half a million people are living in inhumane conditions,” Barasa told me. “This provokes students who will be in 10 to 15 years in their respective fields and will be pushing for more equality… this can inspire conversations about making the world a better place and using their resources and positions of power then.” This sense of motivation was one that Rakel also hoped would stay with students beyond the trip and into their adult lives. She said that she viewed the trips as an opportunity to “plant seeds” in students who could return to Mathare in the future as nurses, doctors or teachers doing long-term work. Several students said that they were also inspired to sponsor children in East Africa, or travel to meet Barasa later in life. For students planning to travel, the effect of their flights on the climate was a secondary concern; “I’ve thought about carbon emissions a bit but not that much yet,” said Damaris. “I really want to travel. It’s selfish. There are so many flights going so many days, it’s not like my one trip will make that much of a difference. It *is* a selfish reason." Silje said, "maybe we could all not think about the emissions but do some voluntary work in organizations that help clean up the slums or get them stuff they need. This is going to stay with me for the rest of my life—I just want to continue with it—but I just don't quite know how either. Most people here are very kind and want to do good in the world." Barasa, too, described the climate crisis as a concern that was not the primary issue he and his community were focused on. "I think we always say you look at the list of your priorities and the list of your worries," he said. "I think climate change is one of the big things and that affects global warming… [but] we're still struggling with the basics." Securing these resources for his community members, like getting school fees covered for his students, was one outcome Barasa hoped would come from *A og B*'s visit and worth both the environmental impacts of the trip and the labor required to host the students. Ultimately, the class donated the entirety of the money they'd earned from working in Rakel's family greenhouse, NOK 15,000 (roughly USD 1,500), and had decided that Barasa should allocate where the funding would go, an exchange both the students and Barasa expressed feeling satisfied with despite not having been able to meet each other in person.

The goal of the relationships established between BMF and *A og B* students was to motivate and inspire each other in ways that each community felt the other needed; even in an asymmetrical relationship, there was much to learn from the other, pieces of encouragement and cultural knowledge that could be exchanged, funds to be raised and transferred. I am not suggesting that this was an equitable exchange, and Rakel and her students also understood that to be the case; in many ways, their discomfort over the inequality that existed between them and their Kenyan contacts was one that Rakel believed they needed to experience in the first place. What I am arguing, however, is that the trip was meant to disrupt the totalizing narratives of African social life that exist in Norway—that Africa is culturally homogenous or constitutes a single country, like Barasa said, or the idea that Africans are "only" poor, as Rakel mentioned—while establishing as much equal footing in interpersonal relationships between their students as possible given the differences that existed between them. Barasa, too, had access to more resources than most of his fellow BMF community members, and had traveled internationally extensively, visiting family in the United States and contacts with organizations in Europe. The differences between the two groups were magnified in stark contrasts through the live stream in the slum in ways that diluted the truth of life in Mathare, and circumvented the range of experiences, status, and daily life that Kenyans have there. Even so, Rakel and her students knew that they would never be able to create a shared *fellesskap* (community) based on equality between themselves and the BMF community, as they perceived their differences as being too great to bridge. No matter how many trips planned, bracelets made, donations sent, or dances learned, the two groups would, as Rakel said, "always be unequal." Like Rakel and her students, Barasa said that he sometimes experienced discomfort with the inequality he saw between the two groups, which was exacerbated by his role as liaison between them. "It's not a comfortable position," he said, "but many of our people in the community have benefited from the support abroad." While Barasa had accessed a higher socio-economic status than most of his peers in Mathare due to his extensive networks in the United States and Europe, his home was still very much in the slum community. And while Rakel and her students had expressed how the trips to Mathare would result in an understanding that could only be achieved by being there in the body, Barasa knew otherwise. "At the back of our minds," he said, "we know this is something you will never understand."

CONCLUSION.

In this chapter I have demonstrated the discomfort Grøndal's students had with Norwegian wealth and how it created an acute sense of difference that could not be bridged in order to achieve a sense of equality with their Kenyan contacts. This meant that Grøndal's value of equality beyond sameness could not be achieved when the sorts of unwanted difference they witnessed between themselves and BMF's community members produced a "disvalue" (Robbins & Sommerschuh 2023: 488) that threatened the paramount value of equality from being realized (Dumont 1980). While the goal of *A og B* was to overcome challenges together, global poverty was an issue too great to interact with in a way they felt was meaningful, as it presented a sense of unending discomfort without resolution. The trips to East Africa were one way that students would be able to experience an embodied relationship with locals in an effort to subvert differences by understanding what poverty could feel like in their bodies. This is why the virtual experience of the live stream was insufficient, unsatisfactory; the *sahandlinger* (interactions) they had, a school value, was incomplete and reinforced the asymmetry that existed between Grøndal's students and their East African contacts. While Rakel never referenced Grundtvig's "living word" methodology, it was clear to me that the educational world in which the folk high school's pedagogical focus on discussion and dialogue influenced her insistence that interactions like these needed to be had in person. After all, the body was a critical point in which Grøndal's students related to each other in their everyday activities, and not being able to be in East Africa inhibited them from developing the same sorts of embodied relationships they were used to experiencing together on campus. Sitting at desks positioned closely together in the classroom or tying another student's bracelet were small interactions that established a shared sense of habitual togetherness, one that was engaged with through repeated activities meant to create a social whole made of individual, but equal, students. For Rakel, watching the live stream on screen was akin to students watching Netflix, a disjointed, spectator-like activity, one that disrupted "real" relationships from happening and reinforced the differences between them and BMF in ways that she felt were impossible to fully bridge. "Feeling" East Africa "in their bodies" was key to *A og B*'s understanding of how inequality was experienced by their Kenyan contacts, a way to establish relationships that would contribute to a sense of equality even for a short while between them. It remains unclear how "real" these relationships could be, considering how short the trip to Mathare usually was, but Rakel, and her students, seemed to believe that "being there" would be transformational and a pathway toward future relating.

Even so, the types of relating that existed and might exist in the future were dictated by the terms of Grøndal's Norwegian staff in ways that reinforced the inequities between themselves and their Kenyan contacts. The camera was not turned to face the *A og B* classroom during the live stream, Rakel did not readily support enrolling Kenyan students at the folk high school, and BMF would never be able to organize a study trip to Grøndal in the same way. It was clear to me that instilling *A og B* students with a sense of gratitude for what they had in Norway was not meant to radically disrupt these global inequities, but instead reinforced the view that these systems were impenetrable, unyielding. Students said they were "lucky," after all, to be born in Norway, a position that they had received by no merit of their own doing. The state-sponsored programs like *A og B*, however, and the dozens of others the folk high school system offers students that feature content like "solidarity" or "development" in their course titles, were meant to give students the sense that they *could* engage meaningfully with inequality outside of Norway's borders, that enrolling in such a course might prepare them for careers in development in the future. Rakel was more pragmatic about her course than some of the other similar programs different folk high schools advertised; "I don't like the 'change the world' savior complex," she said, one afternoon, while updating her page on the school's website. "That's not what we're trying to do." For Rakel, her job was to provide students with tools for being individuals who cared about both each other and her contacts outside of Norway, even within the flawed structures of international development. "When it comes to aid, I really want to be clear," she said. "We will never find the total solution. The day I say, *this is right, this is wrong*, is the day I've really failed. Lots of aid organizations do that."

Despite the ethical questions that Rakel dealt with when it came to international development and her class's trips to East Africa and the discomfort that came to the fore in these discussions, Rakel still believed that engaging with both was necessary for her students' personal development (*utvikling*) both as individuals and Norwegians more broadly. "If you just have these kids staying in Norway," she said, "how will they care about the rest of the world? How will they be *på* (on)? We cannot be proud of how the society is now in Norway." By experiencing how wealth disparities and social inequities felt through embodied activities in East Africa, *A og B* students could access a form of discomfort that Rakel felt was critical for her students' development, a phenomenon that could not be replicated in the comfortable surroundings of their campus through a virtual experience. While the experience had been a thought-provoking exercise for her students and resulted in students expressing a desire to contribute to BMF's work in any way they could, the virtual experience and bracelet-making activity were, quite simply, not powerful enough to generate the kind of good discomfort Rakel believed her students needed for social transformation, both between themselves and with her contacts in East Africa. And despite the problems associated with the inequality that air travel brought to the fore, Rakel, Barasa, and the *A og B* students agreed it was essential for developing the sorts of relationships they each hoped to establish together, ones that would lead to lasting interactions for many years to come.

CHAPTER 9/

CONCLUSION.

Just before I leave the field, rumors start circulating on Grøndal's campus: *Action og Bistand* will be going to East Africa this spring. Rakel has remained tight-lipped about it all, but I recognize the gleam in her eye, similar to the look she had when she told me that she was going to drive her students, blind-folded, halfway across the country to surprise them with a sky-diving trip, a glimmer she will repeat when she surprises me in similar fashion with a going-away party in a few days' time. When the news finally comes out one afternoon in the *A og B* classroom, the students erupt in cheers and laughter, overwhelmed by the prospect of making their dream of being in East Africa a reality after many long months of not knowing whether the trip will go forward as planned.

Afterwards I sit and talk with Hilde, who, as a former *A og B* student and now the class's sole *stipp*, has waited for this trip for nearly a year and a half. Brushing tears from her eyes she tells me how excited she is, how she didn't think the trip would come to pass, how she's never wished for anything so hard before in her life. True to form, I ruin the mood by asking her if the carbon emissions associated with the trip bother her, a question I've asked her and her peers before and one I'm sure she's grown increasingly tired of considering. With a slight flush, she looks me straight in the eyes: "Experience wins," she says. "I know it's kind of selfish, but I really want to go there and I'll be honest, I haven't cared as much if this trip is good for the environment. I feel like I have more thoughts about how I can help them and it's more meaningful than just a tourist trip. It's hard, the climate question. I can't handle it. I feel like I care and I do consider the question, but I just really wanted to go on this trip and that's why I'm going."

I nod, remembering with great detail the sleepless nights I had before my own flight to Norway the year prior, the tears I shed wondering if I'd ever make it to the field in the midst of Covid-19 travel restrictions, the despair I felt over not knowing if I'd ever have the chance to kiss the leathery skin of my Norwegian grandparents' cheeks again. I, too, had considered virtual methods for my work in communicating across cultures, but felt that it would be impossible to study the folk high school without my body being there, that I'd rather scrap the project and come up with something altogether different instead. I recall those long months of waiting during lockdown, the energy in my body with nowhere to go, how much I prayed, how much I hoped, waiting for Norway's borders to open and immigration to start processing my researcher's permit, the endless paperwork and the money spent and the uncertainty and the fear. I didn't know if it would happen, who I would meet, where I would land, and all the ethical questions I would ask Grøndal's students about flying during the pandemic and climate crisis were just as palpable to me but, still, I knew I would do everything in my power to get to Norway, to be with my family and see this project through. The experience for me, like it had done for Hilde, would trump every other ethical consideration.

Hilde is still speaking and I am still recording. "The fact that Barasa really wants us to come," she says, "that makes it different. I really trust Rakel, and she says this is worth it. I believe it. After my sister came home from Africa, her passion was so different. I think you really need to go on those trips to understand we need to do something. We can be in our little bubble in Norway, but there are too many examples of suffering, I need to get a focus, something a bit smaller. I need to go there. I *have* to be there, to experience it. Then I'll know how to be able to make a difference."

Like Hilde, the folk high school consistently communicated the message that "experience wins" when it comes to galvanizing students towards making and embracing good difference in order for equality to flourish. In a society like Norway, where sameness is prioritized in social relationships (Gullestad 1984), Grøndal's educators believed that this project was an important one for Norwegian young people to undertake, and in so doing compassion, respect, and understanding could be generated both in their relationships on campus and in their civic engagement and involvement in Norwegian social life after graduation. Accepting good difference, however, was a social project contingent on establishing overarching emblems of sameness—being equally valued by God, eating the same food, sleeping in similar accommodations, and having the same access to trips and activities—which meant that students' cultural and socio-economic sameness that had been in place prior to their enrollment at Grøndal was reinforced through the school's further aims meant to treat everyone the same (Dumont 1980, 1986). Even within this epistemological and material sameness, students still introduced social hierarchies through rumors, social rankings, and gossip. The equality measures within the folk high school pedagogy, though, through *stipps* and teacher involvement, disrupted the bad difference that was produced by students and introduced productive ways to manage conflict that students were not generally used to in their social spheres prior to joining Grøndal's community.

Differences between Norway's young people and previous generations were also revealed in the study trip to Alta, where students engaged with various forms of embodied movement meant to bring them together and to replicate a sort of rugged Norwegian archetype that is no longer common in Norway. These expressions of idealized Norwegianness, tied to a historical past, also highlighted ongoing tensions in the present between Norwegians and the Sámi that were exemplified in the problems associated with Norway's tourism industry and its public-school curriculum. Through inspiration and good discomfort, students were asked to bridge differences between themselves and the Sámi, and later, through relationships they hoped to develop with contacts in Tanzania and Kenya. When these relationships were limited by temporal and spatial constraints, as well as impacted by bad differences that existed between them in wealth and social status, the equality project collapsed, and students were left with a series of choices in how to act that were ultimately unsatisfactory as they would not be able to produce the sort of equality they had come to appreciate at the folk high school campus in the same way.

I have also argued that centralizing values within the body was an important part of Grøndal's pedagogical model for establishing equality beyond sameness for its students. Building on Dumont's (1980, 1986) theory of value that proposes paramount values encompass lower ones in value hierarchies, I have suggested that value negotiations happen not only in social and material forces but also can be located in embodied affectivity. By utilizing a framework I call "embodied value-making," I have demonstrated how Grøndal's prescribed values—experience, community, interactions, and development—each supported the overarching value of equality in various ways. These values, as I have shown, were also contingent on prioritizing good difference in order to be realized, as interacting and experiencing differing qualities in the student body would require self-development, forms of fruitful discomfort, and a commitment to making community happen despite them. When students encountered unwanted difference that emerged in their bodies through eating or consumer habits, or in their work with communities that had experienced marginalization and poverty, difference was no longer a tool for generating equality but rather, a construct that threated the project of equality they sought to develop on campus and elsewhere. In an effort to adjudicate meaningful difference within the frame of embodied value-making, though, students described how feeling inequality in their bodies during international trips and using their bodies for good through service projects could the sense of hopelessness they felt was palpable within the social and political injustice they encountered in global relationships. The goal was not to impose specific versions of Norwegian egalitarianism onto marginalized people—I very rarely heard students or staff make any moral claims about cultural differences they found inside or outside of Norway—but rather, Grøndal's central aim was to generate a sense of understanding for its students about how the world "really is" and to empower them to contribute to curated short-term development projects meant to balance the scales, even marginally.

Grøndal's equality project was mediated through national mandates that informed institutional and individual practice. This was demonstrated through the folk high school laws I have examined, the historical context of the folk high school movement I have described, and the present-day challenges teachers experienced with upholding traditional ideals while attracting and retaining student numbers. The folk high school network in and of itself represents how far Norway has come in achieving prosperity and equality for its citizens; I was often reminded that the schools' founder, N.F.S. Grundtvig, had developed them for Scandinavian peasants who couldn't afford education otherwise, an ironic historical foundation for the contemporary students who attend them and are among the most privileged young people in the world. In this way, extending equality from people who had been born into specific forms of it in Norway to those who hadn't outside of Norway's borders seemed like a logical next step in Grundtvigian philosophy, a worthy aim for seeing his vision through. Most students, as I have shown, were eager to contribute to these projects on campus and some even described wanting to "give up" some of their wealth, power, and privilege in order for global equality to happen. Even so, students and staff did not often invoke a world in which Norway's wealth would be compromised in such a way that the global majority's socioeconomic statuses be made equal. Instead, most students described Norway's welfare state as impenetrable, eternal, a beacon of safety and comfort for their people that would extend for generations to come. When confronted with the ways in which Norway's oil extraction and entanglements with global markets supported their equality and fomented inequality outside of Norway, most students and staff also viewed them as also impenetrable, eternal: "We're the ones with the money," said Rakel, describing her relationship with her Kenyan friends. "We will always be unequal." In this way, the boundaries to the sorts of discomfort Norwegians were willing to engage with in order to achieve equality on a global scale were clear.

Still, the limits to what Grøndal's students and teachers could do within global systems of inequality was a central tension in their work together and revealed how their individual actions were subject to hegemonic constraints. The ways in which national and institutional power informs individual perceptions of agency and equality is something I thought about a lot during my fieldwork and subsequently while writing this thesis when I returned home to Edinburgh. I found myself comparing and contrasting the folk high school with my own student experience in higher education and reflected on the similarities and differences my doctoral colleagues and I had with Grøndal's staff. My doctoral cohort, with students from Thailand, Chile, Great Britain, India, Austria, Pakistan and the Nordics, are brilliant researchers, all in the same program working towards a similar aim, which is to further peoples' experiences and mobilize action through the important work of bearing witness to the ways in which different people live and breathe and operate. We have each been selected by the invisible hands of the admissions committee; some of us have been granted studentships from the University but most of us are funded by our sending universities or through student loans. All of us have upended our lives to be a part of this collective work, supported by the promise that education leads to a better life, while most of us are uncertain of what the future holds for us in academia. My colleagues from the Global South have faced different worries, with more damning visa restrictions here and with unrest and volatile political systems in their communities back home. Through our shared commitment to knowledge production and anthropological work we have understood that we are similar, but the challenges we face are not the same. In this way, liberal academe promises a vision of educational equality, but one that is limited in scope, within parameters that are designed to be temporal, to imbue us with a sense of equality that is uneven, that is mediated by national statuses, that can produce further economic inequity for people who were led to believe that higher education is a path towards financial safety and social mobility. Jobson (2020) has suggested that anthropology should burn, that you cannot dismantle the structures that were built through colonialism and extractivism through the very tools that were used to build them in the first place. Most of my colleagues and I agree. Still, we believe that education is a human right, an avenue for illumination, for compassion, for understanding. This, if anything else, is the central claim of this thesis: that learning the truth about the world and our place in it is critical for committing to developing forms of equality within it, even insofar as we, too, are bound by structural factors outside our control.

The folk high school's pedagogy, then, where the body becomes a site for experiencing and generating equality, is a compelling one, a robust strategy for mobilizing students towards deeper engagement with social issues, an effective tool for encouraging students to use their power to contribute towards more equitable social and political worlds. This aim is not without its problems, as I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, and the ways in which embodied learning strategies can foment further inequities even within avenues meant to alleviate them is critical to consider. The "tools of the master's house" (Lorde 2018) are ever present in higher education, and the systems meant to teach students about social justice and critical engagement the same ones that produce further inequity between the students who are able to access this sort of education and those who are not. Like Norway's oil industry, the avenue through which Norway has achieved socioeconomic equality within its borders has also reproduced inequality outside of them, and academia is fueled by similar sticky entanglements. How, then, are educators meant to operate within a world that promises so much and produces so little? Like the folk high school teachers, I myself am beholden to specific aims within institutionalized forces that are subject to national, social, and political commitments. Like the folk high school, academia is predicated on who is allowed in as much as who is kept out and there is no singular student experience powerful enough to alleviate the discomfort of this uncomfortable truth. The curriculums of higher education, too, risk distracting or dissuading students from action, by overwhelming them with the truth about climate change, worsening global poverty, genocide, war, famine, while offering no methodological pathways for engaging with these realities even on a micro-level. The folk high school interacted with this problem in such a way that prioritized action over perfection, and while their strategies were at times problematic, the ends, perhaps, justified the means; after all, twenty-two Tanzanian students had their school fees paid that year, a Sámi guide now has a bracelet he might sometimes wear and think of the student who gave it to him, Barasa and his community center have been "seen," his students have been "met." None of these small moments of attempting to bridge difference in the service of equality would have happened without Rakel, and Lisa, and Marta, and Jens. None of it would have been possible without a nation-state like Norway that supports an educational system that prioritizes localizing equality through the body like the folk high school network does. For this, I am grateful. Through this, I am compelled to act.

EPILOGUE: LEAVING.

The last day of fieldwork I start to pack my apartment. Snow is falling peacefully outside my window against a backdrop of blackness, the campus unusually quiet. Most students are in their dorms in constellations similar to mine, packing for Christmas break while I am packing to leave. Karl calls me at 4 pm; "are you still taking a *julebad* (Christmas swim) with me?" He asks. "We have a pact!" We do indeed, one we made way back in August before the school year started, an activity that Karl promised would make me a “real Norwegian” by having a swim in the fjord sometime during the winter before I leave. We’re out of time so I begrudgingly slip on my bathing suit, then sweatpants and a synthetic down jacket. Buddy drives us down to the docks, so we won’t have to walk home soaking, the three of us shivering with anticipation and the weather.

We emerge from the vehicle and are met by mostly darkness, the surrounding streetlights ricocheting off the snow that lies around us, thick, white, cloaking everything in sight. In the summertime there are boats in each space on the docks but now there is nothing but the bare bones of the ramps and slips that crisscross the water and are now powdered in snow. We decide we’ll run in from the beach, the snow giving way to wet sand, which will give way further to seaweed crusted with frost, which will yield to the icy waters of the fjord in front of us. We peel off our layers, jumping up and down and yelling a bit in preparation for the freezing waters that quietly await us. “Don’t think, just do!” Karl says, and there’s no turning back now: with a yelp, we run towards the water, its knives splashing up our calves and pricking our skin as we shriek in unison. We jump in enough to be just covered, then turn around towards the shore as quickly as we can, soaking and pink. We laugh, fumbling in the car for our clothing, shivering in the unmoving, frozen air.

I return home. I take a hot shower. I go through my apartment, heavy with hidden plastics, bags in closets, bottles in cabinets, the undercurrent of trash that has supported so many of my experiences here this year. I find my BMF bracelet, a stack of wool underwear I still need to return to Rakel. My knee clicks, a constant reminder of my errant ski incident that will exist with me for some time. I find stacks of students’ responses to my lessons, their pieces of artwork with reindeer and Sámi words scribbled on them, several programs from *Thomasmesse*, the T-shirt the *Backpacker* class gave me at the end of the school year last year that says *alt håp er ute* (a play on words between “all hope is gone” and “all hope is outside”). As I survey my material mementos, all of the things that made me feel different, all of the ways I was made to be the same, I feel the sharp pain in my chest over leaving and realize that as much as I have become a part of Grøndal's student body, so, too, have they become a part of mine.

I don't know it yet, but after I leave Grøndal most of the people I have written about here will follow suit. The students, of course, will graduate in the spring, ready to embark on their adult lives, brimming with possibility. Several of the teachers will also move on; there is no mass exodus or anything of the sort, but due to various life circumstances, some of them will decide to follow pursuits elsewhere, just as I am doing the same. Marta, Håvard and their children will move to Western Norway so that Marta can be closer to her family, and Rakel will follow them home a year later, ready to take on operations at her family's greenhouse. Jens, who was already transitioning out of his role as school priest during my fieldwork, will move full-time into his new job at a local university, bringing his cheer and intellect to a similar segment of Norway's young scholars but in a different capacity. Martin will retire, the time invested into his students' lives transitioning towards those of his children and grandkids. My own grandfather, my beloved *bestefar*, will pass from this life to whatever comes next, but not before he has attended mine and Buddy's wedding at the folk high school campus the following summer, seated next to my grandmother, *bestemor*, who later calls the whole event "a beautiful dream." Jens will lead the liturgy and I will cry through all of it, surrounded by friends and family from the United States, Great Britain, and Norway,[76] all welcomed to campus by the teachers and staff I have had the privilege of describing in the chapters of this thesis.

It strikes me as strange that this particular cast of characters, many of whom have become my dear friends, will now only live on in our shared memories, our hundreds of photos, and in one small part, on the pages of this document. I feel very lucky to have been here to write about this chapter of one school in a single region of Norway, to have known and to have been known in the precise social figuration I have become a part of, and to experience with my body all of the joy, some pain, and deep connection I have encountered over the span of my fieldwork.

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[76] The carbon emissions associated with this event were surely similar, if not the same as those required to transport *A og B* to East Africa.

There is so much that I have missed and so much more I wish I could have included, but as my version of a yearbook of my time with you all, I hope this contributes something to you, and speaks of the depth of our shared experiences together. It's not enough, but it's what I have.

There is a song that you, the staff, sing to students as they arrive and depart Grøndal's campus each year. It is a song that you sang to me and Buddy during our wedding, and a song I leave the lyrics to here now. Its melody I will carry forever, and its simple phrasing will encompass all I have experienced at Grøndal and all I will ever wish for each of you. May we continue working toward its lyrics being made a reality for all people in all places in all ways.

Midt i alt[77]
Æ ønske du har tak over din kropp
et hus som e et hjem førr deg, at magen e fylt opp
at søvnen din e god og stille, heile natta lang
og at den du dele sæng me gjør dæ varm

En levegg når det blåse, et bål når det e kaldt
ei jakke i mot regnet og en god venn midt i alt

og måtte dine pænga strekke te
sånn at du kan si nei tel det som ikkje gir dæ fred
styrke tel å kunne jobbe, tima tel å slappe av
og må barnelatter alltid gjør dæ glad
Æ ønske du blir vænn med den du e
at du kan le og gråte med de du dele hverdag med
må du kjenne du e elska midt i storm og tankekjør
av en evig kjærlighet som aldri dør

---

[77] Lyrics and music by Trinity and Maria Solheim. Trinity Music, 2020. English translation my own.

Æ vill beskytte dæ mot vinden, og æ vil vær ditt hjem
midt i natta vil æ tenne lys, så du kan finne frem
I stormen vil æ bære dæ, gi varmen som du træng
du går ikkje aleina, æ e her, æ e her som din venn

I wish you a roof over your body
A house that is a home for you and that your stomach is full
That your sleep is restful and still the whole night through
And that the one you share a bed that gives you warmth

A wall against the wind, a fire when it's cold
A jacket for the rain and a good friend through it all

May your money cover what you need
So that you can say "no" to that which doesn't give you peace
The strength to work, with some hours to relax
And that children's laughter always makes you glad
I wish that you will be a friend to yourself
And that you can laugh and cry with those you share your days with
May you know that you are loved in the midst of the storm
And know of an eternal love that never dies

I will protect you against the wind and I will be your home
In the middle of the night, I will light a candle so that you can find your way in the storm
I will carry you and give you the warmth that you need
You won't go alone, I am here as your friend

REISELIV
BACKPACK
ACTION
& BISTAND

Fig. 37: Venner for livet (friends for life).

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