Senri Ethnological Studies 104: 133–145 ©2021
*World Whaling: Historical and Contemporary Studies*
Edited by Nobuhiro Kishigami

# Contemporary Whaling in the Faroe Islands: Its History, Challenges, and Outlook

**Russell Fielding**
*Coastal Carolina University, USA*

## 1. Introduction

In the Faroe Islands, pods of small cetaceans are driven ashore, killed on the beach, and processed for food by local community members. This practice, known in Faroese as *grindadráp*, produces food for local consumption. The primary species taken is the long-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala melas*) but occasionally Atlantic white-sided dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*) and, more rarely, bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) are also taken. The Faroe Islands are a self-governing North Atlantic nation under the external sovereignty of the Kingdom of Denmark. Under their Home Rule agreement with the Danish government, the Faroese enjoy a high level of political autonomy over nearly all domestic affairs, including whaling. The grindadráp is legal under Faroese law and is not forbidden by any treaty to which the Faroese government is party (Fielding 2018a).

A grindadráp begins when whales or dolphins are sighted, usually from land or a boat. Sightings are reported to the government authorities, who, in consultation with locally recognized whaling experts, discuss whether a drive is possible, given the state of the sea and weather. If it is determined that a drive will be attempted, a message is relayed through formal and informal networks calling all would-be participants to their places. Boats are dispatched with crews to locate the cetaceans and to gather on the seaward side of the pod in preparation for driving them toward shore. Whalers who will participate in the grindadráp from shore gather on the designated beach to await the arrival of the whales, driven in ahead of the boats.

When the boats, whales, and shore-based whalers converge, a dramatic spectacle takes place. Boat captains will coordinate their efforts with one another and with the swells and waves to cause the whales to strand in water as shallow as possible—or, if their timing is just right, on dry land. As whales begin to strand, shore-based whalers enter the water in two-person teams holding large metal hooks attached to stout ropes. Hooks are inserted into whales' blowholes and the ropes are pulled to drag whales toward, or onto, the beach. When a whale rests on the sand, a shore-based whaler inserts a specially designed lance behind its blowhole to sever its spinal cord. The lance is then rocked back-and-forth to sever the blood vessels supplying the whale's brain. This

specific sequence of events has been designed to cause as quick a death as possible for the whales.

Normally, the entire pod is killed. When whalers finish the task of killing one whale, they move on with their hooks, ropes, and lances to another. The average number of whales killed, per drive, since 1709 is 124. To slaughter this many large mammals is to spill a tremendous amount of blood. Most whaling beaches are located at the base of long fjords, thus confining the blood and prolonging the time until its eventual dilution in seawater. The scene of a grindadráp nearing completion is a cliff-lined beach with dozens or hundreds of glistening black cetacean bodies lying in repose at the waterline, nearly decapitated to expedite the exsanguination begun by the application of the lance. Whalers, also by the dozens or hundreds, hurry about from one whale to another, hooking, dragging, killing, and securing. As the pod is killed the water in the bay turns bright red. Observers unfamiliar with the grindadráp have been horrified, shocked, and brought to tears by the sight of the reddened waters of the whaling bay.

The grindadráp is over when all the whales lie dead on the shore. The whalers are exhausted, excited, cold, wet, and proud. In older times they would stay in the village nearest the whaling bay and hold an impromptu dance in order to socialize, to warm up, and—as the American anthropologist Jonathan Wylie put it—to recreate the strictly ordered Faroese society that had necessarily been abandoned to conduct the grindadráp. Today, with improved transportation networks of roads, tunnels, and ferries linking nearly all Faroese villages, most participants go home after the grindadráp, returning to the whaling beach when the time to process the carcasses into food has arrived.

After the whales are killed, the local police *sýslumaður*—a title often translated as "sheriff" in English accounts of the grindadráp—presides over the tallying and distribution of food. The sýslumaður tasks certain volunteers (who will be compensated with extra shares of meat and blubber) to count, measure, evaluate, and mark the whales or dolphins taken in the grindadráp. With the cetacean inventory in one document and the list of potential meat and blubber recipients in another, the sýslumaður sets forth to devise an equitable arrangement by which the proceeds may be distributed. When the distribution has been decided, those who would receive shares gather at or near the whaling beach to learn which whales they are to take portions from and with whom they will share those whales. It is the responsibility of the recipients to butcher and carry off the meat and blubber. The post-grindadráp scene is one of much activity: small groups of people gather around cetacean carcasses to strip off large sheets of meat and blubber, which they carry home in buckets, wheelbarrows, or trucks.

Both the meat and the blubber are dried: blubber in salt and meat in the salty North Atlantic wind. These two food products are usually eaten together, along with potatoes, in a dish called, simply, *grind og spik* (pilot whale meat and blubber). Many consider it to be the national dish of the Faroe Islands.

## 2. History

The earliest recorded grindadráp took place in 1587, when, according to the Norwegian

cleric Peder Claussøn Friis, "300 small whales were harpooned and slaughtered and driven ashore" (Sanderson 1992: 52). From that year until the early eighteenth century, whaling records exist but are inconsistent. From 1709 to the present, however, the Faroese have kept consistent and uninterrupted whaling records, which represent what one researcher called, "surely… one of the longest runs of whaling statistics available anywhere in the world" (Mitchell 1975: 77). The expansive dataset, detailing the date, location, species, and number of cetaceans taken in each individual grindadráp for the past 300+ years, is a treasure trove of potential research for quantitative environmental scientists.

It is not known when the grindadráp began. Scholars agree that the deliberate exploitation of whales is a very old part of the Faroese economy, likely dating back to the original Norse settlement of the islands (Joensen 1976; Sanderson 1992). The degree to which the earliest Faroese exploitation of whales was active and deliberate—as opposed to the use of naturally-stranded cetaceans—is less well understood. The Seyðabrævið, or "Sheep Letter," written in 1298, refers to "driving ashore" as one method by which "a whale" (singular in the original) may be obtained. The other two methods are by finding a whale dead at sea or stranded on the coast. The Seyðabrævið, then, is clear evidence of active Faroese whaling at the close of the thirteenth century but cannot be unequivocally viewed as referring to the grindadráp since a key component of the latter practice is the driving ashore, *en masse*, of a plurality of cetaceans. As such, the earliest date to which we can ascribe the beginning of the grindadráp is 1587, with three important caveats. First, most scholars agree that a tenth century introduction of whaling to the Faroe Islands is at least possible, if not likely; second, historical antecedents to the grindadráp date back to at least the late thirteenth century; and third, the source for the 1587 date, after stating that "300 small whales were harpooned and slaughtered and driven ashore," goes on to say that, "and such has occurred in ancient times," indicating that, at the time of writing—1632—the practice was already considered "ancient" (Sanderson 1992: 52). A likely scenario is the one presented by the Faroese ethnographer Jóan Pauli Joensen, in which the grindadráp, during a period of fifteenth century economic decline driven by late medieval climate change,

> could have assumed great importance in these times of crisis. It is conceivable that at about this time one began to create an organization around the hunting of pilot whales so that one could fully utilize an economic resource surely known of earlier but not to any real extent utilized (1976: 6).

It is reasonable to imagine the struggling Faroese of the fifteenth century searching their history for methods of survival that had proven successful to their forebears and that might yet again provide sustenance during times of scarcity. The beginning of formal whaling records in 1587, then, would evince a situation in which a subsistence activity had become institutionalized during a period of austerity with a new economic value worthy of being recorded. The economic value of the grindadráp remains to the present day, not as a direct part of a cash economy—the selling of whale-based food products in

the Faroe Islands is strongly discouraged—but as a form of subsistence food production in an otherwise developed economy. The food produced through the grindadráp, along with other Faroese forms of subsistence—fishing, fowling, gardening, and sheep-rearing—supplement household incomes and contribute in a meaningful, yet often unquantified, way to Faroese household incomes. The economic value of this free food source should be considered equal to that of the food that would otherwise be purchased. The persistence of subsistence methods of food production within developed economies strikes some as anachronistic. Kate Sanderson, an Australian-Faroese literary scholar, examines the "ambiguity" of "a subsistence hunt for food in what is now, in most other respects, a modern technological society" (1994: 195).

On average, seven grindadráp occur in the Faroe Islands each year. The long-term average take is 868 cetaceans per year, but the total number of cetaceans taken annually has fluctuated significantly throughout the grindadráp's long history. Trends are better shown when the data are visualized by decade, as in Figure 1 (below). An entire decade, the 1760s, passed without a single whale taken. The 1980s saw the largest decadal catch in history—more than 21,000 cetaceans. The 300-year dataset reveals a long cycle of rising and falling take numbers, with a peak occurring about once every 120 years.

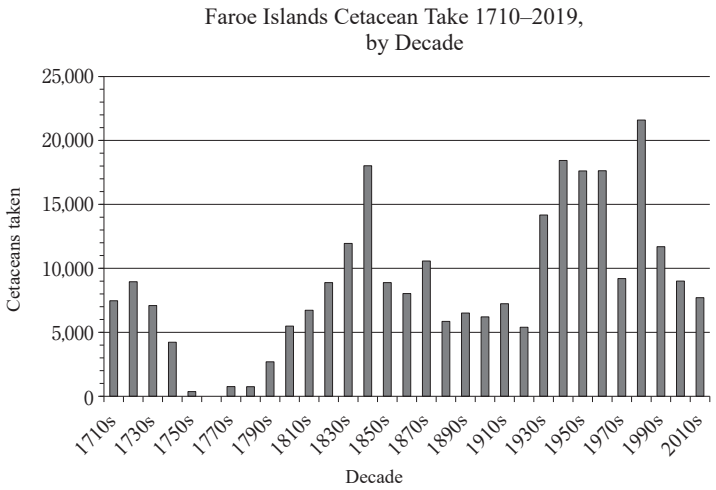


**Figure 1** Number of cetaceans taken in the Faroe Islands by decade. (Source: National Whaling Statistics, Føroya Náttúrugripasavn)

Factors driving this fluctuation are not well understood. One scholar cites "North-Atlantic climatic variations" as the reason for the "cyclic variation" in Faroese take records (Culik 2004: 76). To date, however, specific evidence of the mechanism by which "climatic variations" would have affected pilot whale populations or whaling outcomes remains to be shown. The human population of the Faroe Islands has grown steadily during the time frame represented in the chart above. Demand for the food products that

result from the grindadráp has remained relatively constant until recently, in response to new information on environmental contaminants. Whaling effort has not changed appreciably since a fundamental attribute of the grindadráp is that it is a spontaneous event. That is to say, no one goes out seeking the whales; rather, a grindadráp is only initiated after the whales have been sighted by someone not actively engaged in whaling (Sanderson 1994).

## 3. Challenges

The American anthropologist, Jonathan Wylie, stated that the grindadráp supports an immense literature (1993: 353). Much of this literature, according to Sanderson, is part of "the broad genre of travel writing" (1992: 15). Beginning in earnest during the nineteenth century, travelers to the Faroe Islands from Europe and North America have included their impressions of the grindadráp within broader discussions of Faroese landscapes and livelihoods. Sanderson addresses many representative pieces of this body of literature in her 1992 thesis on the textual history of Faroese whaling. For much of the history of the grindadráp, the practice was noncontroversial among both the Faroese public and foreign observers. As recently as 1982, the American Cetacean Society—self-described as "the first whale, dolphin, and porpoise conservation group in the world" (ACS 2018)—published an article about the grindadráp by oceanographer Michael Moore, which concluded by cautioning the reader that it "would be an error to prejudge the pilot whaling issue" on either its moral justification or its sustainability (1982: 7). Moore's hint that one might be inclined to pass such judgement was indeed prescient. Two years later, in 1984, a Danish television documentary introduced many among the European public to the grindadráp for the first time. A year after that, in 1985, international attention to the grindadráp increased on both sides of the Atlantic with the Humane Society of the United States publishing a brief article calling "for the curtailment of the Faroe hunt" (Plowden 1985: 13) and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society sending a boat to the Faroe Islands to observe and, through both anti-whaling discourse and physical interference, to discourage the grindadráp.

Following these exposés, and the public outcry they engendered, environmental organizations began to focus more attention on the grindadráp. The 1980s saw the origins of several directed international campaigns against the grindadráp, mostly on the grounds of animal welfare. During the 1990s these campaigns increased their call for boycotts against Faroese products, almost exclusively meaning seafood, which constitutes more than 90% of Faroese exports (Hagstova Føroya 2019). Threats of seafood boycotts waned during the late 1990s and early 2000s but as recently as 2008, Faroese authorities viewed the potential boycotts as one of the greatest threats to the continuation of the grindadráp (Fielding 2010). During that year, however, a different threat rose to prominence.

The existence of environmental contaminants in the edible tissues of pilot whales has been known—and studied—in the Faroe Islands since 1977 (Weihe and Joensen 2012). Since the mid-1980s, Faroese health authorities have monitored concentrations of mercury and other environmental contaminants in blood and hair samples taken from the

human population. Throughout the last decades of the twentieth century and first decade of the twenty-first, findings from ecotoxicological research were held in tension with the Faroese affinity for—and reliance upon—the food products derived from the grindadráp. Health authorities issued the first dietary guidelines for the consumption of cetacean-based food products in 1977.[1)] At that time, the advice was to consume pilot whale meat and blubber no more than once per week and to avoid consumption of organs altogether. Over the next three decades, as the results of contaminant analysis studies revealed increasing concentrations, dietary guidelines were revised to recommend progressively less frequent consumption of cetacean-based food products. Compliance with these recommendations was never universal, but the general trend among the Faroese public was to heed the advice of their health experts.

The situation changed in 2008. In that year, based upon evidence that concentrations of some of the most troubling environmental contaminants such as methylmercury and persistent organic pollutants had increased beyond safe levels, Faroese health authorities officially made the recommendation "that pilot whale is no longer used for human consumption" (Weihe and Joensen 2012: 3). This advice was controversial and disruptive, with factions of the Faroese public rallying around the public health experts and others holding to the traditional use of cetaceans as a food source. These societal fractures often appeared along generational and gendered lines. Often the decision whether to eat or not to eat did not find agreement even within individual families.[2)] A 2009 survey found that 19% of respondents reported having reduced their consumption of cetacean-based food products directly in response to the 2008 dietary recommendations (Fielding 2013a).

International pressure to end the grindadráp resurged during the second decade of the twenty-first century, led by the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society's 2012–2015 "Operation Grindstop." This campaign highlighted the direct-action techniques of previous engagements with the Faroese, especially as it was depicted in the 2012 television documentary, *Whale Wars: Viking Shores*, but were nuanced to include anti-whaling arguments based upon animal welfare, sustainability, and—notably—public health (Robé 2015). The inclusion of ecotoxicological findings in the anti-whaling discourse of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society and other environmental organizations had a profound effect on the nascent trend toward a reduction in cetacean-based food product consumption that had only recently begun when "Operation Grindstop" commenced.

As Sea Shepherd integrated the ecotoxicology narrative into their own discourse, some members of the Faroese public began to see compliance with the 2008 dietary recommendation as somehow siding with the anti-whaling activists. The alternative, continuing to consume cetacean-based food products, came to represent an act of resistance, solidarity, and nationalism. A recent study quoted a Faroese commenter as saying that the Sea Shepherd campaigns "have had the expected effect of giving the [grindadráp] massive support from the younger generations" (Fielding 2018a: 251). To oppose whaling, then, was to side with Sea Shepherd and the other anti-whaling organizations. What once had been a mosaic of nuanced opinions regarding the grindadráp coalesced into an "us-versus-them" mentality by which the consumption of

cetacean-based food products became an act of Faroese nationhood, in spite of the very real health risks it presented. Some members of the Faroese public even began to question the health risks of consuming foods high in environmental contaminants and considered whether the public health message was itself, perhaps, anti-whaling. In a 2017 survey of 400 Faroese respondents, more than 88% confirmed eating food produced through the grindadráp (Sosialurin 2017). While it is impossible to compare today's rates of cetacean-based food product consumption and of whaling itself to what those rates would have been if Sea Shepherd and other environmental organizations had never engaged with the Faroese, or had engaged with a different message, the nationalistic response to the anti-whaling actions and discourses at least supports the notion that some individuals today are consuming contaminated whale meat who would not have done so if those environmental action campaigns had never occurred. This, along with the requisite increase in whaling to satisfy the demand, is decidedly not the outcome that these campaigns were designed to cause.[3)]

## 4. Conservation

The vast dataset of whaling records, taken together with the latest information on pilot whale abundance in waters surrounding the Faroe Islands, indicates that, in the strict terms of natural resource economics, the grindadráp is sustainable—meaning that the number of whales taken per year is unlikely to affect numerically the overall population of whales in the region. Specifically, the most recent mathematically corrected population estimate for pilot whales in the Northeastern Atlantic between the Faroe Islands and East Greenland from latitude 52° to 72° N is 344,148 whales (Pike et al. 2019). The average number of whales taken per year since 2000 in the grindadráp is 636 (Fielding 2018a). This works out to 0.002% of the total regional population taken by the Faroese per year, which, speaking strictly in numerical terms, is highly sustainable. While the worldwide population of long-finned pilot whales is unknown—the conservation status of the species is listed as "data-deficient" by the IUCN (2007)—the regional population in the eastern North Atlantic is unlikely to be negatively affected by the grindadráp.

Many observers have wondered, some incredulously, how the Faroese have managed to maintain a sustainable take for so long? This question is perhaps misplaced: a whaling operation that was *unsustainable* would have, by definition, likely ceased at some point in the past 400-plus years. The long duration of the grindadráp can be considered tautological evidence of its own sustainability. The grindadráp is a strictly regulated activity. These regulations, codified in Faroese law since 1832 (Petersen and Mortensen 1998), trace their origin to unwritten, socially enforced elements of Faroese culture. A suite of ongoing cultural practices and mores has been identified by which the sustainability of the grindadráp is maintained (Fielding 2018a).

Environmental social scientists have long recognized the presence of societal "taboos" that, when adhered to, promote the sustainable use of natural resources (e.g., Colding and Folke 2001). The study of these institutions by ecological anthropologists and other scholars has occurred overwhelmingly among traditional indigenous cultures. Because the

Faroese are, by nearly all economic and social measures, a modern European society, their reliance upon traditional resource management methods has generated less scholarly interest than it deserves.

Among these traditional practices that influence the sustainability of the grindadráp are the geographical limitation of whaling activities to a finite set of beaches approved and listed by the Faroese government. This list of approved "whaling bays" (*hvalvágir* in Faroese) is updated occasionally with bays being added, sometimes provisionally, that have been suggested as possible locations for grindadráp, and bays being removed when they are no longer considered to be safe or effective. Contrary to the common Faroese explanation, whaling bays are not significantly different from bays not approved for whaling, in terms of beach or nearshore morphology (Fielding 2013b). Rather, those beaches selected for the grindadráp are typically the ones with the longest history of grindadráp, before the list was originated, and those adjacent to culturally or economically influential towns and villages. The spatial limitation of sites at which grindadráp may occur has likely resulted in fewer grindadráp over the activity's centuries-long history than if all the archipelago's beaches comprised permissible sites for whales to be driven.

Another tradition which has contributed to the sustainability of the grindadráp is the principle that, for a grindadráp to occur, cetaceans must approach land on their own and that no one should go out to sea specifically and intentionally seeking cetaceans to drive ashore. The appearance of pilot whales off the coast of the Faroe Islands has long been viewed as a "gift from God" (Weihe and Joensen 2012: 1) and Faroese history is peppered with examples of this gift arriving just in time to avert disaster during a period of extreme need (Joensen 2009). Pods of cetaceans have been sighted from land, from sea, and from the air—all by people engaged in other activities besides seeking whales. Similar to this tradition, there are no professional whalers in the Faroe Islands. All participants in the grindadráp are amateur and their work is compensated only by the receipt of shares of the food that the activity produces. Those who perform the *coup de grâce*, the actual act of killing the whales, have been required since 2015 to have completed a training course and obtained a license, but all participants in the grindadráp—skippers and crews of the boats during the drive, the hook and rope handlers, and the licensed "killers"—converge on the whaling beach from whatever occupation or vocation in which they had been participating. After the grindadráp is over, the "whalers" cease being whalers. The whales are turned into food and those who had been engaged in whaling return to their everyday lives. This custom of amateur whalers initiating a grindadráp only when whales have been sighted has certainly resulted in fewer whales taken than if the Faroese economy had developed a specialized guild of whalers or whale-finders.

The final tradition we shall discuss here is the noncommercial aspect of the grindadráp. Food products derived from the grindadráp are distributed freely to all those that the authorities deem deserving. Sometimes the list of recipients includes only residents of the village nearest the beach where the whales were driven; at other times it includes only those who participated in the grindadráp. Sometimes, in especially large

takes, meat and blubber will be distributed to the participants, the villagers, and people further afield. When the whales are first sighted, if the authorities determine that the homes of potential recipients are already well-stocked with meat and blubber, the grindadráp will be halted and the whales will swim free. This noncommercial quality, and especially the likelihood that unneeded whales will not be killed, contributes to the grindadráp's sustainability by disincentivizing the kind of profit-motivated excess that characterized the era of commercial whaling and continues in Iceland, Japan, and Norway today (Dorsey 2013).

These "culturally embedded conservation strategies" (Fielding 2018a: 192) have almost certainly resulted in a smaller number of whales taken over the grindadráp's long history than would have been taken if the geographical limitation, proscription on actively seeking whales, and nonspecialist/noncommercial nature of the grindadráp had not been present. Because these conservation strategies are culturally embedded, their adherence is rarely questioned, much less flouted. Since 1832, the Faroese government has maintained a code of written regulations governing the grindadráp. This code, however, directly derives from the older, unwritten, culturally embedded traditional regulations that kept the grindadráp sustainable for much of its long history. In this way, the Faroese with their resource management regime, resemble traditional societies not often associated with the continent of Europe.

## 5. Outlook

How long will the grindadráp continue? This is a question that has repeatedly been answered, incorrectly, with variations of the response given by a representative of Greenpeace Denmark and cited in the *Los Angeles Times*: "I think it's a matter of a couple of generations before they [the Faroese] drop the pilot whale hunt… The younger generations are losing interest" (Olsen 1991). Over the long history of the grindadráp, various challenges have emerged, threatening to put an end to the activity but a lack of interest among the Faroese has never constituted a significant threat to the grindadráp's continuation (Fielding 2010). Occasional, multi-year absences of whales, however, have. During the mid-1700s, twenty years passed without whales being sighted at all in the Faroe Islands, leading one analyst to remark that "it was not possible to maintain the whaling tradition and the skills required to conduct a whale hunt correctly" (Joensen 2009: 70). Localized absences of whales have also occurred throughout the grindadráp's history, leaving some superstitious villagers to wonder whether their beaches might be under the spell of "some jugglery of Satan… there on the sand" (West 1985: 102). In all historical instances, however, even the one attributed to Satan's alleged "jugglery," the whales eventually returned.

Either local or nationwide, for reasons both natural and—allegedly—satanic, the appearance of whales off the Faroe Islands has never been guaranteed. A real concern among conservationists has been the influence that the grindadráp has had on pilot whale numbers in the waters surrounding the Faroe Islands. While the real consequences of taking too many whales have been seen in whaling operations throughout the world, most

of those operations are incongruent to the grindadráp, owing primarily to their commercial nature. The two whaling operations that bear the most similarity to the grindadráp both occurred in the North Atlantic, both targeted long-finned pilot whales, both used similar methods of driving the whales ashore *en masse*, and—as the past tense verbs in this sentence indicate—both have ceased.

The Shetland Islands, a Scottish archipelago lying south of the Faroe Islands, supported a drive-style whaling operation similar to the grindadráp until the early twentieth century (Smith 2003). Across the Atlantic, another drive-style whaling operation, also targeting long-finned pilot whales, existed in Newfoundland until 1972 (Fielding 2009). The Shetland and Newfoundland whale drives may have appeared visually similar to the grindadráp. Their purpose, however, was entirely different. Neither was conducted primarily to produce food for human consumption; both were intended to produce whale oil for export and sale. Likely because of this commercial focus on a non-food commodity, overexploitation was a major problem. While reliable records are absent in the Shetland case, the Newfoundland operation is known to have taken more than 2,000 whales annually, on average, for the twenty-six years of its commercial existence (Dickinson and Sanger 2005). Both of these operations ceased when pilot whales became so scarce as to render the practices commercially obsolete. The grindadráp also differs from the Shetland and Newfoundland whale drives owing to the presence of culturally embedded conservation strategies in the Faroe Islands without comparable traditions present in the other cases. Direct comparisons between the grindadráp and each of these other drive-style whaling operations have emphasized the restrained nature of the former while commenting on the excesses of the latter (e.g., Smith 2003; Fielding 2007).

Despite the effective use of their culturally embedded conservation strategies to maintain the grindadráp as a noncommercial, sustainable use of marine natural resources, and despite the nationalistic resistance to demands from environmental groups such as Sea Shepherd that the Faroese give up whaling, the continuation of the grindadráp remains uncertain. The major threat to its continuation is the presence—and increasing concentration—of mercury and other environmental contaminants (Weihe and Joensen 2012). While the nationalistic Faroese response to the anti-whaling discourse from abroad may have prolonged the grindadráp's eventual demise, its long-term continuation is doubtful (Fielding 2018a). As environmental contaminants continue to increase in concentration, and as compliance with the still-current recommendation to avoid consumption of cetacean-based food products becomes more widespread, demand for the foods that the grindadráp produces will continue to wane. As demand decreases, so must supply; the grindadráp will become unnecessary and eventually unjustifiable.

When the grindadráp ceases, some environmentalists will rejoice. For one whose main purpose is the protection of marine megafauna from tangible anthropogenic threats, this reaction will certainly be justified. For the more holistic and nuanced environmentalist, however, to the environmentalist who believes, like John Muir wrote more than a century ago, that, "when we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe," the demise of the grindadráp will not be an

unambiguous win for nature (1988: 110). To this environmentalist, the fact that an environmental catastrophe—the pervasive contamination of the marine ecosystem with harmful, biomagnifying, industrially-sourced chemicals—will have precipitated the demise of a controversial, but ultimately sustainable, traditional method of food production will surely provoke concern, perhaps despair.

The Faroese pride themselves on their pristine ocean environment (e.g., Faroese Seafood 2018), a quality noted by the editors of *National Geographic Traveler* magazine when they named the Faroe Islands the world's top island destination (Tourtellot 2007). For the grindadráp to cease as a direct result of an increasingly polluted marine environment would be a sad reminder of what humans have done to the sea and how some of our impacts are far worse, and far more widespread, than whaling.

## Notes

1) The 1977 dietary guidelines represent the first official Faroese health advice to *limit* the consumption of cetacean-based food products. Previous to this, the only relevant dietary advice given was to *increase* consumption. For example, school physicians were known to send notes home with pupils, advising their parents to "make sure that blubber was included with the breakfast" (Weihe and Joensen 2012: 1).
2) The 2016 documentary film, *The Islands and the Whales*, expertly depicts the division that can occur within a family over the decision whether to eat cetacean-based food products (Day 2016).
3) See this author's 2018 article in *Salon* for more on the paradoxical outcome of foreign-led anti-whaling campaigns in the Faroe Islands (Fielding 2018b).

## References

ACS (American Cetacean Society)
2018 The American Cetacean Society. https://www.acsonline.org/ (accessed May 26, 2020)

Colding, J. and C. Folke
2001 Social Taboos: "Invisible" Systems of Local Resource Management and Biological Conservation. *Ecological Applications* 11(2): 584–600.

Culik, B.
2004 *Review of Small Cetaceans: Distribution, Behaviour, Migration and Threats*. Bonn: UNEP.

Day, M.
2016 *The Islands and the Whales*. North Berwick, Scotland: Intrepid Cinema. http://intrepidcinema.com/the-islands-and-the-whales (accessed on May 26, 2020)

Dickinson, A. B. and C. W. Sanger
2005 *Twentieth-Century Shore-Station Whaling in Newfoundland and Labrador*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Dorsey, K.
2013 *Whales and Nations: Environmental Diplomacy on the High Seas*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
Faroese Seafood
2018 The Pristine Waters of the North Atlantic. *Faroese Seafood—The Pure Taste of the Faroe Islands.* https://www.faroeseseafood.com/the-faroe-islands/the-pristine-waters-of-the-north-atlantic/ (accessed May 26, 2020)
Fielding, R.
2007 A Comparison of Pilot Whale Drives in Newfoundland and the Faroe Islands. *The Scottish Geographical Journal* 123(3): 160–172.
2009 The Whale Drivers of Newfoundland. *Focus on Geography* 52(3): 1-8.
2010 Environmental Change as a Threat to the Pilot Whale Hunt in the Faroe Islands. *Polar Research* 29: 430–438.
2013a Whaling Futures: A Survey of Faroese and Vincentian Youth on the Topic of Artisanal Whaling. *Society and Natural Resources* 26(7): 810–826.
2013b Coastal Geomorphology and Culture in the Spatiality of Whaling in the Faroe Islands. *Area* 45(1): 88–97.
2018a *The Wake of the Whale: Hunter Societies in the Caribbean and North Atlantic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
2018b Pollution Is Making Whale Meat Toxic—but Imprudent Activism Makes Some Double-Down on Eating Whale. *Salon*. https://www.salon.com/2018/12/02/pollution-is-making-whale-meat-toxic-but-imprudent-activism-makes-some-double-down-on-eating-whale/ (accessed May 26, 2020)
Hagstova Føroya
2019 *Statistics Faroe Islands—Statbank*. http://www.hagstova.fo (accessed May 26, 2020)
IUCN (The International Union for Conservation of Nature)
2007 Globicephala Melas. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/9250/12974694 (accessed May 26, 2020)
Joensen, J. P.
1976 Pilot Whaling in the Faroe Islands. *Ethnologia Scandinavica* 6: 1–42.
2009 *Pilot Whaling in the Faroe Islands: History, Ethnography, Symbol*. Tórshavn: Faroe University Press.
Mitchell, E.
1975 *Porpoise, Dolphin, and Small Whale Fisheries of the World: Status and Problems*. Morges, CH: IUCN.
Moore, M. J.
1982 Grindadrap: the Faroese Pilot Whale Drive. *Whalewatcher: Journal of the American Catacean Society* 16(3): 6–7.
Muir, J.
1988 *My First Summer in the Sierra*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
Olsen, J.
1991 Faroe Islanders Continue Whale Hunts. *Los Angeles Times*, December 1. http://articles.latimes.com/1991-12-01/news/mn-935_1_pilot-whale (accessed May 26, 2020)

Petersen, J. and K. P. Mortensen
1998 *Executive Order on Pilot Whaling*. Translated by J. P. Joensen. Tórshavn: Faroese Representative Council.

Pike, D. G., T. Gunnlaugsson, B. Mikkelsen, S. D. Halldórsson, and G. A. Víkingsson.
2019 Estimates of the Abundance of Cetaceans in the Central North Atlantic Based on the NASS Icelandic and Faroese Shipboard Surveys Conducted in 2015. *NAMMCO Scientific Publications* 11. https://doi.org/10.7557/3.4941 (accessed May 26, 2020)

Plowden, J. C.
1985 Pilot Whale Hunt Attacked. *Humane Society News* (Fall): 13.

Robé, C.
2015 The Convergence of Eco-Activism, Neoliberalism, and Reality TV in Whale Wars. *Journal of Film and Video* 67(3–4): 94–111.

Sanderson, K.
1992 Grindadráp: A Textual History of Whaling Traditions in the Faroes Islands to 1990. M.Phil. Thesis, Department of English, University of Sydney.
1994 *Grind*—Ambiguity and Pressure to Conform: Faroese Whaling and the Anti-Whaling Protest. In M. Freeman and U. P. Kreuter (eds.) *Elephants and Whales: Resources for Whom?,* pp. 187–201. Basel: Gordon and Breach.

Smith, B.
2003 Whale Driving in Shetland and the Faroes. *Shetland Sea Mammal Report*. (annual) 8–16.

Sosialurin
2017 Hvat Halda Foroyingar um at Eta Grind. *Vikuskifti* 91(104): 14–15.

Tourtellot, J. B.
2007 111 Islands. *National Geographic Traveler* 24(8): 108–127.

Weihe, P. and H. D. Joensen.
2012 Dietary Recommendations Regarding Pilot Whale Meat and Blubber in the Faroe Islands. *International Journal of Circumpolar Health* 71: 18594. http://dx.doi.org/10.3402/ijch.v71i0.18594 (accessed May 26, 2020)

West, J. F.
1985 *The History of the Faroe Islands, 1709–1816,* vol. 1, 1709–1723. Copenhagen: Reitzels.

Wylie, J.
1981 Grindadráp. In J. Wylie and D. Margolin (eds.) *Ring of Dancers: Images of Faroese Culture,* pp. 95–132. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
1993 Too Much of a Good Thing: Crises of Glut in the Faroe Islands and Dominica. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35(2): 352–389.