# *MUTUAL AID, ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY, AND THE REGULATION OF FAROESE PILOT WHALING*

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**Abstract**

This paper examines the evolution of unwritten regulations and formal government policies in the control of the Faroese pilot whale drive, or *grindadráp*. This form of whaling has occurred in the Faroe Islands since at least the sixteenth century, probably much longer. Informed by theories of anarchist geography, we discuss specific policies, both formal and informal, regulating when and where whales may be pursued, actions of whalers in boats and onshore, equipment permitted for use, and the distribution of meat and blubber from the hunt that have developed over the centuries in response to internal or external pressures and calls for change. Our discussion gives special attention to a recent change in the regulation of grindadráp, namely the requirement, beginning in 2015, that whalers who participate in the killing process—as distinct from other aspects of whaling—be certified as having attended a training course on the subject. We conclude with a discussion of lessons learned through a reading of anarchist geographies as applied to the topic at hand.

**Keywords:** whaling, Faroe Islands, mutual aid, anarchism, environmental policy

**Ayuda Mutua, Política Ambiental y la Regulación de la Caza de Ballenas en las Islas Feroe**

**Resumen**

Este artículo analiza la evolución de regulaciones no escritas y de políticas gubernamentales formales en el control en la caza de ballenas piloto en las Islas Feroe (una práctica denominada localmente como *grindadráp*). Esta forma de caza de ballenas existe en las Islas al menos desde el siglo XVI, o incluso quizás desde mucho antes. Basándonos en diversas teorías de la geografía anarquista, aquí discutimos algunas políticas—formales e informales—que regulan las acciones de los cazadores (en barcos y en tierra), cuándo y adónde las ballenas pueden ser cazadas, el

uso de equipamiento y la distribución de la carne y la grasa de ballena resultante de la caza. Se trata de políticas que se fueron desarrollando durante siglos como respuesta a presiones internas y externas, y a exigencias de cambio. Nuestra discusión le da especial atención a un reciente cambio en la regulación del *grindadráp*—específicamente, el requesito—que comenzó en 2015 y que establece que quienes participan en el acto de matar a la ballena (y no en las demás actividades) deben hacer un curso de capacitación. Cerramos el artículo con una discusión sobre los resultados, analizándolos desde la perspectiva de geografías anarquistas aplicadas al caso en cuestión.

**Palabras clave**: caza de ballenas; Islas Feroe; ayuda mutua; anarquismo; política ambiental

## Introduction

### *Faroese Whaling*

The Faroe Islands—a semi-autonomous Danish archipelago in the North Atlantic—support an ongoing, legal take of pilot whales and other small cetaceans for the provision of food for local consumption. This practice, called *grindadráp* in Faroese, uses a method known as "drive-style whaling" by which entire pods of whales are pursued by boats, are made to strand on the beach or in shallow water, and are then killed by shore-based whalers. Both the process and the assemblage of participants are *ad hoc*; there are no professional whalers in the Faroe Islands and grindadráp are not planned events. They can occur at any time throughout the year with the summer months being more likely, probably owing to the presence of more people on the water and therefore the increased potential to see whales. Whenever a pod of whales is sighted in the waters surrounding or between the Faroe Islands, the possibility of grindadráp is raised. This traditional practice has occurred in the Faroe Islands, according to records, since at least the late sixteenth century. In all likelihood it is significantly older (Kerins 2010). Since 1709—the year that continuous Faroese whaling records began—about 800 pilot whales and 100 dolphins of various other species have been killed each year, in an annual average of 6.3 separate grindadráp events (Fielding 2013b).

The eighteenth-century Faroese poet Venceslaus U. Hammershaimb (1891, 401 [translated in Sanderson 1992, 102]) remarked, in reference to grindadráp, that "yes, this is a slaughter, which is a dreadful sight for whomever stands on the shore peacefully watching." Part of the reason that grindadráp may inspire "dread" in the heart of a peaceful observer is the appearance of violent chaos: men (and rarely, but occasionally, women) running fully-clothed into the frigid North Atlantic, wielding knives, ropes, and large steel hooks; whales thrashing, flukes slapping the water, which itself is quickly reddening from the blood of whales that have already been killed; instructions shouted in haste from the participants in the boats to those in the water and on the shore; and the apparent decentralization of power, with each participant seeming to move from task to task with little oversight or hierarchical control.

However, what may not be apparent to Hammershaimb's peaceful observer is that grindadráp, for all its apparent confusion and chaos, is in fact a highly regulated event. Combining elements of traditional, community-based oversight and top-down, colonial exhibitions of power, grindadráp is surrounded by controls that are intended to keep the event as traditional, efficient, humane, and sustainable as possible. These are lofty goals, some of which may be in tension with one another, considering that what is being regulated is the simultaneous slaughter of dozens—sometimes hundreds—of large marine mammals in the dynamic environment of a North Atlantic swash zone by an equivalent number of excited, sometimes frightened, amateur whalers. The control of such a chaos-prone event requires either the strict enforcement of domination by a set of leaders or a near-religious adherence to tradition by the participants. In fact the regulation of grindadráp combines elements of both. Like a magnet levitating over a superconductor but kept in check by gravity, grindadráp is held up, supported by community devotion to the relevant cultural mores and traditions, but also subject to the regulatory limitations imposed by government and government-sanctioned authority. These opposing forces hold grindadráp in tension but also serve to secure its continuation in a world of globalizing trends toward the abolition of

such “antiquated” methods of subsistence. Here we contend that the theories associated with anarchism, and specifically anarchist geography, can help lend structure to the analysis of grindadráp.

***Anarchist Theory and Mutual Aid***

Anarchy is a form of governance characterized by a lack of hierarchical organization, and self-organizing and governing communities, where the means of subsistence is shared equally by all citizens who are joined together by “mutual need and common interests” (Berkman 2006). Through mutual support and cooperation, individuals work to meet the basic needs of the society, even those not able to sustain themselves—groups such as the elderly (Malatesta 2015). In an anarchist society, private property is abolished and the resources necessary for the survival of the community are governed communally (Goldman 2014). While the Faroe Islands are by no means governed by anarchy across the board, the Faroese governance of whaling exhibits many characteristics of an anarchist society. Further, this case provides an example of Kropotkin’s (2006) holistic “Mutual Aid” applied to resource management. This occurs both at the community scale, where members come together, and also across the archipelago, as communities aid each other.

*Mutual Aid* was the culmination of years of experience and observation, Kropotkin’s enduring interest in both science and anarchism, his exposure to, and interpretation of, Darwin’s ideas about evolution and natural selection, and his reaction to interpretations of Darwin espoused by others.

During his youth, Kropotkin was exposed to both the ideas of anarchism and Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, and was an ardent believer in the theory of natural selection. Upon his entry into the Russian Army, he requested assignment to Siberia where he could look for evidence to support Darwin’s ideas of evolution through competition between individuals. Instead he found cooperation. During his 50,000-mile sojourn, Kropotkin found the majority of species, especially in areas with harsh environments such as Siberia, were most successful when individuals of the same species worked together, or were mutually supportive (Peet 1978). Further, Kropotkin found the same in the human communities he visited. Expecting to see competition amongst the inhabitants consistent with the ideas of social Darwinism, he instead found the residents were similarly mutually supportive.

This experience led him to develop his ideas regarding mutual aid, and to publish works refuting followers of Darwin, especially Huxley, whom he claimed misinterpreted Darwin. While Kropotkin acknowledged that competition did play a role in biological evolution, he came to the conclusion that mutual aid was a more powerful evolutionary factor, and species with this trait, including human beings, were more successful than those that lacked it. Indeed, he felt that natural selection could be said to favor cooperation, not competition. Kropotkin argued that mutual aid is thus an inherent characteristic of our species, and that institutions such as the state encourage competition, contrary to our true nature. The villages he encountered, being a great distance from the apparatus of the state were, in a sense, less influenced by it. He saw these remote villages as places where true human nature, or our biological and social drive to support and aid our community to ensure survival of the group, were still prevalent and available for observation. Similar to species he observed that self-organized and cooperated in the absence of a “government” such as ants, termites, and birds, the villagers of Siberia self-organized in a similar fashion. It was following this expedition and these observations that his scientific and anarchistic interests began to merge.

The Faroe Islands and the grindadráp provide a unique and current example of Kropotkin’s mutual aid. Similar to the Siberian villages, that they are part of a broader state hierarchy, the Kingdom of Denmark, but distant enough, and semi-autonomous, they regulate their own internal affairs. Interestingly, not only does each village self-organize, but communities throughout the archipelago coordinate and cooperate on nearby grindadráp to ensure their success. Not only do the members of the village benefit and ensure the survival of the group, but the greater Faroese community benefits and survives. It is also of interest

to note that the pilot whales are a cooperative species, living in groups, or pods, which ensure survival of the species. We thus see an interesting interaction of two species and communities whose survival revolves around the idea of mutual aid.

### *Research Methods*

We conducted more than 25 semi-structured interviews with people involved with grindadráp to greater or lesser extents. The list of interviewees included government officials, scientists, whaling foremen, and ordinary Faroese people: some of whom had participated in whaling, some who had not, and a few who were actively and publicly opposed to the practice. Questions focused on scientific research around grindadráp, regulation of the practice, on-going changes to grindadráp's various institutions, and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society's 2014 "Grindstop" anti-whaling campaign. Initially, respondents were selected purposively and later through snowball sampling following initial interviews. These interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim unless circumstances prevented it. Most interviews were conducted in English, which is widely spoken in the Faroe Islands. Those interviewees who preferred to speak Faroese were provided with translators. Interviewees who spoke in their "official" capacities (e.g. government officials or police) are referred to below by their actual names. Private individuals are not named. In addition, we have observed roughly a half-dozen grindadráp and, at least as many times, have been present for the aftermath of the killing to observe the allocation and division of the meat and blubber to the community. These observations have informed both our description and our analysis.

### *Regulation by Expertise*

Within the Faroese legal code, the Executive Order on Pilot Whaling and the Executive Order on Whale Bays set all the rules for when, where, and how grindadráp may be conducted in the Faroe Islands. The former states that "the Faroese Government is the highest authority in all matters pertaining to pilot whaling" (Petersen and Mortensen 1998, 272). Throughout much of grindadráp's early history the hunt was regulated locally by those who participated and those upon whose land the whales were beached. In the late eighteenth century, the Faroese scholar Jens Svabo (1779, 51 [cited in Joensen 2009, 66]) called for the establishment of a kind of hierarchy by which "one or two of the most responsible men from each whaling bay," would each become the absolute authority regarding all aspects of the hunt and subsequent division of the meat and blubber within his district. The Løgting, or Faroese Parliament, first codified pilot whaling regulations in the Faroe Islands in 1832. These rules include the establishment of an official leadership system, the answer to Svabo's call.

Following more than a century of largely unchanged practice, innovation within grindadráp accelerated in the 1980s. Increased global attention beginning in 1985 combined with changes already ongoing within Faroese society, led to action being taken on several levels. For the first time a (non-mandatory) collective association for whaling participants was created in the form of the *Grindamannafelagið* (the Faroese Pilot Whalers Association). Various bodies within the Faroe Islands also took an increasing interest in pilot whaling, conducting research into toxin levels in pilot whales, the ocean environment in general, and specifically the meat produced from whaling (Julshamm et al. 1987), as well as on-going research into the biology of the pilot whale (Donovan et al. 1993). In 1992 the Faroe Islands became a founding member of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO). This organization, which includes management and scientific committees, provides a site for cooperation on whaling matters in Norway, Iceland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands, and provides scientific advice on management. Alongside the growth of these institutions various changes also occurred to the practice of whaling. For example, during this time new equipment was introduced with the intention to improve the efficiency of slaughter, reducing the time-to-death for each whale. The pilot whaling regulations were then also updated to reflect these changes (Joensen 2009).

## Opposing Forces

### *History and Geopolitics*

Grindadráp is steeped in tradition. While some of the former superstitious practices—such as shutting the front door of the village's church while the whales are being driven, or forbidding pregnant women from observing the event entirely (Bloch and Joensen 2001)—have faded, there is still an element of timeless national identity to grindadráp (Nauerby 1996; Joensen 2009). This unbroken chain of traditions is embodied most prominently in the continuous, gapless 300-year grindadráp record. From 1709 to the present, records exist of every pod of whales killed on Faroese shores: the number of whales taken, the date, location, and the amount of meat and blubber produced. Discontinuous records extend back further, to the late sixteenth century. Most scholars (e.g. Thorsteinsson 1986; Sanderson 1992; Joensen 2009; Kerins 2010) suspect that the earliest Norse settlers brought drive-style whaling to the Faroe Islands in the ninth century. From the first stirrings of a Faroese nationalist movement during the mid-nineteenth century, grindadráp has been held up as an element of the Faroe Islands' unique culture.

At the same time, the Faroe Islands are a dependent territory. Officially called "a self-governing community within the Kingdom of Denmark" (Kallsberg 1970, 305), there is a clear division of power between the Faroese and Danish governments. The Faroese handle most of their own internal matters while Denmark represents all of its realm—including Greenland and the Faroes—internationally. There is a Faroese Prime Minister but the Danish monarch appears on the coins. The police force, while made up primarily of ethnically Faroese officers, is an extension of the Danish government. Denmark is a member state of the European Union; the Faroe Islands are not. Denmark forbids whaling; the Faroe Islands embrace it. The Faroe Islands hold a seat in NAMMCO while Denmark has only observer status. In Copenhagen, we asked Danes for their opinions of Faroese people. A common response was simply: "whale-eaters," said with an air of bemused disgust and a shake of the head. In the Faroe Islands, however, whaling is problematic only to a small minority. According to Prime Minister Kaj Leo Johannesen, interviewed by the authors in 2012, the major environmental debate in the Faroe Islands at the time was over fishing limits. Whaling does not register as a major domestic problem. While whaling is not practiced by all, nor are the products consumed by all (Fielding 2013b), the activity itself does not see much direct local opposition. Indeed, a 2014 weighted survey of 1% of the Faroese population found that 77% felt that grindadráp should continue, against 12% who felt it should cease (Gallup Føroyar 2014). Anti-whaling activism in the Faroe Islands is largely initiated abroad and carried out by non-Faroese. For example, the controversial animal rights activist group Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) has campaigned several times in the Faroes in recent years, bringing several hundred volunteers from many different nations to the archipelago. These campaigns were criticized nearly unanimously by Faroese respondents, even those personally against grindadráp. Critics have called the actions of SSCS imperialistic and counter-productive (Kerins 2010). However, despite this, in recent years, an international group, *Earthrace Conservation*, has managed to gain a foothold in the Faroe Islands with a Faroese membership base. One member of the organization, interviewed by the authors, asserted a main function of the group was to provide a forum for Faroese to voice opposition to grindadráp. Its members have participated in debates with pro-whaling activists on the practice. At the time of our 2014 interview the respondent asserted there were around half a dozen active members and that little activity was occurring, in part to separate themselves from SSCS.

In terms of Faroese nationalism, grindadráp plays a symbolic, and perhaps also a practical, role. Prior to the 1980s, when the Faroe Islands first began to face international criticism for their whaling practices, many had held up grindadráp as something uniquely Faroese, going so far as to call grindadráp the "national sport" of the Faroe Islands (Sanderson 1992, 1). This was in spite of the fact that similar drive-style whaling practices had occurred in many countries on both sides of the North Atlantic and beyond for centuries and still continue today in certain parts of the Arctic and Pacific (Brownell et al. 2008). Today, while the

foldable postcards, charmingly called "Faroegrams," depicting images of grindadráp alongside bucolic scenes of traditional Faroese life are no longer common items in Tórshavn bookshops, intensified opposition to Faroese whaling has provoked a renewal of interest in grindadráp among Faroese who had previously been ambivalent about its continuation. Additionally, some have voiced concern that the institution of grindadráp—and especially the food production that results from it—might play a role in determining the viability of a future independent Faroese state, free from Danish colonial oversight. The reasoning is that the loss of locally-produced food would need to be made up through imports, bought on the cash economy, which would deepen the financial dependence of the Faroe Islands on Danish subsidies. These payments, which in 2013 totalled 630 million Danish kroner (US$94 million) or about 4% of Faroese GDP (Lindahl 2013), are seen as essential for the maintenance of the Faroese economy. In discussions of the potential for Faroese independence, the subsidies received from Denmark are often cited as "one of the main obstacles toward independence" (Cannady 2014, 92). Maintaining grindadráp as a source of essentially free, local food for the Faroe Islands is viewed then by some as a small but key part of a future Faroese economic—and perhaps political—independence.

### *Process and Leadership*

Whales are most often sighted from sea. When a sailor or fisher sees a pod of whales he or she is compelled by law to contact the district *sýslumaður*, a title most often translated into English as *sheriff*. The sýslumaður is the top police officer of the district. As a police officer, he or she is an employee of the Danish state. So from the very beginning, grindadráp must be reported to Danish authority. Upon hearing of the sighting, the sýslumaður in turn contacts one or more of the district *grindaformenn*—whaling foremen—to discuss whether or not to pursue the whales. The grindaformenn generally are elected to their role based upon their reputation for knowledge and skill related to grindadráp (Joensen 2009; Ministry of Fisheries 2013). They are the direct answer to the call made by Jens Svabo in 1779 for expert leadership of grindadráp. Grindaformenn are the expert whalers and representatives of a Faroese tradition that predates Danish rule. Faroese law prescribes nine whaling districts containing twenty-three approved whaling beaches, chosen for their historical connection to whaling and physical appropriateness (Fielding 2013a), and states that each whaling district must have four grindaformenn and two deputies (Petersen and Mortensen 1998).

So who is ultimately in charge when whales have been sighted offshore, the grindaformenn or the sýslumaður? The representative of expertise or the representative of the colonial state? In an interview, one sýslumaður called the district grindaformenn "my prolonged arm" in the regulation of grindadráp. After the sýslumaður, in consultation with the grindaformenn, has decided that a grindadráp will be attempted and has announced the beach that will be the target of the drive, the two share responsibility in a sort of land-and-sea tension. The first *grindaformann* (the singular form of the word) to reach the pod of whales by boat hoists the white, red, and blue *Merkið*, or Faroese flag, on his boat's mast, thus signaling his leadership role in the ensuing grindadráp. The sýslumaður stays on shore to enforce the laws about proper whaling. Though the authority of the sýslumaður and the grindaformenn is not equal—the latter must carry identification cards signed by the former—the two support one another as the regulators of the grindadráp: the sýslumaður on shore and the grindaformenn at sea. Beyond this geographical distinction, however, lies a deeper distinction between earned expertise and state authority.

### *Foremen and Killers*

Given their whaling experience and nautical knowledge, grindaformenn are the most qualified to decide how to best handle a particular pod of whales within particular oceanic, meteorologic, and economic conditions. The Executive Order on Pilot Whaling is very explicit on the authority of the sýslumaður and the grindaformann. The charge is repeated several times throughout the text's English translation that, "All boats and people on land must follow the instructions of the Sheriff and/or the whaling foreman" (Petersen and Mortensen 1998, 272-280).

As the boats arrive on the scene to assist with the whale drive, the grindaformann instructs the other captains (each called a *báturformann*, or "boat foreman" [Joensen 2009, 100]) by marine radio, mobile telephone, or simply by shouting from boat to boat, how to best steer the pod of whales into the chosen bay. When the whales begin to strand in the shallow water, the grindaformann signals the men on shore to enter the water and begin the kill. With vocal expressions of excitement, whalers enter the water, sometimes wearing wetsuits but often in their work clothes, to meet the pod of stranding whales. At this moment, the land/sea distinction is reduced as boats, whales, and shore-based whalers converge on the swash zone. Whales are hauled ashore with ropes and hooks; whalers wade into the sea—sometimes to a depth where swimming is necessary—and the *dráp* portion of the event, the slaughter, begins. Many observers have commented on the quickness of the killing. Bloch and colleagues (1990) analyzed data from 43 grindadráp over a two-year period from July 1986 to July 1988. The average number of whales killed per grindadráp according to Bloch's dataset is 84.6 and the average time from the killing of the first whale to the killing of the last is 28.4 minutes (after we corrected an arithmetic error in the original). Many grindadráp deviate from this mean. The present authors witnessed a grindadráp in August, 2012, which took much longer than this average: 69 minutes from the killing of the first whale to the killing of the fiftieth—and, in this case, final—whale.

***Sharing the Catch***

After the whales are killed, a distinct shift in authority occurs. The most pressing practical need is that the whales must be counted, measured, evaluated, and divided. The sýslumaður, not the grindaformann, is solely responsible for these processes. Faroese law prescribes a complex, yet adaptable system of division by which the meat and blubber are distributed among those who participated in the grindadráp and/or the residents of the village where the event took place. Fairness and equality are the ideals of the system but often not all are satisfied with their lot.

Regulations for the division of the whales vary by district and in some districts there is much room for subjectivity in how the meat and blubber will be divided. Final authority in all division-related decisions rests with the sýslumaður. This process sometimes provokes conflict, though almost exclusively verbal, not physical. Andras Poulsen, sýslumaður of the largest and most populous district, mentioned in an interview that the division of meat and blubber following a grindadráp is the only situation in which he carries his service pistol—as a deterrent to any violence that may erupt, fueled by alcohol, greed, and excitement in the event's aftermath.

The sýslumaður's first step in making a fair division is to have all of the whales lined up and measured in the place where they will be processed. Once the whales are lined up in the processing area, certain men appointed by the sýslumaður set to the task of measuring them. These *metingarmenn*, or measurement men, chosen for their trustworthiness and impartiality, fill an ancient role in Faroese society. Joensen (2009, 125) cites the earliest reference to these men and their job from a 1710 report, which states that after the whales are killed, "then they are all assessed, small and large, by men who have been appointed by the sheriff, and each fish [is marked with] its number and value." At the time of the measuring, the metingarmenn or other helpers of the sýslumaður's choosing open the body cavities of the whales and remove the entrails to allow the carcasses to cool and to prevent the meat from spoiling.

When the metingarmenn have finished their measurements, they present the tally to the sýslumaður. He then retreats to his temporary office—normally a simple, donated workspace with a desk in a nearby building or house—to calculate the divisions. The purpose of the calculations is to ensure that the meat and blubber are divided fairly among all the residents of the district in which the grindadráp occurred, and that any special shares are properly assigned. Special shares are given to the person who first sighted the whales, the grindaformenn, the metingarmenn, local schools and nursing homes, and others whom the sýslumaður deems deserving. The sýslumaður also completes a form detailing various data about

the grindadráp for the Faroese Ministry of Fisheries, where the information is added to the ever-growing database on Faroese whaling.

At the appointed time, a crowds gathers to listen to the sýslumaður read the shares. Ideally, anyone present at a grindadráp is eligible to receive a share of meat and blubber. In practice however, the sýslumaður often decides to limit the shares to only residents of the village where the grindadráp took place, or to the actual participants in the driving or killing of the whales. These limitations depend solely upon the sýslumaður's judgment and the number of whales available. The most traditional, and most egalitarian method of distribution is variously called the *partahvalur* (shared whale) or *heimapartur* (home share). With this method, every home in the district receives an equal share of whale meat and blubber. Occasionally a small pod of whales will be divided only among those who participated in the grindadráp. This type of distribution—called a *drápspartur*, or killers' share—is generally unpopular because it strays from the traditional, intended purpose of grindadráp: to provide food for the general population. These two share systems are merely the most common. In reality, the sýslumaður has a wide margin of flexibility in the way that he decides to divide the proceeds from a grindadráp.

At its most basic level, the division of the whales after a grindadráp is a process of human geography. The Faroe Islands are divided into nine *grindadistrikter*, or pilot whaling districts. The inhabitants of each district are organized into groups of no more than fifty individuals. In most districts, these groups are called *bátar*—boats. This system of organization was based on the assumption that the crew of an eight-man boat, together with their families, comprised 25 people (Joensen 2009). A *bátur* (the singular form of the word) then represented two actual boat crews and their families. Today, actual boats can be crewed by any number of people but the bátur as a unit of human organization remains set at fifty people. When the whales are divided, they are assigned to individual bátar; further division among individuals is left up to informal group leadership to decide.

After the sýslumaður has finished his calculations—often several hours after a grindadráp is complete—he calls the participants and all others who will receive a share of the meat and blubber for the traditional oral recitation of the amounts to be distributed. During this speech, the sýslumaður gives a representative of each bátur a slip of paper called a *grindaseðil*, which lists the numbered whales that one particular group of people will receive. Often, some whales will be set aside to provide food for schools and homes for the aged or the poor (Joensen 2009). In the past, one or more whales were sold to cover losses incurred by the participants in the grindadráp. Today a special tax covers these expenses. Throughout the history of grindadráp, sales of whales have been the exception to the rule of a noncommercial method of food production.

***The People's Process***

At the time of processing, men, women, and children descend to the beach or the otherwise designated processing area to claim their shares. Representatives from each bátur who will share the meat and blubber from an individual whale first must locate that whale by the number carved into its head. Once the whale is located, the bátur members quickly cut the blubber and meat from the carcass. While the processing is usually left to those with more experience, children can often be seen helping, observing, and in some cases, practicing the skills needed to get meat and blubber from a whale.

Until recently, as will be discussed below, there were no formal lessons in the Faroe Islands through which people could learn the skills of grindadráp. Indeed, for most of the tasks involved in grindadráp children and even adults who were interested were simply expected to make themselves available and to learn from the experts. When veterinarians and biologists occasionally have introduced a new tool or technique to grindadráp, they have held training sessions with the grindaformenn, who in turn, have trained those interested in their own districts.

Finally, the whales have been stripped of their meat and blubber and the leftover parts—heads,

spines, fins, and organs—have been discarded. As the members of each batár finish processing their whales, the crowd at the beach or the processing area becomes thinner. People carry home meat and blubber in plastic buckets or pickup trucks to be further processed at home.

### *Certifying Grindadráp*

The most recently introduced tool into grindadráp is the *mønustingari*, spinal lance, with which the whales are killed. The product of several years' trial-and-error development by a senior Faroese veterinarian, the mønustingari has been, despite initial reservations by some, near-universally accepted by *grindamenn* carrying out their work, reducing time of death to a few seconds for each whale when used correctly. Due to its efficacy, the use of this tool is required by the updated pilot whale regulations, effective May 2015, although other killing methods are permissable if the situation requires it (Ministry of Fisheries 2013).

A further change, also beginning in May 2015, is that all those who kill whales during grindadráp must have attended a training course of at least 2 hours, for which they will receive a certificate (Ministry of Fisheries 2013). At the time of research, official details of the course were unavailable although interviewees involved stated the content would involve instruction in pilot whale anatomy, the use of the mønustingari, and pilot whaling in general.

The requirement of certification to kill pilot whales has elicited mixed responses from the Faroese public, some questioning the certification scheme's purpose. It is clear though that those behind the measure and senior figures within the Grindamannafelagið believed that most objections have been addressed satisfactorily. These officials stress that all Faroese retained the right to participate in grindadráp and receive pilot whale meat; it is simply that those who wish to be involved in the killing process itself needed to be aware of specific information. As such, the certification scheme was depicted as a natural evolution of the practice. Our informants highlighted that in modern societies, the killing of animals for food is regulated, and the new certification scheme reflected this norm. Several whalers we interviewed asserted the value of instructing people to ensure the whales suffered as little as possible, providing examples of pilot whales being killed in an inappropriate manner. Indeed, during fieldwork, reference was made on several occasions by different people to a widely-reported grindadráp in Klaksvík in 2011 that had gone badly wrong, taking several hours. One respondent suggested that events like this led to soul-searching and were the main driver behind efforts to improve pilot whaling practice. This has been the case in the past, with self-criticism forming one of several pressures for the reform of grindadráp (Sanderson 1990).

At the time of writing, it remains unclear what the impact of certification will be for grindadráp, including details regarding how it would be paid for or enforced. On the one hand it can be seen as a significant symbolic change to the institution–one respondent reported that an old pilot whaler he knew had pronounced it as "the beginning of the end" for the practice. On the other hand, senior figures leading the changes were confident that the bulk of those involved with grindadráp see it as natural change to improve practice. They played down the significance of the change, pointing out that all could still participate and that all innovations, including the mønustingari, tend to face resistance initially. One Faroese contact stated that the initial certification courses were well attended, with several hundred attendees both in Tórshavn and in Sørvágur (Bjarni Mikkelsen, *pers. comm.*). Other respondents pointed out that, while many people participate in the driving and hauling-ashore of whales, the majority of pilot whale killing is carried out by a small minority of regular participants. As such the majority of participants are largely unaffected and as the certification course is not too arduous (simply involving a two-hour presentation) and open to all, it was not considered a burdensome imposition. From one perspective, the certification can thus be seen as providing official recognition for a distribution of labor already present in practice.

## Discussion and Conclusions

The traditional, community-based governance and oversight of grindadráp can provide an interest-

ing, real-world example of an anarchist form of governance and regulation. While many tend to associate anarchists with an extremely individualistic and chaotic lack of government and authority, this is not always, or even often, the case. Anarchists support a community of voluntary associations, with authority earned by individuals based on knowledge, experience, and expertise. This is granted to individuals by the community in a bottom-up fashion, rather than imposed in a top-down manner by the state or other powerful entity higher in a hierarchy (Bookchin 1982; Breitbart 1975; White and Kossoff 2007). While the very nature of anarchism means that the actual implementation of an anarchist community government can take a variety of forms, the aforementioned principles tend to be common to many anarchists.

Grindadráp is an example of the "Mutual Aid" discussed by Kropotkin (2006). Rather than the individualistic and competitive, "survival of the fittest" society promoted by the current dominant economic forces, the Faroese embrace a communal whale hunt which benefits a wide range of community members. The Faroese social attitude condemning the sale of whale meat for profit is also at odds with the prevailing global capitalistic economic philosophy. Whale meat is intended to feed local residents, instead of being viewed as a means of self-enrichment. That whale meat is used to feed the elderly and infirm is another example of how this resource currently lies outside the capitalist economic system. The Faroese also take Kropotkin's Mutual Aid to another level. During grindadráp, in addition to individuals aiding others in their own community, nearby communities aid each other when necessary through the sharing of food products and more directly, by helping drive, haul, and kill whales. This enacting of mutual interdependence has occurred throughout the history of Faroese whaling and continues into the present. While each district maintains jurisdiction over its own whale drives, communities are dependent on each other and come together in a way that ensures they all survive and have support in the future if needed.

Faroese tradition provides an example of Kropotkin's ideas and anarchist community organization, and the unique institution of Faroese whaling provides an example of Kropotkin's dueling forces of the "holistic approach", or cooperation, and the "atomistic approach", or competition, perhaps best summarized by Galois (1976). In a world dominated by the atomistic, we see here an example where the holistic is the norm. It also reflects more recent anarchist approaches to relations with nature discussed by scholars such as Bookchin (1982; 1990) who proposed a less exploitative relationship to nature, and the use of scientifically guided management to create a sustainable relationship with nature in ecocommunities. For decades the Faroese have actively sought to ensure that the whale populations from which they hunt remain at sustainable levels. More recent tools and techniques have been introduced to reduce the suffering of individual whales. In this sense, changes to grindadráp are a reflection of attempts to balance the concerns driving global pressure to end the whale hunt, and local desire to both improve and protect a traditional activity that benefits and sustains the community.

If the balance is upset, pressure from globalizing forces enacted through the presence and actions of non-Faroese anti-whaling groups could actually put vulnerable community groups—such as the elderly—in a more precarious situation, force the Faroese to further integrate into the global community, and make them more dependent on outside globalized food markets and their price fluctuations as they become less dependent on local food. Faroese self-sufficiency is also an indicative characteristic of an anarchist society—though anarchist societies would go further, lacking what state oversight Denmark provides, limited as it is by the Home Rule arrangement. For over three decades, the Faroese have been studying pilot whale populations and contaminants found in whale tissue in an effort to ensure the long-term viability of the species and reduce the effects on consumers, both locally driven attempts to ensure sustainability.

Indeed, when compared to the concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) and other hierarchical, or atomistic, relationships to food and nature, grindadráp and the traditions surrounding it represent a relationship to nature more in line with the holistic thinking of anarchists, one that puts nature on more

of an equal footing with humans that is also, arguably, more sustainable (Hall 2011). The dependence on this food source and the close Faroese connection to it, combined with communal governance and attempts to ensure the long-term viability of the species and reduce suffering of individual pilot whales provides an example of one successful type of anarchist governance of a resource outside the capitalist system by a society asserting itself and attempting to preserve its identity against the overwhelming pressure of global economic forces.

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**Credit: Becky Brice.**
**Faroese men on shore and in boats pause after the killing of 50 pilot whales**