

When two worlds meet: Greenlandic identities in change

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Abstract. The article explores Greenlandic minority's life in Denmark. Settling down to Denmark is studied as a process that most of the migrants go through. The study examines the factors that affect the construction of identity in different phases of the changing situation. This is carried out through individual migrants' experiences. The key concept of the analyses is identity. Its various dimensions show how identities are changed in a situation where two different cultures meet: how identity is constructed in relation to Denmark and Danish people, Greenland, the present and the past. Greenlanders have to connect different worlds and different roles in Denmark. In order to find the feeling of belonging to a place they have to cross the line between 'self' and 'another', 'here' and 'there'. Thus, it can be said that the identities can at the same time be constructed in different places, in relation to different roles and environment. Belonging to a place and finding own role in relation to the Danish society is based on reaching the balance between two worlds.

Introduction

The relationship between Denmark and Greenland has been formed through a long process, especially during the past five decades, when the contacts have been more permanent. The lives in both countries are intertwined together, in particular from the Greenlanders' point of view. Denmark and Danish culture are part of Greenlanders' life today, as well in Greenland as in Denmark. However, on the way to the situation when Greenland is a self-governmental part of Denmark, there have been many changes in the mutual relationship. Greenlandic culture and identities have been under many clashes when the new and the old, the familiar and the unknown have met. The differences between the western technology culture and the arctic hunting culture have

been, and are still, enormous. Under the colonisation period it was usually Greenlanders who had to resign themselves to the Danish premises. Denmark came to Greenland, but the other part of the relationship is Greenlanders' migration to Denmark. It increased during the 1930's and the first permanent Greenlanders' communities in Denmark were established.

Later on, Denmark has been a natural choice for Greenlanders when choosing e.g. a studying place. Nevertheless, when moving to another culture from small communities, adapting to Danish life is not self-evident. As a consequence of Danish attitudes Greenlanders feel themselves as different. On one hand the relationship is labelled by the post-colonial attitude of feeling pity. On the other hand social problems, alcoholism and drugs are often associated



with the Greenlanders life in Denmark. Greenlanders see that both of these pictures disparage them (Petersen 1999: 22). All in all the Greenlanders' minority in Denmark has not been studied thoroughly. The majority of the research is concentrated on the group of Greenlanders with social problems. Anyway, the intention of my research is not only to reach this part of the minority, but also to study the Greenlandic minority as a whole. During my stays in Denmark in 2000 and 2001 I also became familiar with the group of Greenlanders that could be seen on the streets. It is convenient to pay attention to those with problems, but I wanted to find out what is behind these stereotypes. In other words I wanted to have a look at the "ordinary people" who have been able to connect Denmark and Greenland in their lives: those that cannot be found on the headlines of newspapers. The goal of the research is to study how a migrant experiences the Danish life, and the process how the relation to Greenland and the sense of being a Greenlander changes. Consequently, the process happening in minds plays a central role in the research – how the past places and events live in the present and affect the identities.

For studying the relation between Denmark and Greenland I am using the concept of identity. As Stuart Hall (1996: 224) has noticed, identity is not 'being something' but rather 'becoming something'. In a situation where two different cultures meet, this way of seeing identity helps us to understand the phases that a migrant goes through: in relation to Denmark and Greenland. For Greenlanders missing home is part of their life in Denmark and many of them feel like living in between two cultures. Identity is attached to place; it lives and

changes, affects our choices and everyday life even if we do not think about it. One part of the identity is our origin and roots, relation to our history. Moreover, the relation to the outside and another plays a significant role in order to understand, how the identities are constructed. As Paul Gilroy (1997: 315) has said, the self can no longer be plausibly understood as a unitary entity. Instead, it appears in the dialog that connects "us" with our "others". Therefore being a Greenlander cannot be understood without defining Greenlanders' relation to their "another", Denmark.

Many Greenlanders who migrate to Denmark share similar experiences, but adaptation to Denmark is, however, a personal process. Experiences in an individual's life complete the picture and exemplify how the relation of Greenland and Denmark can be in practise. In order to understand the whole situation it is necessary to go through the whole process starting from the migrant's concrete and mental point of departures in Greenland. In the research I am using Marta Labansen's experiences during ten years in Denmark (Lauritzen 1979) as well as my own observations during the six months stay in Copenhagen in 2001. As a model for the analyses I am using a study made in the university of Copenhagen (Tuxen & Rasmussen 1989), where the Greenlanders' adaptation in Denmark was studied as a process. The study brings up the different phases that can be seen also in Marta's experiences. However, it is only a story of one person in certain time and political atmosphere. Thus I am using other material, e.g. interviews, to bring up variations in different phases.

Under the effect of colonisation

A look at the common history is necessary

in order to understand the relation between the countries. The changes in Greenland towards a modern society have taken place in such a short period that the adaptation has been enormously difficult. The development that took hundreds of years in the other Scandinavian countries took only a couple of decades in Greenland. To a large degree, Greenland had stayed isolated and even self-sufficient, but in 1953 Greenland became officially a part of Denmark (Nuttall 1992: 103). Until the 1950's, Greenland had remained also monolingual. From 1950 on the changes have been drastic. Greenland had already become dependent on the outside contacts, and at this point of the colonisation process the politics of isolation was replaced by the requirements of modernisation - also a wish stated by many Greenlanders. Thousands of Danish people were brought to Greenland to establish the new infrastructure, and by the 1970's the amount of Danish was at the highest: almost twenty per cents of the whole population.

The short, but intensive period of colonisation had its consequences. As a result of the modernisation new groups were born to the Greenlandic society (Jonsson 1996), and that reveals the affect of colonisation, especially on the people's minds. The changes of means of support and society in general took place quick and those, who had not learned Danish as young, had difficulties to adapt to the dominant Danish culture. Likewise, migration to towns and leaving the settlement communities based on families caused feeling of not belonging to a place and alienation of the own familiar environment (Nuttall 1992: 181). Belonging to a place means that you know where you are. Anyway, for Greenlanders it was no longer clear, where they were. As a con-

sequence of the problems in adaptation, a group of alienated was born - they could not find their place in the new Greenland. Several social problems, like apathy, suicides, increased criminality and alcohol problems arose. To sum up, the psychological state of mind was in drastic change during the colonisation period. As an outsider it is difficult to understand the significance of the changes. Greenlanders got connected to the world outside, but as a nation they differentiated. It is possible to say, that the feeling of unity and common identity were at least to some degree lost. Home, that is the centre of life, offering security and permanence being thus a meaningful part of identity (Porteous 1990: 107), was for Greenlanders not the same as before. First Greenlanders had to experience otherness and outsidership in their own community. Subsequently many Greenlanders have felt alien in the Danish society.

Greenlandic minority in Denmark

Greenlanders living in Denmark are a marginal minority in the Danish society, in 1998 approximately 11 500 persons. Instead, they are a notable part, 15 %, of Greenland's population (Lund Jensen 1999: 113). The common history means that the position of Greenlanders in Denmark is different compared to the position of other minorities': as a matter of fact, they are not an official minority and thus they are not treated as the other immigrants. Immigrants coming from different cultures are given orientation into the Danish society, whereas Greenlanders do not get it, as officially they are Danish citizens. Greenlanders have to carry the responsibility on their own, and for one it is easier than for another. A migrant does not only meet the new environment



with many expectations, but also brings the past and Greenland with him. A person moving to another culture has to adapt to the new place, but at the same time the relation to the past and home is under a change.

Usually migrant communities are concentrated on a certain area in Denmark, but Greenlanders make an exception. They live all around Denmark and there is at least one Greenlander in every municipality (Lund Jensen 1999: 113). Yet, the biggest groups can be found in the largest cities, especially in the university cities. Still in 1971, when a large social survey on Greenlanders in Denmark (Barfod 1972) was carried out, more than 50 % were between the age of 14 and 25. Instead, the proportion of over 45 years old was only 6 %. Today the situation is different and both of these age groups form one fifth of the Greenlanders in Denmark. The policy of the self-government has broken through: most of the young Greenlanders stay in Greenland and get their education in Greenlandic. However, many Greenlanders still see Denmark as an attractive choice; the traffic connections are better, it is possible to get higher education and many of the immigrants think of their children's future, climate, and things that the Danish culture and society has to offer (Lund Jensen 1999: 114).

It is difficult to estimate the position of Greenlanders in Denmark. On one hand they are "at home", in their home country living with their countrymen. On another hand they live far away from home, as a minority in a strange country and culture. Many things are familiar like the education system and methods as well as the milk cartons in the supermarkets. Regarding many similarities it is possible to realise how big affect the Danish presence has had on

Greenland and Greenlanders. Still, many things are conspicuously absent and that makes it more complicated to adapt to the Danish society. As Seamon (1981: 92) has noted, habits, routines and rituals are important for getting the feeling of belonging to a place and they cannot be formed in a moment. Families and friends are far away and living environment in a city or town differ from the small community at home. The connection to Greenland may weaken, but the connection to Denmark may not replace it. Likewise, the different values may strengthen the feeling of outsideness and clash with the Danish values. According to Seamon (1981: 95), building a working relationship between those 'inside' and 'outside' is complicated as the relation is embellished by misinterpretations. This can be exemplified with the common Danish attitudes and simplifying stereotypes of the Greenlandic national characters. On one hand Greenlanders are treated as smiling, innocent people who have been forced to adapt to the modern, inhuman development and it is Denmark's responsibility to help these offers. Another common picture is openly negative showing Greenlanders as people with social problems coming from another side of the world.

When discussing images of Greenlanders with Danish I often found out that Greenlanders are people that you can see on the streets walking with a bottle of Carlsberg. In general either Greenland or Greenlanders were not well known. These Greenlanders are, however, only the visible part of the Greenlanders' community and it is convenient to pay attention only on them. It is estimated that they are ten percents of the Greenlanders who live in Denmark (Tuxen & Rasmussen 1989: 5) – a minority inside a minority. The Greenland-

ers who live ordinary life, study or go to work, are not in the same way visible in the streets. In this sense Danish images are understandable. Both positive and negative stereotypes help to maintain the boundaries of the self and to protect the self from the changes and people outside (Sibley 1995: 15). The positive stereotype is based on the bad conscious of the former colonialist, on another hand also on the romantic image of self-sufficient Greenlandic life that is distant paste for Danish. The negative stereotype is, however, more crucial for understanding the feeling of outsidership that Greenlanders experience in the Danish society. It is said that maintaining the social order requires binary oppositions in the creation of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (Woodward 1997: 33). 'Others', different ones, disturb the observer's established worldview, and if the groups do not have interaction, this stereotyped image that leaves aside individuality and personality is not even challenged (Sibley 1995: 18).

The reasons for moving to Denmark have become more and more multiple and therefore also the experiences of Denmark and Danish life vary. Even though the countries have become closer in many ways, the physical distance has remained the same and the distance in the ways of thinking has not disappeared. Greenlanders do not necessarily come from the idyllic paste how many of us still would like to see it. Nevertheless, the distance from a fishing village on the east coast – in all scales – is long both to Nuuk and Copenhagen. Cultures are different and the first meeting with Denmark can be a culture shock (Tuxen & Rasmussen 1989: 5). Aware or not aware, a Greenlander brings a heritage with and that is part of the context when Greenlanders come to Denmark and meet Danish peo-

ple (Janussen 1970: 293).

Identities in change

Despite the official status, Greenlanders in Denmark do not regard themselves as Danish. The Danish nationality does not mean that Greenlanders would automatically be assimilated into the Danish life or feel them Danish. I am studying the identities in change through individual migrants' experiences: how identity is formed in relation to Denmark and Danish, Greenland, the present and the past. All our existence has both spatial and temporal dimension (Unwin 1992: 138). Thus, besides relativity, the questions of both time and space are crucial for understanding identities under a change. Interaction cannot be avoided in a changing situation; on the contrary it reveals that we do not have just one identity (Pratt 1999: 164). After moving to Denmark a Greenlander has to find the relation both to Denmark and Greenland. I would not call this situation identity crisis: I see it as a new situation, where whoever has to find again the position in relation to the present and past.

The traditional Greenlandic identity was strongly bound with physical, concrete places – roots defined the solid foundation of identity. Observing the migrant identities, a picture of a solid and stable identity – essential and absolute – connected to a place is scattered (Gilroy 1997: 331). The migrant feels the tension between 'here' and 'there' and 'then' and 'now'. According to Susan J. Smith (1999: 139) the place cannot be forgotten when examining how social identities are formed and re-formed. As Smith continues, *where* identities are made is still crucial in relation to the other: which markers of difference are salient, and which



are veiled. Our daily experiences, memories and activities are part of our bond to a place (Johnston, Gregory & Smith 1994: 548-549). These feelings are strongest in connection with home, where we especially feel like belonging to a place. Thus home denotes us stability and security whereas a new place may cause the feeling of outsideness before the bond of affection exists. A place can be seen physical, but especially when I am studying how the Greenlandic identities are constructed in relation to the other and the past, this image is not sufficient. Instead, I am using the concept of identity that takes a place as a construction of social relations (Meegan 1995: 55).

Denmark through individual's life

The migrant has always his own reasons for the moving and these have an effect on how he adapts to the new place. A Greenlandic, who comes to study in Denmark, is immediately connected to a social network, but a Greenlandic who comes just to look for better opportunities does not necessarily get any support in problematic situations. All the social relations are under a change and the new roles mean also that the identities have to be re-constructed (Sejersén 1999: 26). In a situation where a Greenlandic has to settle down to new and different roles, that are even in conflict to each other, it is possible to lose the self-consciousness. How we construct, interpret and present the self to the others and ourselves, too, is a feature of identity problems (Kellner 1992: 143). When the Greenlanders come to Denmark they feel uncertain, and as a result of that do not know how they should be in different situations. They do not know if they will be understood as Greenlanders or if they have to express

themselves with new codes of social behaviour.

The adaptation to Denmark can be divided in two main phases: first learning the new culture and later on criticising it. At the beginning the migrant is superficially interpreting the codes, phenomena and habits of the new environment. Later on the content of the meaning and their effect on the self are studied (Tuxen & Rasmussen 1989: 12). The first phase can be seen as a raw interpretation of the environment. At the second phase it is a question of the self in relation to the other and how the identities are constructed through this relation. In both phases there is also the relation to Greenland on the background. On one hand the migrant wants to adapt, but on another hand awareness of Greenland is in the mind. This discrepancy can at some point out turn out to a conflict between two strong bonds. Paul Gilroy, who has studied diasporic identities, has stated (1997: 332) that a migrant feels pressure to associate, remember or forget, depending on the economic and political atmosphere that cannot always be foreseen. For instance fear of becoming too Danish and at the same time being left outside of the Greenlandic society are common among the migrants, who have been living in Denmark for a longer period (Wagner Sørensen 1993: 39). All these feelings and relations affect identities that are not only connected to the new environment, but also to different places, past and expectations in relation to Greenland. Where a person lives, works or meets friends is one, but not necessarily the most remarkable environment forming the identity (Marcus 1992: 315).

Most of the Greenlanders, today as well as before, have had some contact to Denmark before they move (Tuxen & Rasmus-

sen 1989: 12). Consequently, migration to Denmark cannot be seen as a journey to unknown. Denmark is present almost in everybody's life in Greenland – often in a dominant role. How the relation to Danish has been in Greenland affects what kind of prejudices a migrant has when moving to Denmark. Marta had been, despite of living in a small community, in contact to Danish people through out her childhood. Besides Danish teachers she was also working in a Danish family and therefore saw Danish family life (Lauritzen 1979: 11). In Marta's childhood Danish people were looked upwards; learning Danish language and studying in general was seen as a way up (Lauritzen 1979: 11). Greenlanders were culturally dominated; Greenlandic culture was not esteemed, on the contrary, Greenlanders wanted to be like Danish. Role as a Greenlander was in conflict with the Danish premises and the new society. The presence of Danish dominance affected to which Greenlanders wanted to identify. Also the older generations' experiences had an effect on the attitudes on the Danish culture. In many occasions, for example when applying for a job, Greenlanders felt outsiders – their skills were not enough. Sibley (1995: XIV) has studied how the process of exclusion often takes place routinely without thinking or noticing anything. In this case exclusion is based on the dominant majority's definitions of what is acceptable. Gaining entry to the dominant groups in society requires credentials: in practise what the majority esteems 'normal' (Sibley 1995: XV). In consequence, for example Marta's parents wanted to offer their children a possibility to a better life. Marta, like many others, moved to Denmark in the 1960's – in her eyes a picture of her future as an educated Greenlander, ready to return to

Greenland and be useful for the society (Lauritzen 1979: 42).

Although desire to study Danish was Marta's own idea, it did not make it easier for her to find her own place in Denmark. On the contrary, many of the young Greenlanders feel enormous responsibility to carry out their studies despite the problems. Returning to Greenland is felt more or less as an obligation (Wagner Sørensen 1993: 40). Even if all the expectations would not be realised, returning to Greenland without education is felt like a shame. The concrete distance to Greenland makes the gap to Greenland clear – returning is not thought on the spur of the moment. All in all, a Greenlander who moves to Denmark is far away both physically and socially, and being prepared to everything new is not possible.

The first landing to the south

The first experiences in a new place are connected with observing everything new. They are also in connection with the stereotypes that we bring with us from home, and we automatically search for these elements in the new environment. For Greenlanders the first experiences in Denmark are full of confusion – the strange elements seem to be without any order or affinity. At this phase a migrant has a big task to learn the rules and find the meanings of new codes (Tuxen & Rasmussen 1989, 13). Yet, one of the biggest problems at the beginning is the Danish language. In principle Greenlanders are supposed to have skills good enough, but the Danish that they have learned at school is necessarily not at such a level that they can manage well in Denmark. With the language problems it is not only a question of translating; because



of the different culture and society Greenlanders simply do not have words or expressions for all new things that they meet in the Danish society.

"It always took me a long time to find out what they meant with this and that. There were so many things that I missed in order to be able to take a position. As a matter of fact, I had to learn all the time. I should learn that it's called a pharmacy. And, really, what is a pharmacy? Where you can buy medicines! But why do you have to buy medicines, in Greenland we get the medicines when we go to a doctor."

"Det tog mig altid lang tid at finde ud af, hvad jeg mente om dit og dat. Der var så mange ting, jeg manglede, for at kunne tage stilling. Jeg var faktisk hele tiden i et læreforhold. Jeg skulle lære, at det hedder apotek. Og hvad er egentlig et apotek? Der kan man købe medicin! Men hvorfor skal man købe medicin, i Grønland får vi medicinen, når vi går til lægen?" (Lauritzen 1979: 31)

Like Greenlanders, also Danish communicate with a language that is compatible with their worldview, and they use their own categories to make order of their life. Thus misinterpretations and misunderstandings are possible, but it is a problem especially for the minority (Sibley 1992: 108). Usually it is not thought that the majority should learn minority's habits or culture – it is the minority that has to adapt.

Migration means crossing the borders: both social and cultural (Sibley 1995: 32). Sibley continues that when migrating to a strange place, difficult situations may appear as the migrant gets caught under the other's control. These conflict situations are signs of the power relations. The dominant so-

cial and political structures also affect how the self is shaped (Sibley 1995: 4). The need to belong to a place is so significant that the culture to which the migrant wants to adapt is not questioned. Greenlanders have already experienced the feeling of inferiority in Greenland and when migrating to Denmark this feeling follows (Vedel-Pedersen 1990). Besides, in the daily life the domination of space is often invisible and we are not aware of it, and therefore we accept our positions (Sibley 1995: 76). Marta had absorbed the idea of learning Danish and thus she could not see any other options (Lauritzen 1979: 35).

However, getting in to a culture is not easy for a migrant, as the majority wants to protect their own culture from the strange and different. The fear of difference together with the ignorance causes all the stereotypes that e.g. Danish have of Greenlanders. The studying of attitudes to others and setting them in the broader context of the cultures is significant in order to understand the processes of exclusion (Sibley 1995: XIV). The social self is place-related, and Sibley (1995: 19) points out the question whether the representatives of the minority belong to a place or whether they are outsiders. If a stereotype of the minority is strongly in connection to a certain place, it can be thought that elsewhere they are in a wrong place (Sibley 1995: 10). Danish still connect Greenlanders to the wild nature and according to this image they are in a wrong context for example in a park in Copenhagen, as Marta had experienced (Lauritzen 1979: 87). Although this image of a nation belonging to nature can be seen romantic, but at the same time it makes Greenlanders less human. And less human, like in this case Greenlanders as colonised others, should be excluded from the civi-

lised society (Sibley 1995: 27). This image also distances Greenlanders away from the daily Danish life.

The outsidership does not necessarily appear only in concrete places; it is seen also in social interaction and in places understood in social sense. Besides the language problems Greenlanders may not be able to share the same experiences with Danish. Place, that is constructed socially, can be studied for instance through the symbols, rituals and myths of a community (Sibley 1995: XV). These signs can reveal who is regarded to belong to a place and who not. Sibley (1995: 3) finds several reasons for social and spatial exclusion; one of the major factors is simply peoples' emotions, a factor that has not been well considered in geographical research. Many feelings, like fear and nervousness, may be pointed towards the migrant. The difference is often regarded as deviance as it is opposite to what is viewed normal in a specific context (Sibley 1992: 108). The majority's images of minority precisely confirm their attitudes and fear of difference and result to the acts that make the minority even more distant. After all, it is a question of the control of a place that the majority feels threatened, and therefore they try to protect it. The familiar things and the predictability of life are important for most of the people, as well as a wish to live in a stable space, where everything is under control.

The scanty communication between the minority and majority increases the differences even more. Thus the gulf between the groups is primarily social, but in some cases it can also be connected to a space (Sibley 1981: 4). For instance in Copenhagen Greenlanders live all around the city, but especially the freetown Christiania, the Istedgade –street close to the main station and

many of the city's squares are closely connected to Greenlanders, and first and foremost with the negative stereotype. In these cases difference is in connection with concrete places that the majority of Danish may not feel their daily places. They confirm the image of Greenlanders as a marginal group in an unequal position in relation to Danish. It is possible that the majority also wants the minority out of its sight. David Sibley (1995: 77) regards the spatial purification as a key feature in the organisation of social space.

The cultural differences appear over and over when both Danish and Greenlanders describe their mutual relationship. Experiencing difference and the boundaries in between can be seen as a continuous chain of misinterpretations based on the idea of otherness: the 'other' that is not the same as 'me' (Sibley 1995: 6). Greenlanders say that the Danish are unaware of their culture and therefore many prejudices and imaginations stay alive (Plesner 1989). For instance differences in the sense of humour, values and self-expression are discerned. They have an effect on the daily life and complicate the adaptation. We often regard it self-evident that we can live in an environment, where we are understood and where the others share the same worldview. As Sibley (1999: 115) has said it, to be understood is not possible for everybody. Controlling the daily life both in social and material sense requires power that the minorities do not usually have. Greenlanders often describe the Danish way of thinking and acting as rectangular; ironically they say that Danish use their brains, Greenlanders their feelings (Syberg 1990; Ulnits 2000: 5). As a consequence of all problems – both spatial and social exclusion – it can be seen how difficult it is to find the feeling as an insider in



the Danish society.

Greenlanders may feel them other in several levels despite the fact that most of them want to adapt to the Danish culture and learn how the Danish society works. The attitudes basing on the common history and the desire to absorb the Danish culture are behind many problems (Tuxen & Rasmussen 1989: 13). In Denmark Greenlanders are privileged compared to other minorities; it is easy for them to move to Denmark without any bureaucracy, but at the same they are applied different expectations. The Danish society expects them to be like any other Danish: they are expected to understand Danish without problems and speak it fluently as well as they are expected to adapt to Danish premises without problems.

“In Denmark I often felt the expectations of the people around. As I was a Greenlander I should be like this or that and that caused many limits. It was a heavy burden and I often said to myself that now I would forget everything that I’ve learned, and I would show them how I really am. That I can think on my own and everything like that. I couldn’t force myself to it and instead, I often withdrew into my shell.”

“I Danmark havde jeg tit følt omgivelsernes forventninger om, at eftersom jeg var grønlander, så måtte jeg være sådan og sådan, og det gav mig en masse begrænsninger. Det havde været en stor belastning, og flere gange sagde jeg til mig selv, at nu ville jeg glemme alt, hvad jeg havde lært og læst og vise dem, hvad jeg er for en person. At jeg selv kan tænke og sådan noget. Men det var umuligt. Jeg kunne ikke trænge igennem, og i stedet lukkede jeg mig ofte ind i en skal.” (Lauritzen 1979: 53)

This attitude has become even more stronger during the last years when the amount of other immigrants has increased: Greenlanders are treated more and more like Danish and they are expected to act like Danish (Surrugue & Steensgaard Mortensen 2001: 6-7). The social context and expectations affect an individual and make the ‘same person’ act differently in different occasions (Woodward 1997: 22).

At the same time as a Greenlander gradually finds out models how to adapt, the relation to Greenland and own culture is completely on the background (Tuxen & Rasmussen 1989: 14). Identity is constructed in relation to the other and new only; Greenlanders settle down to Denmark and build up their position through the Danish culture. The relation to Greenland can be so difficult that it may be even denied – the life goes on according to the Danish expectations only. The feelings of difference and inferiority and speaking Greenlandic in a public place may be ashamed as it seems to cause all the problems in forms of the Danish prejudices (Tuxen & Rasmussen 1989: 14).

“Many years I was very touched upon being a Greenlander. I felt it like a shame. It was annoying to be a Greenlander cause it brought with so many problems. The only way out was to try to find out what it meant to be a Greenlander, and how the Danish are.”

“I mange år var jeg meget personligt berørt af at være grønlander. Oplevede det som en skam, at det var ærgerligt at være grønlander, fordi der fulgte så mange problemer med. Den eneste måde at komme ud af det er at forsøge at finde ud af, hvad det vil sige at være grønlander, og hvordan danskere er.” (Lauritzen 1979: 90)

Besides the problems, the physical distance confirms isolation of the own background. As a Greenlandic student has said, many in Greenland may forget them as they simply are so far away (Plesner 1989).

The forgotten Greenland

Through all the reverses most of the Greenlanders eventually internalise the Danish habits. They learn how to control their behaviour and adapt it with the Danish norms. They learn to laugh at the right moments and use appropriate gestures. To which degree this adaptation is necessary or Greenlanders' responsibility has not been opened to question so far. As Rennie Short (1998: 41) has put it, it is in general the norms and rules of the majority that have to be followed. Greenlanders have adapted to a different cultural model and with that they relate themselves to the Danish society and culture (Tuxen & Rasmussen 1989: 14). However, when everything new does not any longer require their all concentration, many Greenlanders like Marta notice that they have forgotten Greenland as well as themselves (Lauritzen 1979: 39).

When Greenlanders have perceived this fact they suddenly feel uncertain whether they belong to Greenland or Denmark: they are in between a cultural clash. Grossberg (1996: 91) proposes that confusion and being on the edge or border describe the modern identity and a situation where an individual can be in between two competing identities. Despite the adaptation Greenlanders often feel that the difference in relation to Denmark is after all too significant (Tuxen & Rasmussen 1989: 15). Most of them say, that no matter how long they stay in Denmark, they are still always Greenlanders (Stensgaard Mortensen

2001). Greenlanders describe their stay in Denmark often as a period that they have to manage (Wagner Sørensen 1993: 36). It brings out the conflict caused by the pressure to adapt: to which degree is it possible to settle down in Denmark and adapt to Danish habits without losing the contact to Greenland?

The struggle to adapt the Danish culture has taken long time and has been thorough, but it has helped only to survive outwardly. The personal identity bound with the social space is divided; Danish culture still feels strange, but at the same time also the relation to Greenland is distant. Belonging to a place in concrete sense is strengthened, but belonging to a social space is necessarily not strong. Marta's experiences in different occasions describe her relation to the social space in Denmark.

"I felt stronger and stronger how being a Greenlandic was like a concrete handicap. In the school I had felt that I was backward as I was a Greenlandic. In the restaurants I had experienced how I wasn't respected because I was a Greenlandic girl. In Århus I experienced that I couldn't find a flat because I was a Greenlandic."

"Jeg oplevede stærkere og stærkere, hvordan det var et konkret handicap at være grønlandsk. I skolen havde jeg følt, at jeg var bagefter, fordi jeg var grønlandsk. På værtshusene havde jeg oplevet, hvordan jeg ikke blev respekteret, fordi jeg var grønlandsk pige. I Århus oplevede jeg, at jeg ikke kunne få et værelse, fordi jeg var grønlandsk." (Lauritzen 1979: 52)

The continuous experiences of how Greenlanders are set as outsiders strengthen the feeling of being other. Outsideness and the feeling, that you cannot be your-



self and share the feelings with others are often big problems. The connections to other Greenlanders may be at the beginning few, but at his point they are searched. Many of the migrants plan to return back to Greenland and therefore they find it important to maintain a connection. For a long period identity is built up only in relation to Denmark, Danish and the present, but gradually Greenlanders miss the feeling of unity that connects them not only to Greenland but also to the past and future. Being together with other Greenlanders brings Greenland present and strengthens their consciousness of the Greenlandic culture. Same habits, rituals, understanding and unity are important for the identity. As Marta noticed how easy the communication with the other Greenlanders was, her attitude to the Danish changed.

As Kellner (1992: 1443) has said, identity is constructed of the present social roles; those roles to which we are connected in certain situations. After Greenlanders are settled to the Danish society and have got contacts also with the other Greenlanders, these different roles may clash in practice and a person does no longer know where his place is and who he is. At this moment it can be perceived that the identity is constructed in different places and through several relations. Gradually the relation to the Danish society gets more critical; differences are still observed, but now after the own position is felt stronger, the attitude is more negative and many self-evident truths are questioned. Thus the dialog between similarities and differences continues and 'self' is still constructed through the

other, but the dominance of another is no longer self-evident.

Conclusions

Connecting two worlds and different roles in Greenlanders' life in Denmark is not an easy task to carry out. Crossing the line between 'self' and 'another', from a familiar place to an alien, as Sibley (1995, 32) has expressed, is difficult for a person moving to a different culture. For Marta 'loosing' herself meant, however, not only finding her relation to 'Greenlandicness', but also helped her to find her own place in Denmark. At the same time as Marta found the other Greenlanders in Denmark and could share her experiences with the others, she got through the strengthened cultural identity also courage to meet Danish society and its requirements. Greenlanders living in Denmark have to connect two different cultures and models of a society – keeping them separate continue the conflict situation. Thus it can be said that the identities can at the same time be constructed in different places: in relation to different roles and environment. Belonging to a place and finding the own role in relation to Danish is based on reaching the balance between the conflicting parts that are constructing the identity in the changing life situation. As experiencing difference in different forms is to an increasing degree part of our daily life, studying these relations is current. At the same time we can also ask ourselves; what kind of difference we accept and what kind of difference we want to exclude?

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