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## Home or on the Road

*A study of motorhome tourism as a Norwegian phenomenon*

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*Master thesis in Tourism Studies - November 2015*







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Remi Lorentzen  
November 2015, Alta



# Abstract

Motorhome tourism is a phenomenon seen on many Norwegian roads during the summer months. In the last two decades, motorhomes has increased in popularity in Norway, due to technological improvement and better comfort. The motorhome enables people to camp in various places, independent of tourism infrastructure and public transportation.

This thesis aims to give meaning to the phenomenon of motorhome tourism, by interviewing eight Norwegian couples who had traveled with their motorhomes in Northern Norway. Edensor's theoretical concept of performance and spaces have been used as a tool of reflection, in order to analyze the phenomenon studied. The findings in this thesis indicates that motorhome users travels to several destination during one vacation, where the performance of travelling becomes the actual holiday.

Keywords: couples, Northern Norway, home, campsites, motorhomes, identity, freedom to roam, performance.



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# Chapter 1 - Introduction

A motorhome is a vehicle constructed for recreation, merging accommodation and transportation together thereby enhancing the possibility for people to go wherever they want, whenever they want. The Norwegian Motorhome and Caravan Club (NBCC) writes in their Norwegian magazine, that motorhomes have increased in popularity and the amount of motorhomes has doubled over the last decades (Bobil & Caravan, 2015: 94). Currently, in year 2014, we see more motorhomes than ever on Norwegian roads due to a good economy, better comfort and stronger motors (Bobil & Caravan, 2014., Caravan, 2014a., Caravan, 2014b). In other words technological improvement and economic development have been important factors behind the increase of sale experienced by Norwegian motorhome retailers.

Proof of this increase in motorhomes can be found in statistics from the Information Council for Road Traffic (Opplysningsrådet for veitrafikk, 2015 [Phone call]). If we compare the number of newly registered motorhomes from year 2006 until year 2014, the statistic indicates that the number exceeds over one thousand vehicles per year. The numbers for newly registered motorhomes was 2,527 in the end of year 2014, in sharp contrast to only 237 newly registered motorhomes in 1997. There is 39,204 motorhomes registered in Norway as per 31 December, 2014 (Opplysningsrådet for veitrafikk, 2015, E-mail 20<sup>th</sup> January). The statistics from the Information Council for Road Traffic proves that motorhomes have



increased in number over the last eighteen years, indicating that the trend of owning a motorhome has clearly grown since 1997. The international symbol for motorhomes is depicted to the left, often as a sign for motorhome parking or sanitary stations. Motorhomes come in many

different shapes, sizes and models where some are more luxurious than others, a decent sized motorhome in 2015, would be about 7,5 meter long and cost around a half million Norwegian kroners or more. The inside of the motorhomes is often equipped with integrated bathroom with shower, toilet and an own sink for washing. The beds are usually installed in the rear end of the vehicle giving enough space for people to sleep comfortably. Further, the kitchen usually consist of a stove that runs on gas, a refrigerator and a freezer. The salon is the motorhomes 'living room' where sofas, chair and tables are installed in order for people to eat,



read, socialize and relax. The motorhome emphasizes home comfort, yet, the most important aspect of the motorhome is that it is *built to live in* unlike a normal car.

Norway is a country that practices freedom to roam or '*allemannsretten*' as we say in Norwegian. Freedom to roam means that everyone has the right to access nature (Reusch, 2012: 13). In 1957, freedom to roam became statutory in Norway through the Norwegian outdoor recreation act, in Norwegian named '*friluftsloven*'. People travelling with motorhomes in Norway talk about the freedom to roam as being of great importance. Motorhome tourism combined with the freedom to roam offers possibilities to camp almost everywhere in Norway, attracting international motorhome tourists from far and wide. The Norwegian outdoor recreation act states in § 4: that "it is allowed to park outfield on public roads as long no damage or disturbance is caused" (Lovdata.no, 2015). Freedom to roam has led to many debates regarding illegal /legal camping, a debate that normally is discussed between motorhome tourist and locals in various internet newspapers. Indeed by just typing the Norwegian word for motorhome tourist, which is '*bobilturister*' in the google search bar, we can find newspaper article after newspaper article about problems and discussions related to motorhome tourism in Norway. According to NBCC web pages, motorhome users have an "annual income of 500 00 Norwegian Kroners... where the majority of the motorhome users are couples... that continues to camp after their children has left the household" (NBCC.no, 2014). Motorhome users are very different both in behavior, attitude and traveling preferences, where some prefer traveling domestically while others prefer traveling internationally.

## **1.1 The Research Question**

Throughout this thesis I want to create a better understanding of Norwegian motorhome tourism as a phenomenon. I have narrowed down my study to focus mainly on narrations regarding what it means to travel *from* and *inside* one's own neighborhood in Northern-Norway, I have therefore worked out the following research question; how Norwegian motorhome users ascribe meaning to the phenomenon of motorhome tourism. This is a way of finding out *how* and *why* Norwegian people are travelling with a motorhome. The empirical material is based on qualitative semi-structured couple interviews, which were conducted in private Norwegian homes. Four couples from Lofoten and four couples from Alta were selected to participate in this research, the age group included participants who were above sixty years of age, and many of the couples were retired. The semi-structural interviews

brought up several discussions encompassing problems, benefits, destinations and vacations, related to how it to live, socialize and travel in a motorhome.

My own experience within the motorhome tourism field comes from working twelve years as a campsite receptionist in Northern Norway. When I started to study the phenomenon of motorhome tourism, I realized that there was a lot of empirical material to work on, I started by reading motorhome magazines, internet newspapers and searched in various academic articles about motorhome tourism, yet it proved to be more challenging than I previously had thought. Finding material that could describe the personal usage and reasons for owning a motorhome was almost absent, I realized that little had been written about the phenomenon I was about to study. I have therefore sometimes compared motorhome tourism as a homogeneous group with other forms of tourism with the aim to find differences.

My main reflections regarding motorhome tourism as a phenomenon are based on Edensor's (1998, 2000, 2001, 2007) theoretical concept of performance, a theoretical concept that aims to explain the relationship between places and tourists behavior (Edensor, 1998: 67). I have focused mainly on how people in private ascribe meaning to their identity as tourists and as everyday people. By investigating how people perform in a vehicle built for home comfort, we may better understand motorhome tourism as a phenomenon intertwined with the aspects of 'home' and tourism. Motor-'home'-tourism, you are 'home' but are a tourists.

## **1.2 Description of the North-Norwegian Neighborhoods**

The geographical area where my informants live and travel stretches across the three counties of Nordland, Troms and Finnmark, which makes up Northern Norway. Topographically Northern Norway consists of closeness to fjords, valleys, mountains, woods and small islands. This diverse topography invites many pastime activities in the forms of hikes, walks, strolls and fishing that can be conducted in people's own neighborhoods. Yet, what typifies driving in Northern Norway is the vast natural landscapes that can be explored in a crisscross of roads often without trace of human activities or infrastructure. In other words, driving in Northern Norway invites trips that can stretch hundreds of kilometers through inhabited nature. The peak season for North-Norwegian motorhome tourism is between the months of May until the end of August, where the last traces of motorhome tourism fades out in the middle of October. My informants where all traveling in the summertime where the average temperature is approximately about 14 to 18 degrees Celsius. Infrastructurally, Northern-Norway is filled

with gasoline stations, sanitary stations, resting areas, sites of attractions, museums, cafeterias and restaurants, souvenir shops and hotels. Nevertheless, Northern Norway is also characterized by its long driving distances between town and settlement, often separated by several hours of driving depending on the destination visited. Northern Norway has a total population of approximately 478 134 inhabitants (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2015) covering an area of 112 974 Km<sup>2</sup>, roughly about the size of Iceland or Bulgaria (Kartverket.no, 2015). A huge part of the population in Northern Norway is not concentrated in cities, making population density very low.

The above description of Northern Norway, leaves motorhome users to encounter many differences with regards to travelling away from Northern-Norway, where different topography, infrastructure, temperatures, languages and cultures may change depending of the destination visited, either domestically or internationally. The remainder of the thesis is structured in the following way.

Chapter two provides a chronological explanation on how the empirical material was generated. I explain my background, choice of research method, development of topics, how I selected my informants and how I used my methodology throughout the research.

Chapter three first presents the theoretical framework separately from the empirical material, in order to go back and forth between theory and empirical material. I then present the analysis by going through the four themes I developed.

Chapter four presents the findings. I sum up the most important part of my research as well as explain how it was to study the phenomenon. I present suggestions for further research.

# Chapter 2 - Methodology

## 2.1 Introduction

The method and methodology that I used to construct my thesis is chronologically explained in this chapter, step-by-step I start by explaining my background as a campsite receptionist to further explaining the process of selecting a research method, then I explain how I constructed and designed my research and selected my informants. Finally, I explain the process and how I came to choose my methodological viewpoint. The main research question regarding how Norwegian motorhome users ascribe meaning to the phenomenon of motorhome tourism, aims to understand *how* and *why* people travel with motorhomes.

Edensor's (1998, 2000, 2001, 2007) theoretical concept worked as the basis for my reflections around the empirical material. Where discursive practices, such as language patterns of a specific group (Kruuse, 2007: 235) and type of language (Matthews & Ross, 2010: 391) were examined in order to ascribe meanings to the phenomenon studied. The main research question demanded a qualitative methodological approach that I argue later in this chapter. In combination with Edensor theoretical concept, I have used Margareta Järvinen's (2005) methodology regarding constructivist interactionism as a tool to provide a basis of interpretation of the meetings between the informants and me, questioning not only the interview *what*, but also the interviews *how*. Edensor's theoretical concept will be explained in detail in the analysis chapter.

I explain a series of methodical choices, which I reason for throughout this chapter. I explain why I chose to conduct semi-structural qualitative interviews with couples owning a motorhome. I explain how the interview guide worked, by introducing three themes that generated the empirical material used in this research. Further, I clarify why I conducted the interviews privately in the informants' homes and discuss the ethical dilemmas that followed in doing so.

## 2.2 My background as campsite receptionist

When I started conducting this research I realized that I needed to explain my background as a campsite receptionist. My life as a campsite receptionist started in Lofoten in 2002, when my parent allowed me to work in our privately established campsite. This research is inspired by my interaction with motorhome tourism over a period of twelve years. Dyste et al (2010: 96) write that the interaction between researcher and subjects can be of importance since my understanding of motorhome tourism as a phenomenon, will help to explain how different topics and themes emerged as a part of this research. Thagaard (2009) writes that a researcher's understanding of the phenomenon studied, "is influenced by the researcher previous experiences regardless if the researcher has connections to the culture or not" (Thagaard, 2009: 77) For me, my connection to motorhome tourism has been both formal and informal, I did not practice motorhome tourism as a tourist, however, I have discussed, chatted and been inside many motorhomes as a guest. Further, Wadel, (2006: 29) writes that the researcher needs to be conscious about the role used to interact with other people. I want to underline that my interaction between motorhome tourists and me have been mostly connected to work, however, due to my work I have witnessed, observed, noticed many changes in the field of camping tourism. I have witnessed a demographic change that more people in their forties have started to travel with motorhomes. I have seen that the average age of motorhome tourists are people in their sixties. I have noticed that camping tourism is dominated by couples. I have observed that motorhome tourism has expanded internationally since more and people from non-Scandinavian countries start to travel with motorhomes. I witnessed an increase of Norwegian motorhome tourists travelling in their own country. I have also observed that motorhome tourists establish contact with each other regardless of nationality, resulting in a friendship that may be maintained for years. I have experienced that some motorhome tourists can stay for months at the same campsite, while others only stay for one day and leave. Discussions and social contact with motorhome tourists has worked as a source of inspiration when I was constructing my interview guide, since I frequently started to develop topics aimed to provide insight into the meaning of motorhome tourism as a phenomenon. However, to enhance my own competence and knowledge in the field of camping tourism, I decided that this research would not take place at the campsite home in Lofoten, I did so because I wanted to learn something new, something I did not know or have never thought about before.



## 2.3 Qualitative Research

The research question invites the use of a qualitative method, since the study encompasses describing a phenomenon. I have chosen a qualitative method because it focuses on interaction with people who have direct knowledge of the phenomenon studied (Kruuse, 2007: 23-24). Qualitative methods aim to explain the characteristics of a phenomenon (Repstad, 2007: 16) with a further aim to give insight into what people do and say (Gran, 2012: 33). Yet to explain how the empirical material emerged, an explanation of the qualitative method is given below.

Qualitative methods allow us to focus on the context of people's everyday life (Barbour, 2009: 13), where the data produced rests on the researcher competence and the informant's knowledge (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015: 71). It is a form of research that aims to create a "better understanding of a social phenomenon" (Thagaard, 2013: 11- 56). Qualitative research is also a fine opportunity "to learn about oneself and others"(Widerberg, 2001: 29).

The methodological position, which has formed the basis of this thesis, brings me towards the paradigm of constructivism (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). I have realized that my aim to *better understand*, corresponds to the characteristics of constructivist thinking, where the focus lies more in the understanding of knowledge rather than explanation and predictions (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 113). Ontologically, realities can be understood as multiple mental constructions, meaning that there is no 'one truth' in an absolute sense (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 110-111). The epistemology I have worked within encompasses that the researcher and the informant are communicating through interaction, the production of meaning or the "findings are literally created as the investigation proceeds" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 111). Further, I want to emphasize that meaning is constructed individually by different people in a variety of ways (Crotty, 1998: 17) meaning that my view of the phenomenon of motorhome tourist can be utterly different from my informants' views regarding the phenomenon. In other words, "what can be the truth for someone, can be false for others" (Berger and Luckmann, 2004 cited in Egholm, 2014: 153). On the other hand, in this thesis, *meaning* is seen as created through interaction between the researcher and the informant (Järvinen, 2005). I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews since the flow of the interview determines, which questions are the most suitable to ask (Bailey, 2007: 100). The interviewer has a list of questions (the interview guide) but is willing to be flexible so that the informants can speak more widely regarding the topics discussed (Denscombe, 2011: 175). The questions and topics discussed do not need to come in any specific order, and do not need to be directly

connected to the phenomenon being researched (Mehmetoglu, 2004: 70). Qualitative research is ascribed the ability to inquire in-depthly in conversation with people, a quality that would not be achievable by using e-mails and conducting interviews by phone (Ryen: 2002: 85). Finally, in this section, I have explained my background as a campsite receptionist, in order for the reader to understand my relationship to motorhome tourism. I have also argued that my scientific position lies within the field of constructivism, implying that this research aims to create a *better understanding* of motorhome tourism as a phenomenon.

## 2.4 The Interview Guide

The interview guide<sup>1</sup> I constructed consisted of three themes being: 1. the motorhome tourist, 2. motorhome culture, 3. South-Varanger. I wrote the interview guide with the idea to explore the informant's relationship to the municipality of South-Varanger, yet the data that was generated from the theme, South-Varanger, indicated that this project was more about motorhome tourism as a phenomenon. Theme 1. *The motorhome tourists*, aims to start the discussion, by asking questions regarding what the people are doing when travelling on a motorhome vacation. The theme aims to introduce and explain the interviewee's background as motorhome tourists, by asking for social and individual experiences regarding travelling with a motorhome. Theme 2. The theme *motorhome culture* aims to find out what people are doing inside the motorhome, by asking questions related to typical lifestyles and habits of people travelling with motorhomes. These two themes worked quite well and generated good narrations and unexpected answers about the phenomenon of motorhome tourism. I also found that the two themes generated many improvised discussions, enriching the material further. Theme 3. *South-Varanger* aimed to discuss motorhome tourists travel behavior and their experiences in the municipality. The plan was to find out how South-Varanger worked as a travelling destination. I implemented questions regarding travelling alongside the Russian/Norwegian border, by asking people what they did in South-Varanger and why they travelled to the destination. One criteria for choosing the informants was that they must have been in South-Varanger, to which I will return later in this chapter. The theme was thoughtfully constructed and received quite mixed results but nevertheless relevant data.

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<sup>1</sup> The interview guide is found in the appendix

## 2.5 The informants

I have now come to the section where I explain the process of finding my informants. The one criteria for being selected as informant, was that the informants should have conducted at least one motorhome trip to South-Varanger, regardless of age, background and profession. The reason behind the criteria was first of all to guarantee that the informants could ascribe meaning to the destination being researched. Secondly, to guarantee that they had experienced travelling with a motorhome. Due to the circumstances of winter seasonality, the most practical way of finding the informants was to conduct the semi-structured interviews in people's homes. I decided that my informants had to be Norwegian, not only because it was more practical to find them, but also because of being able to use my first language (Norwegian). As I previously have mentioned from my background as a receptionist, motorhome tourists often travel as a couple so I decided that they should be interviewed as a couple as well. The setting of interview encompasses interviewing two persons at the same time. Krusse (2007) used the term dyad interview when two persons are being interviewed simultaneously. Dyad interviews can stimulate the informants to narrate more deeply, in contrast to interviewing informants alone (Krusse, 2007: 145-146). Conducting dyad interviews also has its benefits since the participants can help each other remember and control each other statements, creating a dynamic and cooperative interaction (Holter and Kalleberg, 1996: 155; Kruse, 2007: 146). However, I use the term couple interview since the informants know each other, meaning that a dyad interview or a group interview can consist of people that don't know each other at all. Nevertheless, I noticed throughout discussions with my informants that a saturation point started to emerge after about eight interviews. Thagaard describes the saturation point as an indication when the phenomenon studied does not seem to bring any further understanding that is relevant for the research (Thagaard, 2013: 65) The point of saturation can also be reached due to time constrains and because the informants gradually seem to contribute with less knowledge, in contrast to previous interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 129). In other words, when the informants start to give repeatable and similar answers, then it is a good time to stop (Repstad, 2007: 83) since it is not the number of informants that matter but the content of the empirical material gathered (Ryen, 2002: 93).

Due to both time constrains and repeatable answer from my informants, I felt that eight semi-structured qualitative couple interviews was enough. Interviews durations was approximately one hour. The informants in this research were selected by the use of *snowball*

*sampling*. Snowball sampling involves asking participants about other potentially informants, however, the method could also cause less variation between informants (Tjora, 2012: 230). To prevent all the informants coming from the same environment, it is recommended that the researcher tries to gather empirical material from different environments (Thagaard, 2013: 62). I ended up conducting four interviews in Alta and four interviews in Lofoten to increase variation between informants. The reason for choosing informants from Alta was because I studied and lived in the town. The reason for choosing informants from Lofoten was because Lofoten is my home. I now explain how I found the informants. It all started in the very beginning by knocking on the front doors of people living in Alta. I did so since I could see a motorhome standing outside their house. Thus, when I managed to get one phone number to one potential informant I started to call around Alta after motorhome owners by explaining the criteria for participation. By contacting the informants by phone, I managed to get 8 informants (four couples) from Alta. On 5 December, 2014, I drove to my home in Lofoten and started to search for informants, however, the strategy was a little different since I found a camping catalogue and contacted people randomly in Lofoten. In the end, I found four couples who agreed to participate, providing a total of eight couples and sixteen informants. All of the informants were in the age bracket of 60+ years.

### **The pre-meeting**

In order to establish better contacts with the informants, I choose to arrange one pre-meeting before the actual interviews were conducted. As I phoned the informants and introduced myself, I asked if they had been to South-Varanger with their motorhome, I further asked if I could come and meet the informant face-to-face in person so I could introduce myself. I did so because I wanted to establish contact with my informants in order for both the informants and me to feel more secure of one another. It turned out that the informants, to whom I spoke in the pre-meetings, were the husbands; the wives were usually absent. Nevertheless, the husband invited me into their living room so we could chit-chat and drink coffee, I asked the husbands if they could explain to their wives what the research encompassed when they returned home. I decided to conduct pre-meetings in order to establish trust. Trust may take a long time to establish and can be achieved by talking face-to-face, and by dressing accordingly since clothes can have a symbolical meaning (Ryen, 2002: 116-117). As I was meeting the informants for the first time, I was wearing a cap with the initials “Lofoten” on my head, and black trench coat with the NCC pin stuck to the trench coats fabric. I also felt it necessary to have a pre-meeting, to avoid the researcher being considered as foreign and

suspicious (Thagaard, 2013: 72). Having a background as an adopted Indian, I knew that a pre-meeting was the right thing to do in respect to myself. I wanted to avoid any misunderstanding regarding my appearance (Bailey, 2007: 36) when I was visiting people privately. I also wanted a pre-meeting in the respect to the informants since they opened the door and let me into their home. The purpose of the pre-meeting was to explain to the husbands what my research encompassed, that their names would be anonymized in the research and that whenever they wanted could remove their statements. At the end of the pre-meeting with the husbands, I gave them a copy of the information letter <sup>2</sup>

### **The interviews**

After the pre-meetings were conducted, I waited approximately one week until I contacted each couple by phone to find a suitable date where the interview could take place. All the informants preferred to have the interviews conducted in their home. According to Tjora, interviews conducted in peoples private homes makes people feel relaxed and safe (Tjora, 2012: 120). The couples took me into their living room where there was enough space for all of us to sit. First, I started by introducing myself to the wife, then I asked the couple if they felt they were ready, I placed the Dictaphone on the table and turned it on. I realized that there might be a drawback with using a Dictaphone since some informants might feel discomfort (Repstad, 2007: 85) when they know they are being recorded (Tjora, 2012: 139). Yet all the informants agreed to be recorded. The interviews started by asking the couple how they started to travel with motorhomes, where the informants responded very differently, the question generated a lot of discussion. I started the interviews by introducing the informants to the first topic, *motorhome tourists*, a topic that generated good narrations and interaction between the husband and wife. As I started to ask the probing questions related to the first topic, motorhome tourists, the discussion would escalate more, the informants would sometimes tell quite detailed stories from their motorhome vacations both domestically and internationally. The second topic, *motorhome culture*, was a bit harder for the informants to answer, since I often needed to explain and improvise questions, in order to generate more discussion regarding how it was to live inside the motorhome. The third topic, *South-Varanger*, did not go as planned since most of the informants struggled to explain what they have done, rather they started to explain a myriad of other travelling stories regarding other destinations, during this topic I used many improvised questions that did not relate to the

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<sup>2</sup> The information letter can be found in the Appendix



topic discussed. I managed to get some stories from the couples, but I felt that the empirical material gathered around this third topic was insufficient. On the other hand, the topic generated many stories about where the couples travelled in their motorhomes.

### **The setting of the interviews**

Sometimes I wondered if it was a mistake to conduct couple interviews, since I noticed that one person could dominate the interview leaving the other partner less talkative. Nevertheless, under many instances the informants could stop and correct each other, meaning that conducting couple interviews actually had its advantages. Most of the informant interacted quite frequently with one another, while other took a more relaxed tone and talked slowly. I think one of the reasons that really helped me connect with the informants was my dialect, since the informants found it familiar. When I turned off the Dictaphone and thanked the informants for their participation, I would get the consent form<sup>3</sup> and have the informants sign it. However, when the interviews were over the informants started to ask about my background as adopted, sharing their stories about other people who they knew also were adopted. I was sitting with the couples maybe twenty minutes longer before I left their house. The conversation that took place after the interviews may led to many interesting discussions (Widerberg, 2001: 84). However, I don't think the conversations that happened after the interviews were of any relevance for this research. Nevertheless, during the interviews many metaphors were used by the informants, which I found hard to translate into English, leaving me to talk about transcription, after all the interviews were conducted I had over eight and a half hours of recorded material. What happens during a transcription is that the oral conversation is written down and abstracted, leaving out aspects of the conversation, such as, tone, respiration, facial expression and body language (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 187; Barbour, 2009: 193). However, it is the researcher responsibility that the transcription is as accurate as possible (Barbour, 2009: 192). It was a demanding task to write the interviews down word for word and sometimes when listening to the recorded interviews, I struggled so much that I needed to slow down the speed of the sound file in order to hear what the couple was saying since they sometimes could speak too fast. I realized that many dialectic expressions may lose their meaning if translated literarily from English to Norwegian, but I tried to be as fair as possible not to lose the meaning of the metaphor and words spoken. During the transcription I anonymized the couples identities and names by ascribing them a

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<sup>3</sup> The consent form can be found in the appendix

number, the number indicated, which order the interviews were conducted, meaning that couple #1 was the first couple I interviewed, whereas couple #8 was the last couple I interviewed. As an example, when I refer to a specific quotation from one of the informants, it is written as (Couple #1, the husband)

As I reflected on the empirical material gathered, I realized that my research had taken a different shape than previously planned. The production of the empirical material regarding South-Varanger may have decreased, since I conducted the interviews off-season during wintertime. I also noticed that the informants stories from South-Varanger was too implicit, lacked details and were of a shorter in length compared to their other travelling stories. I also realized that having a problem statement connected to South-Varanger would narrow down the scope of the empirical material, rather I found that the dominating notion in this research was motorhome tourism as a phenomenon. As I continually analyzed the empirical material, I struggled with constructing topics that would somehow describe motorhome tourism as a phenomenon. I tried to sort the empirical material and constructed topics around geography, topography, experiences and activities by using Edensor's theoretical concepts as a source of reflection. However, I felt something was missing, something that could structure the empirical material according to the phenomenon of motorhome tourism. The themes I had used in the interview guide did not fit well with the empirical material gathered, so I decided to adjust the research question in order to make the empirical material correspond to the discoveries I had made. In the end, I managed to work out four themes, which I think is representative for what this thesis encompasses. The first theme encompasses why the informants choose to travel with a motorhome as form of vacation. The second theme discusses how identity and status is interpreted amongst motorhome users. The third theme discusses the collective and social aspects associated with owning a motorhome. The fourth theme discusses where and how motorhome users are travelling. The four themes emerged when I noticed some features of motorhome tourism, which I did not think about, these features are elaborated on further in the analysis chapter.

Another reason for adjusting the research question from that which I had started occurred when I read Margareta Järvinens' (2005) view on constructivist interactionism. Järvinen questions if the researcher is capable of absorbing core knowledge from the people interviewed (Järvinen, 2005: 28). The methodology of constructivism interactionism rejects that the researcher can go and just absorb knowledge, without influencing the outcome of the

material “absorbed”. When we questions how *meaning* have been produced in this research, I have used Järvinens view of interactionism to explain how the empirical material came into existence. When the informants tell me stories about experiences they have encountered, as an interviewer, I cannot only focus on *what* is being said, I need to know *how* the discussion emerged as a part of the narration. The interview hows and whats are closely related to each other, meaning that statements conducted by the informants should not be secluded from the context from whence they emerged (Järvinen, 2005: 44). As a researcher, I interacted with my informants I talk to them and I ask them questions. Yet, according to a constructivist interactionist perspective, the researcher’s interference when speaking with the informants should not be considered a problem, since the researcher is a part of the meaning production process (Järvinen, 2005: 45) In other words, the researcher and the informants influence the empirical material (Thagaard, 1998 referenced in Gran, 2012: 136). Järvinens’ methodology regarding constructivist interactionism is in contrast to objectivism and naturalism -- “both are methodological approaches that claim that it is possible to excrete empirical material that is not influenced by the researcher” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 16 cited in Järvinen, 2005: 28). Further, Järvinen emphasizes that the interviewer is a co-producer of knowledge, meaning that the interviewer and the persons being interviewed are producing knowledge together. Järvinen states that “Empirical interview-material is always formed by the research project that brought forth it” (Järvinen, 2005: 41). Further, Järvinen writes about social identities and self-presentation where both the interviewer and the informants are conducting descriptive performances (Järvinen, 2005: 30). Descriptive performances encompass how the informants/interviewer are presenting themselves, while acting out a variety of different selves (Riessman, 2002 cited in Järvinen, 2005: 30). As an example, the interviewee and the interviewer can describe themselves differently through a variety of different discussions and topics. Järvinen’s methodology brings a new dimension into the research by questioning the *how* of the emergence of empirical material. When I wrote the analysis chapter, I used Järvinens methodology to bring more details and *meaning* out of the discussions. Yet, it should be mentioned that our understanding of the empirical material, is based on a “plausible understanding of the world” (Silvermann, 2002: 343 cited in Järvinen, 2005: 29). As a researcher, I do not have empirical proof of my informants traveling behavior, since the material emerged inside the couple’s home. The methodological understanding of constructivist interactionism was used, as a theoretical perspective, to describe the context of *how* the empirical material emerged.

## 2.6 Ethics

Ethics encompasses respect for individuals and is part of a research project, by making the researcher aware of the responsibility and ethical dilemmas that can occur when conducting research. It is the researcher's duty to make sure that the information that comes forth in the final thesis, does not harm or cause negative consequences for the informant (Thagaard, 2013: 28). Ethics also encompasses anonymizing people's identity during transcription of interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 195). As I transcribed and wrote my analysis, I realized that a good amount of the empirical material encompassed names of family members, places and people who could be identified. Ryen writes that confidentiality means to protect the informant's private life, so that the location of the informant is not able to be found (Ryen, 2002: 209). However, the anonymization of the informant's name is only one aspect that can lead to the identification of informants (Barbour, 2009: 81), which leads us to the dilemma of whether we can promise total anonymization in order to establish trust, confidentiality and mutual respect (Tjora, 2012: 39 -161). Due to the informant's stories and narrations, a "massive" amount of empirical material needed to be anonymized without taking the informant's statement out of context. I realized that I needed to be cautious when I was describing the informant's behavior, background, tone and statements in order to not leave any indication that could directly or indirectly identify them. The importance of variation between the informants thus became crucial. The motorhome environment can be small and motorhome tourist may know each other's travel habits, (the weakness of the snowball method). Yet, the problem in my opinion did not occur in the anonymization of the informant's names, but in the anonymization of places. Anonymizing name of places could alter the understanding of the analysis, which is connected to Edensor's theoretical frameworks, which is highly connected to space and places.

Further, I have reported and registered this research project with the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD), where I stated that no personal information will be used with regards to this thesis. I have told the participants in the information letter that personal information will be kept confidential, and that at any time they could withdraw their statements without any reason. I kept all the signed consent forms locked in a closet in a room with restricted access along with the transcribed interviews, while the recordings were kept on a password-protected computer.

According to Ehn and Öberg a good interviewer should never attempt to take control over the stories narrated during an interview (Ehn and Öberg, 2011: 66), I realized that I could unintentionally alter the informants stories when I was transcribing and analyzing, and that I could not guarantee that the informants identity would not be indirectly recognized. Personal information about the informants was never a criterion for participation except that they had to be a couple, which is written in the information letter. The informants (the husbands) were positive towards my research when I contacted them by phone. I remember that they started to discuss subjects related to motorhome tourists already from the start. However, when I entered the private homes of my informants, then I was conscious about my behavior, concentrating on being humble and polite. When I ended the interviews, I gave the couples a sincere “thank you” before I left their homes. Due to the kindness and respect showed by the informants, I felt a responsibility to make sure that the informants’ statements represented their spoken word. Ehn and Öberg write that interpretation of stories can “twist” narrations in a way that the researcher focuses on something completely different in contrast to what the informants thinks (Ehn and Öberg, 2011: 68). Reflecting on the statement by Ehn and Öberg, I realize that the analysis process put me to the test, as I constantly tried to ascribe meaning to the theme South-Varanger, which I regarded as important, whereas the informants had different perception of the topic. Bailey writes that we cannot force ethical problems that may emerge from the research, leading to question if research can be conducted with no deception (Bailey, 2007: 35). When I conducted this research, I worked with the aim to let the participants talk and express their opinions, as much as possible, all the participants had been well informed about me, my background as a receptionist and my research, in other words, the informants knew they were participating in research. Finally, a thought that crossed my mind is what does all the empirical material that did not make it into the final thesis represent? (Ryen, 2002: 214). Did I lose, misjudge, misinterpret and misunderstand some of the statements? Or were the left out statements not relevant? However, with mutual respect to my informants, I would like to say that I think everything that was spoken was in some way relevant, but the most important parts, in my opinion, ended up in this Master’s thesis.



# Chapter 3 - Analysis

## 3.1 Introduction

In this part of the thesis, I present the analysis of my empirical material. By exploring how motorhome users ascribe meaning to the phenomenon of motorhome tourism, this thesis can contribute to better understand how people with motorhomes use their vehicles. This chapter commences by introducing Edensor's theoretical concept of performance, a theoretical framework that I frequently use throughout this analysis chapter. The reason for introducing Edensor theoretical concept first, is to enable the reader to move back and forth between theory, empirical materials and reflections that I have used in my analysis.

After I have presented Edensor's theoretical perspective, this chapter focuses on the four themes of this analysis. The first theme, *Ascribing meaning to 'home'*, encompasses discussions about how the informants use their motorhomes during travel. The second theme, *Status, identity and typical motorhome tourists*, delves into how motorhome tourists perceive each other through discussions of wealth, stereotypes as well as typical aspects of motorhome tourism. The third theme, *The dilemma, on your own or together?* discusses the social aspects of being together or independent from other motorhome users. The fourth theme, *The destination...?*, identifies where motorhome users travel with their vehicle. The topics are arranged in an order to tell a story regarding, how people use their motorhomes, what it means to own a motorhome, what motorhome users do together and finally where motorhome users travel. Without further ado, I now present Edensor theoretical concept.

## 3.2 Edensor's theoretical concepts

The empirical material gathered in this research encompasses numerous narrations about place, people and experiences. A theoretical framework developed by Tim Edensor (1998, 2000, 2001, 2007) has been used to interpret and discuss different motorhome tourist performances. Edensor developed his theoretical framework drawing inspiration from Goffman's dramaturgical view, wherein Goffman argues that humans change roles according to the different social contexts in which they reside (Goffman, 1959 as referred to in Edensor, 2001: 60). Edensor's theoretical concept simultaneously encompasses the use of stages, performances and spaces, where Edensor describes that within spaces there are various stages

which tourism performances can take place upon (Edensor, 2000: 327; Edensor, 2001: 63). Performances can vary extensively depending on the characteristics of the stage and the tourist(s), who perform(s) on that stage (Edensor, 2000: 324). Examples of stages are “beaches and mountains, in cities, heritages sites, museums and theme parks” (Edensor, 2001: 63). Further, Edensor emphasizes that performances can never be accurately replicated (2000: 324) and that performances conducted by a tourist should not be perceived as repetitive processes but “as an interactive and contingent process”(Edensor, 2007: 204) that takes into account the skills of the performer and the context in which the performance is acted out. Performances can be unpredictable and interacts between people, who can influence each other. Additionally, account of how performances are “interpreted by an audience” (Edensor, 2007: 204) to be undertaken. Some performances are more predictable than others, since tourists carry with them familiar habits, which can be performed in unfamiliar surroundings, in other words, mundane everyday life performances can take place when travelling on vacation (Edensor, 2007: 202).

According to Edensor, “The notion of performance... is useful as a way of theorizing the diverse act which people accomplish in particular spaces” (Edensor, 1998: 202). By using Edensor`s theoretical concept, I will try to analyze certain views regarding how motorhome tourist perceive themselves, as well as how they perform during a motorhome vacation. Edensor`s theoretical framework of performance be explained further in the next section.

### **3.2.1 Performances**

Edensor`s (1998, 2000, 2001, 2007) concept of performances encompasses four types of performances; the performance of disciplined rituals, improvised performances, unbounded performances and habitual performances. These four performances can be used to explain how tourists behave under various circumstances and environments, in other words “tourists performances specify the relationship between people and the sites they visit” (Edensor, 1998: 67).

#### **Disciplined rituals**

First, the performance of disciplined rituals encompasses performances of a typical need to do activities, such as, sending a postcard, visiting attractions, trying local (or foreign) cuisine and taking photos of important places and friends (Edensor, 2000: 334). What characterizes

disciplined rituals is a focus on controlling, guiding and directing tourists in the form of repetitive movements within a (strict) time limit (Edensor, 1998: 65). Disciplined rituals can happen in familiar situations and can be performed collectively. The performance involves gestural codes, verbal expression, habits, rituals identity and values, leaving little room for improvisation (Edensor, 2000). Disciplined rituals are predictable since people are directed by assumptions regarding, appropriate behavior and group norms (Edensor, 1998: 107). However, disciplined rituals may also lead to relaxation, since some tourists actually prefer to be controlled and guided due to the comfort, reliability and predictability of the performance (Edensor, 2000: 331; Edensor, 2001; 74)

### **Improvised performances**

Second, are improvised performances where tourists acquire information from example from guidebooks, the internet, talks and discussions, but chose not to follow the acquired information down to the upmost degree. A quotation from Edensor clearly explains this: “Improvising performers select where to go, what to look at, and how to behave from a menu of scripts and stage directions” (Edensor, 2000: 335), meaning that tourists conducting improvised performances can chose what to do. In other words, the performances are partly improvised since tourists do follow some information, but decide to be *less constrained* from the norms and rules attained from the information acquired (Edensor, 1998: 66). Improvised performances are also characterized by encountering the unexpected, meaning that habitual behavior is challenged due to a desire of exploring the unknown and unfamiliar places, (Edensor, 2001: 76; Edensor 2000: 336 - 337).

### **Unbounded performances**

Thirdly, are unbounded performances, which occur when places lack infrastructure in the forms of signs and familiar references, which makes it difficult for tourists to orientate themselves (Edensor, 1998: 67). The lack of familiar references, for example, can result in acute self-awareness or even panic, since tourists may not know the norms and rules of the spaces they are residing within (Edensor, 2001: 78). Often this can result in a drawback to more familiar spaces (Edensor, 2000: 338). To further emphasize the meaning behind unbounded performance, tourists may have a desire to travel into spaces in which they know are unsafe, but are willing to do so because of the thrill and excitement that comes with exploring the unknown (Edensor, 2000: 338). In other words, unbounded performances are

not constrained by rules or norms and result in a higher degree of improvisation, since a tourist may not know *what* to do and *how* to behave. Unbounded performances takes place in unknown, unfamiliar, non-touristic and unpredictable places and tourists may seek out these places in order to experience something new (Edensor, 2000: 337-338).

### **Habitual performances**

Fourthly, habitual performances encompass performances people conduct in their everyday life. This means that habits and competencies people have learned in familiar spaces (like home) can be performed away from home (Edensor, 2007: 202). In other words, there is a possibility that tourists can conduct the same homely routines, when they are travelling on vacation as they do at home (Edensor, 2007: 206). Habitual performances thus questions if tourists really are tourist when they are on vacation. A quote from Edensor states that:

*“Modes of address are uttered without self-consciousness, regular routes are followed unquestioningly and all this habits are rarely disrupted where familiar space is consistently reproduced and delimits external influences”* (Edensor, 2007: 202)

Habitual performances also encompass personal identity of who we are, meaning that tourists are carrying their cultural characteristics and habits from home and perform them in a variety of spaces. Edensor (2007: 206) has used the expression the way ‘things just are’, meaning that certain performances are conducted as a part of everyday life without questioning the notion of why we do them.

### **3.2.2 Enclavic Spaces and Heterogeneous Spaces**

Edensor`s (2000) concept of performance encompasses the relationship between performance and space. The purpose of using Edensor`s theoretical concept is to describe and interpret various spaces in order to understand why tourist are performing the way they do. In the previous section, I have described four types of tourists performances, which aim to describe the way tourists perform according to their surroundings, meaning that a tourist performs within certain spaces. According to Edensor`s conception,

*“enclavic spaces are carefully staged so that the performances are somewhat prescriptive, whereas in heterogeneous space, stage boundaries are less clear and a wider range of improvisation is encouraged”* (Edensor, 1998:62).

The relationship between performance and spaces is an ever-changing process, which differs from individual to individual and “changes over time” (Edensor, 1998: 8) It was therefore my desire to explore the relationship between spaces and performance, in order to understand better what motorhome users are *doing* during their vacation.

### **Enclavic space**

An important characteristic of enclavic space is that tourists sometimes are cut off from mixing with the local inhabitants usually by hosting the tourists within accommodations, such as, hotels or tourism resorts (Edensor, 1998). Enclavic spaces are often monitored and controlled with distinct physical boundaries, under surveillance from cameras, guards and tourist guides (Edensor, 2000: 328). The tourism industry within enclavic spaces tries to reduce discomfort for visiting travelers, by implementing quality control and training staff to act in “appropriate manners” (Edensor, 1998: 46). Enclavic space are often planned spaces aimed to orientate tourist in the most comfortable and efficient way. This means that tourists are directed according to the norms and rules within the enclave. Due to the controlled environment of enclavic spaces, many tourists may feel frustration since they desire to venture into spaces, which are non-touristic in order to explore “the unknown and random” (Edensor, 1998: 53). On the other hand, it should be noted that many tourists accept and prefer to have vacation within enclavic spaces due to “consistency, reliability and comfort” (Edensor, 2000: 331) that enclavic spaces provide.

### **Heterogeneous space**

Heterogeneous spaces are characterized as spaces filled with small cafes, restaurants, family run concerns, souvenir and craft shops, streets, markets and bazars (Edensor, 1998: 54). The segregation between local and tourists is no longer dominated by the tourism industry (Edensor, 1998: 54) since the tourism industry exists alongside local life, giving tourists freedom to take individual choices rather than being guided by norms and rules dominated by the tourism industry within enclavic spaces (Edensor, 1998). Within heterogeneous spaces, tourist are free to mingle with locals. Subsequently, tourists are able to see and experience

everyday life (Edensor, 2000). On the other hand, heterogeneous spaces can also generate moments of discomfort like “offensive sights, sounds and smell” (Edensor, 1998: 45). In these instances, tourists expose themselves to hazards and dangers, which within enclavic spaces are reduced. Edensor writes that “The kind of unilinear flows and obstacle-free streets of enclavic tourist space contrast with the numerous impediment and rough surfaces of heterogeneous tourist space” (Edensor, 1998: 106). In other words, heterogeneous spaces are perceived as more chaotic and unforeseen, since tourists are not directed by the tourism industry. Further, Edensor also mentions that heterogeneous spaces and enclavic spaces can mix and have unclear boundaries (Edensor, 2000: 333).

### **3.3 Theme #1 - Ascribing meaning to ‘home’**

In this section, I provide deeper insights into how the informants ascribed meaning to ‘home’ while discussing the freedom that comes with travelling with a motorhome. Home in this analysis has two meanings. First, home is the permanent residence where the interviews were conducted. Secondly, home is a metaphor for the space within the motorhome. The majority of the analysis chapter encompasses discussions on how people perform and compare the characteristics of the motorhome with their permanent residence. Nevertheless, it is the way Norwegian motorhome users practice and perform their everydayness that, in my opinion, stands out in comparison to people who are dependent on transportation in the form of flights, trains and busses, accommodations, restaurants, etc. People travelling away from home bring with them their mindsets, social relationships and routines from everyday life (Haldrup & Larsen, 2010: 26). Norwegian motorhome users are no exception.

The various stories that took place between the motorhome users and me, were all conducted in the informants' permanent residence. Specifically, I have interviewed the couples in their homes. I parked the car outside the various homes, I knocked on the door and the couples would greet me and welcome me inside their house. I was usually served coffee and cookies while the couple sat on the sofa and prepared themselves to be interviewed. I was surrounded by the smell of home, being a student living in a student dorm I could say that being inside a ‘real home’ evoked a sense of belonging and familiarity since I come from a Norwegian home myself.



Couple #3 started by introducing themselves, and told me that in the late 1980s, they had previously worked in the service industry. The husband had quitted his work due to retirement, while the wife still works but will retire next year. I asked the couple how it was to be a motorhome tourist. The wife answered very quickly ‘it is fantastic!’ with a big smile, yet the answer was short so I responded to the wife’s answer by asking ‘but why is it fantastic?’ she responded:

*“with a motorhome you can stop and make food whenever you want (...) all you need to do is to park the vehicle and start cooking. You have everything in the motorhome, you have a place to stay if it`s raining, there is also shower and toilet in the motorhome (...) living in the motorhome is like home only in smaller format”.*

(Couple #3, the wife)

Further into the discussion, the wife told me that traveling is easier with a motorhome, since she always has a pack of clean clothes ready prepared within the vehicle, in case the couple want to drive from home. The wife compared travelling with a caravan in comparison to a motorhome stating that “with a caravan you need to unscrew the legs and pack everything before you go, with a motorhome you just go”. As the interview proceeded, I asked the couple a probing question as to whether they had any hobbies they practiced during their vacation? The wife answered that she likes to knit and read magazines, while the husband answered that ‘they do the stuff they want to do’, the wife repeated her husband’s statement as a sign of agreement. I then asked if they perceive the motorhome as their actual home? The wife then answered:

*“Yes of course! When we are going on vacation then the motorhome is our home, because we have everything (...) so it is our home, it is our ‘cabin on wheels’” (...) during our vacation we see different panoramas from the motorhome window (...), unlike in the cabin where you look outside your window and see the same stone every day”.* (Couple #3, the wife)

The wife’s statement stresses the lack of mobility that comes with owning a cabin, which according to the couple causes *boredom* and less *freedom*. The husband also said that “when you invest into a cabin then you are stuck in that place, however many people prefer that to” Continuing to ascribe meaning to ‘home’, Couple #8 had been camping tourists since the 1980s and had owned a motorhome for some years. They were both in their sixties. When I

asked the couple if they thought that living in a motorhome became too narrow, the wife had the following to say;

*“I like it inside the motorhome because it is small (...) the motorhome is easy to keep clean, and there is not so much washing of clothes, but at home I have thousands of things to do (...) what I like with the motorhome is that everything is close to you, it’s like a cabin”* (Couple #8, the wife)

Couple #8 associated the motorhome with freedom and an escape from a stressing everyday life from their permanent residence. Again, the metaphor for ‘cabin’ was used for the motorhome, indicating that the motorhome should be perceived as a ‘mobile second home’. The wife’s statement above shows that the chores of everyday life becomes a burden connected with stress and repetitiveness, indicating a desire for a ‘*less is more*’ lifestyle. Reflecting on Norwegian second homes, people uses second homes as a place of relaxation and to enjoy the natural surroundings in the form of hikes and nature based activities (Tangeland et al, 2012: 8-10) Norwegians second- homes are often located close to mountains and sea, they have often integrated standard such as water, electricity, internet connection and can be used as primary homes (Flognfeldt Jr, 2004: 234- 235). The second-home can also be perceived as an ‘alternative home’ a place where people seeks the presence of nature (Kaltenborn, 2002 as referred to in Flognfeldt Jr, 2004: 242). Yet, according to Hall & Müller (2004: 5) second home can be semi-mobile, acknowledging that the living standard of a cottage can actually be taken on the road in the form of a motorhome. Going back to the interview with couple #8, I asked the couple if they used to sit outside their motorhome, the wife answered “you can say that the outside of the motorhome, is our living room”, the husband then added on “during Christmas time you can see motorhomes with Christmas decorations inside the motorhomes”. We can read that the couple ascribe meaning to the motorhome by conducting habitual performances the way they do at home. Haldrup & Larsen (2010:109) writes that tourists make themselves feel at home by packing with them ‘homely’ objects, like the Christmas decoration which were mentioned above. Yet it is the way people use the motorhome which that can be associated with being at ‘home’. Like the enjoyment of cooking one’s own food and drinking the same coffee as you do at home, or having an after dinner rest, to further have some midnight snack while listening to the radio. In other words the motorhome enables people to maintain their daily rhythm while travelling.

Continuing interviewing the couples, I noticed that most people usually preferred motorhome vacations, since they had engaged in camping prior to owning a motorhome. In interviews, I learnt that a comparative question worked well, so I asked couple #3 if they would prefer a charter trip instead of a motorhome vacation. The wife told me that “a charter trip is something completely different and I don’t know think I would have enjoyed staying in a hotel, the motorhome is cozier”. Yet during a discussion with couple #8, I started to ask why they owned a motorhome, the wife told me that “we previously owned a caravan but were bored of being in the same place all the time, I told my husband, that I missed the opportunity to travel year around”. However, a little later into the discussion, I asked the couple if they would not prefer a charter trip instead of traveling with the motorhome. The couple’s body language changed from sitting calmly with their hands folded, to using bodily expressions. The wife unfolded her hands and moved upwards in the chair, the couple’s tone changed from quietly to speaking with a higher voice. The wife then told me the following “no, no, no so boring, you are doing the same stuff every day!” while her husband added “last year we were on the Canary Islands, but after two days I said to my wife, what in the world are we going to do over the next ten days?”. Reflecting on Edensor’s (1998, 2000) concept of enclavic spaces, the couple were not satisfied with living in a tourism resort in the Canary Islands, indicating that the couple disliked being in the enclavic space of a hotel, while at the same time feeling delimited in their mobility to travel freely.

Reflecting on the latter statement, being mobile along with the ability to visit more places were two of the main reasons for owning a motorhome. The informants ascribed the motorhome as ‘homely and cozy’ but also as a vehicle of ‘practicality and mobility’. The presence of home was performed through habitual activities such as cooking and packing. As an example, favorite pillows and blankets are taken from home into the motorhome, along with shampoos, perfume, food, books, clothes, laptops and bicycles. The motorhome, thus, is filled with familiar gadgets that are used in everyday life. Bruner (2005: 17) writes that tourists experience home through familiar expected comforts, while Urry & Larsen (2011: 62) purport that standards of accommodation are a predeterminant for people when travelling. Further, as I continued the discussion with couple #8 regarding why they purchased a motorhome, the husband commented that “When our children had moved away from home, then we had more freedom to travel”. The husband’s statement indicates that their children had previously influenced their travelling behavior, specifically, conducting their vacation in

a permanent settled caravan. However, as the children moved away from home, the couple started to long for a more flexible form of vacation.

Going further into the empirical material, peoples' activities inside motorhomes varies from playing table games, knitting, playing Yatzi, reading books and magazines, watching TV and consuming a small amounts of alcoholic beverages. During an interview I had with couple #5, the husband told me "we do the same activities we do at home when we are travelling with the motorhome". I then asked what kind of activities? The wife replied, "we like to go and pick berries in the forest and have a short walk in the evening". Going for a walk in the evening was regarded as important by all the couples, who I interviewed. Reflecting on what the couples had told me, many of them presented themselves as sporty and an active group of people. Further, during my interview with couple #7, I asked them what they liked about their motorhome. The husband said that "in the motorhome, we can sleep in the same bed as we do at home", while the wife added "and we can also have the dog with us!". In other words, the motorhome has many practical functions besides being a vehicle of transportation. I came to understand that the motorhome is also a vehicle of personal customization. The characteristics of 'home' are not only physical tangible objects that smell and feel like home, but also the intangible perception of familiar behavior, attitude or appearance, which I will discuss later in this chapter. Further, reflecting on the discussion about authenticity, Steiner and Reisinger (2006: 300) wrote that people need to be themselves in order to be authentic, while Wang (1999: 363) argued with regard to intra-personal authenticity that tourists travel away from home in order to feel an authentic self. Despite Wang (1999) and Steiner & Reisinger's (2006) views on authenticity, I argue that an authentic self is somewhat present within the motorhome, since the motorhome tourists, who I interviewed were doing many of the activities they did at home while on vacation. However, the informants used the motorhome not only for vacation purposes, but also for travelling to visit family, friends and relatives.

Couple #2 who had been camping tourists since the 1980s, told me that a practical benefit of owning a motorhome, was not bothering the host you were visiting. I asked the couple how they used their motorhome. The wife replied, "We use the motorhome mostly to visit my son and grandchildren in southern Norway since my son does not have enough space in his house to host us". I also asked the same question to couple #7. The wife told me that "we like to visit friends and relatives with the motorhome, since we don't bother them with washing bedclothes and bedlinens". Similarly, when I asked couple #5 about the practical aspects of owning a motorhome, the husband replied;

*“if you are going to visit family and friends, may it be a wedding or for Christmas, then I think the host would appreciate that we are totally independent (...) you have everything you need in the motorhome.”* (Couple #7, the husband)

*“not only that, but I also prefer to have my own house and my stuff for myself.”*  
(Couple #7, the wife)

Reflecting on this couple’s statements, the motorhome has the practical aspect of being a vehicle, which provides privacy and as well as avoiding being a ‘burden’ to hosts. On the other hand, many of the trips undertaken with the motorhomes were small weekend trips, mostly to visit friends and relatives. Bærenholdt et al (2004: 128) writes that people who are travelling to familiar places play out their social roles they have at home. There is no need for motorhome owners to seek new places when going on vacation. People can also feel more at home during a vacation rather than at their permanent residence (Bærenholdt et al, 2004: 131). Further, Haldrup and Larsen argue that “tourism is performed in networks that stretch across the spaces of the holiday and the spaces of home” (Haldrup and Larsen, 2010: 121). Connotations of ‘home’ become an integrated part of motorhome tourism, since people carry their habits from home into the motorhome. This aspects of taking habits from home, leaves me again to ask the question *when are motorhome owners driving a motorhome actually tourists?* Reflecting on Edensor’s (1998, 2000) theoretical concept, I developed the opinion that the motorhome is a moving stage drifting into various spaces, with possibilities for tourists to conduct a myriad of tourism performances. Yet, the stage within the motorhome is used mostly for habitual everyday performances.

### **3.4 Theme #2 - Status, identity and typical motorhome tourists**

In this section, I discuss how motorhome tourists perceive each other, as well as how they perceive themselves as a part of the heterogeneous group of motorhome tourism. As a campsite receptionist, I have often wondered what it *means to* own a motorhome and what kind of relationship people have with their vehicle. I have noticed that people travel with different sized motorhomes, yet seeing the motorhomes standing side by side at the campsite makes me think that motorhome tourism may be intertwined with identity and status. Edensor (2001) writes that tourism is a way of “transmitting identity, by undertaking a particular form of travel a particular style” (Edensor, 2001: 74). One way of transmitting identity is to own

and travel with a motorhome. ‘Style’, however, relates to what people can afford when purchasing a motorhome as a way of performing status-oriented identity. I will discuss how size of the motorhomes may have created a class difference amongst Norwegian motorhome users, where class difference is expressed through economic status. Economic status for example can be uttered by having a better and wealthier lifestyle than other motorhome users, or being able to follow *trends* within the motorhome community. Further, inspired by Järvinens’ (2005: 30) methodology of constructivist interactionism, I focus on how Norwegian motorhome couples present themselves when talking about the ‘typical’ aspects of motorhome tourism. According to Crouch (2002: 211), tourists are self-reflective. They think over where they come from and what they have done in their life. In other words, people reflect over their past in order to understand their present situation (Järvinen, 2001: 276). I start this section of the analysis of a discussion that I had with couple #7

During the start of the interview, the couple told me that they use their motorhome 2-3 months per year. As the interview progressed, I mentioned that I find it fascinating that they spend so much money on a vehicle. After my statement, the husband took a deep breath and stated “of course, it is economically not reasonable to purchase a motorhome, it will always decrease in value”. The wife then added, “I have worked my whole life so I think that we deserve to have some good times now we are retired!” The couple perceived that they were beginners within motorhome tourism as they had only owned one vehicle since 2008. The wife also said she had health problems and that the motorhome was the most practical way for her to enjoy a vacation. Reflecting on the couples’ life situation, Hockey & James wrote that retirement does not mean entering ‘old age’ but rather symbolizes “a new and different kind of life” (Hockey & James, 2003: 6). However, old age has often been associated with a time of problems and disability (Small, 2003: 34). Yet, tourism and travel has proven to give positive meaning to older people’s lives (Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002: 376). Returning to couple #7’s life situation, the wife’s health problem did not stop them from travelling on vacation. Instead the couple commented that due to their good financial situation, they take the opportunity to travel rather than sit at home. Another couple, Couple #2, also referred to finances. The husband told me that “you don’t need to buy the most expensive motorhome and you don’t need to buy one completely new either”. The wife added, “My sister purchased a used motorhome and the price of that motorhome was about 400 000 Norwegian kroner, it was really nice!” The couple’s statements indicate that price does matter, and that some people may be perceived as investing too much money in their motorhomes. The couple’s



tone while discussing this was calm and relaxed. They both had a self-confident tone throughout the entire interview. Reflecting on the situational context of the interview, I would say that couple #2 had a quite wealthy lifestyle, outside their house stood a motorhome that in my opinion cost over a million Norwegian kroner. Further, when I had completed all the interviews, I realized that motorhome tourism might be connected with status, since the majority of couples, who I interviewed, had all changed their motorhome into bigger and more luxurious vehicles. An out-take in the Norwegian Magazine *Bobil and Caravan* confirms this trend.

*“...The camping business has in the past 10 years experienced a rapid development (...) the grill suites and the description of motorhome tourist being ‘harry’<sup>4</sup> is gone (...) both Caravans and motorhomes are now competing with five stars hotels due to the increase of quality and a feeling of luxury (...) campsite life today consists of people from all layers of society and age groups” (Bobil and Caravan, 2015: 94)*

Financial wealth plays a role in how people choose their motorhomes. Yet concerning technological aspects of a motorhome, there is a level of status amongst people owning a motorhome regarding both size and quality of the vehicle. Couple #6 helps “unpack” what such status encompasses. Couple #6 lives in a big house and owns two vehicles including a motorhome. The husband was retired while the wife was still employed. Both the wife and husband were in their early sixties. During a discussion regarding what the couple perceived as typical motorhome tourists, the husband answered that they are people of every social level of society. As I questioned him what he actually meant by the statement ‘social level of society’, he said:

*“we know people here in the village that have the highest ranks, and people that have the lowest ranks (...) you can see a little bit in their motorhome - how big their loan is, and how big their income is, but maybe that is silly of me to say?”*

(Couple #6, the husband)

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<sup>4</sup> “In my opinion the term “Harry” is a Norwegian expression used to describe trends that would be perceived as outdated, a little strange, or locked down upon. For motorhome tourists, the word “harry” would be associated with a couple wearing the same grill suites when barbecuing, a stereotypical image of motorhome tourists. Two English translations of the word would be “tasteless” or “cheesy”.

Motorhome owners are aware of each other's vehicles. Further, economic status is displayed through motorhomes parked outside people's residences. Maybe the husband's statement touches upon a topic that is taboo to talk about in Norwegian society, the husband himself indicated that his statement was 'silly'. His wife added "everyone is wondering why we have such a big motorhome, and we actually have talked about selling it because it is too big." The wife's tone when she spoke was filled with a little laughter. Albeit that the wife's language when she told me about their big motorhome reminded me of self-irony, perhaps their motorhome really had become too big?

In contrast, Couple #5 owned a small motorhome and a small house located in the periphery. The wife was in her fifties and the husband was in his late sixties. The couple had previously owned six motorhomes but had in recent years changed their motorhome from bigger to smaller. During a discussion regarding advantages and disadvantages that comes with owning a motorhome, the couple started to tell a story about how they had experienced being a motorhome owner. The couple's language and tone became somewhat melancholic, almost like they were a little bit frustrated. The husband related that "the trend within motorhome tourism that happens now is that the motorhomes become bigger and bigger. In the end, you start to compare your own motorhome with others motorhomes". The wife then continued the discussion by saying that "we started to get influenced by the other motorhome tourists saying to us 'you need this and you need that'. Later I told my husband during our summer vacation that I cannot stand this trend anymore. I want to have a smaller motorhome." After that statement, the wife lowered her voice almost as if whispering and said to her husband "...the motorhome is maybe a little bit narrow...". The husband replied with an unsure tone in his voice "... yes...no... ". The couple then became silent for a short moment, then the wife said:

*"Our small motorhome may be perceived (by other people) as 'Hello!' what kind of motorhome is that?" (Couple #5, the wife)*

The husband's tone indicated that we had come into a topic that for all three of us was quite serious. Reflecting on this discussion with that couple, there may be an ambivalence regarding changing from bigger to smaller motorhome. The wife was concerned about how 'other' people might perceive their small motorhome. This couple goes against the current trend of having bigger sized motorhomes, since the financial press might have become too

big. Status in this sense is defined by different financial wherewithal within the motorhome community. Resonating in the discussions of couple #5 and couple #6, there seems to have emerged a class difference within the motorhome community, those who have a strong financial situation and those who have a weaker financial situation. The weaker ones may feel neglected since they cannot live up to the ongoing trend. Status among tourists can be observed through brand, styles, aesthetics and identity (Michael, 2000: 117) while owning a car can be seen as a way of self-fashioning (Thomson, 1995: 43 as referred to in Edensor, 2004: 104). Further, remembering historically that the car has been perceived as form of transportation for a wealthy elite (Edensor, 2004: 104). Though, it might be a financial struggle to own a motorhome, the vehicle easily displays who are wealthy and less wealthy. A search on various Norwegian internet newspapers indicates that most people purchase a motorhome around 7.5 meters, and that it is trendy to own a motorhome in contrast to owning a caravan. I could also interpret that many people liked to show off their motorhomes, especially if the motorhomes were luxurious, expensive and big vehicles (Svardal, 2015., Eikefjord, 2014., Bolstad, 2014., Sørumsø, 2014., Jacobsen, 2004). During a discussion with couple #7, I asked if they perceived motorhome tourists as a social type of people. The wife stated the following:

*“One time the word motorhome was almost a bad word (...) there was no pride in owning a motorhome and camping tourism did not have high standards (...) camping was considered low status”.* (Couple #7, the wife)

The wife's statement reflects how camping previously was perceived as a cheap and low status vacation, indicating that in 2014, camping tourism has changed for the better. However, some informants stressed that a simple small vehicle was actually more fun to travel with than a big motorhome. By further reading internet newspapers, I found out that the trend of having a bigger motorhome starts to diminish due to higher standards and a lack of people owning a driver license exceeding 3.5 ton (Sandberg, 2014., Bobilverden.no, 2014a., Henriksen, 2015). During the interview with couple #6, I asked the couple how it was to live inside the motorhome. The husband told me that they own one motorhome exceeding over ten meters, plus a little 'old' camper not exceeding more than six meters, I came to an understanding that the husband was quite attached to the smaller vehicle, since he told me “I love to drive with that little camper and inside that car I have everything I need, I have a little kitchen, two sleeping bags, toilet and a fridge, so I love to live in that car!”. A similar story was told by

couple #5 regarding their first little ‘low-budget’ motorhome. The husband told me that “in our first motorhome we did not have a shower, so we needed to park by a river in Kautokeino and bath in the ice-cold water”. The wife laughed and added “we had not taken a shower for two weeks!” The couple gave me an impression that that they had much more fun in their first small motorhome because it was *less* technical and of lesser standard resulting in many good memories. Reflecting on the preceding statements, perhaps the two couples were telling me that the fun of camping is diminished when the motorhome becomes increasingly more luxurious.

The phenomenon of backpacking has been considered as somewhat anti-touristic (Pearce, 2005: 30; Edensor, 1998). Motorhome tourists exhibit similar characteristics to backpackers: they stress the importance of freedom to go wherever they want, and they stress the importance of being themselves. However, the financial difference between backpackers and motorhome tourists are staggering high. First of all, backpackers travel cheaply in order to save money, and often stay in low-budget hostels or guesthouses, whereas motorhome tourists have made an investment aiming to avoid such unnecessary accommodation expenses. Secondly, backpackers emphasize status with regard to going off the beaten track to avoid places that are touristified (Edensor, 2001: 74). However, I have come to understand that motorhome tourism may emphasize status according to their vehicle, family-life and income. In other words, there may be a different demographical understanding of status between the two groups of tourists, since motorhome tourists usually have come further in life than backpackers. A master thesis regarding Norwegian *long-term campers* written by Ellinor Angell Thomassen (1997) takes us back almost two decades. Thomassen’s fieldwork involved interviewing camping tourists at a Norwegian campsite named ‘Sandstrand’. In her thesis, even in 1996 people expressed a desire for bigger and bigger caravans (Thomassen, 1997: 114-116). Thomassen’s informants narrated how they changed from tent to caravan (Thomassen, 1997: 37-38). My research represents in a way a continuation of her research, wherein my informants had experienced a transition from tent, to caravan, to motorhome. Thomassen’s (1997) Master thesis indicates that camping tourism have progressed through a historical development. If I compare camping tourism from 1996 to camping tourism in year 2015, the use of the internet in year 1996 was not a common media of communication amongst Norwegian camping tourists. Today, tourism embraces technology, which enables people to communicate while being away from home (Cohen and Cohen, 2012: 2181). Examples of such technologies are Facebook, Skype, V Kontakte, Twitter, E-mails,

smartphones with various apps and Instagram. As a campsite receptionist, I have witnessed that access to internet sometimes becomes the main reason for staying at the campsite.

Thomassen's (1997) Master thesis studied the phenomenon of camping tourism; she conducted research with a similar group of tourists to me. Yet, the difference between my Master's thesis and Thomassen's Master's thesis is that she studied camping tourists while they were on vacation, whereas I studied camping people in their permanent residence. In other words, Thomassen and I have studied similar groups of people but in different contexts.

There was a strong presence of couples at the campsite where Thomassen did her fieldwork (Angell, 1999: 203). As a campsite receptionist, I have also witnessed that the majority of tourists are couples travelling together in their motorhomes. However, by conducting interviews with motorhome couples in their private homes, I started to notice, that the difference between the couples was huge with regards to traveling preferences, behavior and identity. Taking into consideration, the financial background of each couple, whom I interviewed, I would say that status reflects identity and similarly identity reflects status. By reflecting on Edensor's (2001, 2007) theoretical concept, motorhome tourism involves the performance of showing financial status but at the same emphasizing the importance of family. Most couples told me about how they like to visit their grandchildren, indicating a successful life by having a 'good' established family. Family thus becomes a privilege, a form of status, which is proudly talked about. On the other hand, financial status can be demonstrated by owning a large sized motorhome and a nice house, reflecting a successful career and profession. Yet, to get a better understanding of motorhome tourism, I wanted to find out how motorhome tourists ascribe meaning to their own identity as tourists, as well how they ascribe identity to other motorhome tourists. Specifically, how do the motorhome users, whom I interviewed perceive Norwegian motorhome tourism as a homogeneous group? Reflecting on identity, Edensor writes that identity is a process that is influenced by our surroundings (Edensor, 2002: 29) building on "assumptions about the way we think we are" (Edensor, 2002: 28). However, to better understand motorhome tourism as a phenomenon, the *typical* aspects of motorhome tourists need to be considered.

Couple #4 was in their seventies and had lived in Alta all their life. The couple told me that since 2004, they have been driving yearly with their motorhome. During a discussion regarding who are the typical motorhome tourist, the husband answered "they are mostly people of an older age, and very often they travel with their grandchildren, however I have witnessed that younger people also have started to travel with motorhomes". I then asked

“younger?”. The husband replied “people in their forties”. A similar statement was also conducted by couple #2, the husband told me that “in the last 3-4 years I have seen that it was not only old people that purchased motorhomes, actually there were many young people in their forties as well”. Yet, during a discussion with couple #8 regarding the typical motorhome tourists, the husband told me that “typical motorhome tourists are people who have come to a phase in their life, where they can afford a motorhome instead of a tent or a caravan”. We can interpret from such statements that the informants have witnessed a demographical spread within the motorhome tourist community, since people now with a family household are more common than previously. I understood that the most typical motorhome tourists were senior travelers, in other words people over fifty years old.

When I asked the couples about the typical characteristics of motorhome tourists and what they were doing, their answer was often given in an uncertain tone. When I asked couple #6 the question regarding who are the typical motorhome tourists, the wife answered “well people say that typical motorhome tourists are those that wear the grill-dress and have a cap on their head”. When I asked the same question to couple #2, the wife told me that “typical motorhome tourists are people without children with a little dog, or a big man with a little dog. I think it looks funny”. The two statements indicate that stereotypical perception of camping tourist exists. However, I realize that the description given by the wife from couple #6 is somewhat a rare phenomenon on campsite. I think I have never witnessed a couple wearing a grill-dress at the campsite, where I have worked. This stereotypical image may have emerged as a form of satire, often to be found in Norwegian comics such as “Pondus”. The grill-dress is a two-piece clothing which consists of a jacket with a zipper and a trouser and is often made of a synthetic material. The colors of the grill-dress are often in 1980s pastel colors, which today is considered unfashionable. Maybe the grill-dress has become some kind of folkish sub-cultural phenomenon that takes place amongst camping people (Valaker, 2013., Kippernes, 2007). Some people have even called the grill-dress the folk costume of the camping, using the Norwegian expression ‘*campingbunaden*’ (Mellem, 2015). Nevertheless, where the root for this stereotypical image emerges is for me remains unknown. Maybe it was a trend in the eighties to wear a grill dress. Undertaking a quick search of some Norwegian internet newspapers, the grill-dress has been associated with campers but with negative or humorous connotations (Brenden J, 2014., Hegvik & Jonassen, 2007., Høyberg, 2014., Reierth, 2010, Christensen & Broom.no, 2013). The statements, from both wives on previously, indicate that they have witnessed a phenomenon, which they perceive as typical.



The so called myth that camping tourists wear grill dress does not correspond to my perception of camping tourism, nor does it correspond to the couples interviewed, in fact quite the opposite. As a campsite receptionist, I can say that many motorhome tourist live a much healthier life, than they would do at home at their permanent residence. On the other hand, the statement by the wife from couple #2 may refer to the motorhome tourist of today. Since ‘big’ men walking with small dogs is a phenomenon that I see from morning until evening at the campsite. However I would not refer to it as being “harry”, I would describe it as a normal sight. When I asked couple #3 an improvised question, that is, if they perceived motorhome tourists as “harry”, the husbands tone become somewhat stern and skeptical, meaning that he talked very calmly and soft during the rest of the interview. The husband had the following to say:

*“I don’t know if you can refer to anyone as “harry” only because you are wearing a grill-suit and are making food, or because that you are wearing sports clothes or something similar (...) I don’t know where this branding of motorhome tourists as “harry” comes from”.* (Couple #3, the husband)

The husband took the question quite seriously, maybe it was a touchy subject to discuss since the husband may prefer to wear a grill-suit. Nevertheless, I think motorhome tourists are well aware that they are actually living up to this stereotypical image when they wear their grill-suits. Further, this is not to ignore that motorhome tourism may have been stigmatized as associated with ‘bad taste’ when it comes to appearance. Although currently, camping tourists in grill-suits is a rarity. Yet I think people wear clothes the they like, even if they are not following today’s trend. Today motorhome users wear jogging suits, hats and caps, blouses and fleece jackets. Maybe inside the camping community wearing clothes that are untrendy are more acceptable, in contrast to people outside the community who perceives camping tourists as a little bit ‘backwards’ when it comes to clothing. Nevertheless, maybe camping tourism is a way of performing some sort of social /cultural status, where people shows of how to be a ‘good’ camping tourist amongst others.

The question regarding typical motorhome tourists, provided opportunity for self-reflective responses, wherein motorhome tourists might consider themselves as typical. When I asked couple #4 about what they regard as typical motorhome tourists, the husband answered “they are like us, I think...” Similarly, when I asked couple #8 the same question the husband

answered “I don’t know, I think they have to be a little bit like us...” The answer given by the two husbands above indicates that they have no problem in being perceived as typical motorhome tourist. However, later, I understood the two husbands were very different, both in travelling behavior and choice of destinations. I go deeper into this later in this chapter. However, the informant’s narratives regarding travelling behavior “can be views in some way of self-fashioning” (Wearing et al, 2010: 47). People ascribe meaning to themselves when they are telling stories and through their stories, we get a better understanding about *who* the motorhome couples are.

Continuing on discussing typical aspects of motorhome tourists. The informants gave me an impression that typical motorhome tourists are people who like to explore and see new places, they like to go for small walks, fish, hike, barbeque, pick berries, bicycle and being out in nature. Motorhome tourists are a quite happy group of people regardless of stereotypes ascribed to them as a homogeneous group. They use nature to exercise and to keep themselves healthy, often parking by rivers, costs, lakes and forest, indicating that Norwegian motorhome users practices some kind of outdoor tradition when travelling. Nature was constantly brought up during the interviews, where people camped in the most abandoned places just to relax and enjoy some fresh air. Also, it seems that people are using the freedom to roam in order to practice their activities, leaving me with an impression that motorhome users often prefers the rural over the urban.

### **3.5 Theme #3 - The dilemma, on your own or together?**

Motorhome tourism encompasses performances of the collective and the individual. This part of the analysis investigates how motorhome users perform while meeting up with other motorhome user, when they are ‘on the road’. Further, I discuss how motorhome users negotiate differences between travelling alone and being together with other people, for example, at campsites or motorhome gatherings. Campsites are spaces that often offer services, such as, sanitary stations, laundry machines, electricity and showers; often the sites represent an enclave in heterogeneous spaces. In this analysis, campsites and gatherings are intertwined whereas campsites is a physical place, gatherings are a phenomenon co-created between people in different spaces, that is, some gatherings are ‘arranged’ at campsites. Alternately, independently of campsites.

In the Norwegian language, the word ‘*treff*’ is commonly used by motorhome tourists to describe an event. In this research I use the English word, ‘gathering’. Many events like gatherings are arranged privately by families or social groups (Getz, 2005: 30) or arranged yearly at the same place as an periodic event (Getz, 2005: 19). The most common type of events in motorhomes tourism is participant events, requiring participants for events to exist (Getz, 2012: 46). What characterizes these participant events is that they are local and regionally arranged, for instance, the North Norway region, Nordland region, east region, west region and south region. A typical advertisement in a motorhome magazine often consists of a participant price, contact information and a maximum number of participants, the typical maximum number of participants is usually between 20 – 30 participants. Looking through two of the most regular motorhome magazines, *Bobilen* and *Caravan*, I found that most gatherings were small local participant events. The names of these gatherings are sometimes really hard to translate into English, because they are so rooted in local culture, to give some examples; *Skreimøljetreff* and *fårikåltreff* are two types of gatherings that evolve around Norwegian cuisine, *fårikål* and *mølje* were the word *treff* is just added on the name of the cuisine indicating that we are gathering for the purpose of eating *fårikål* or *mølje*. Usually, the majority of the advertisements in these motorhome magazines focuses on gatherings to a specific place, for example, *treff* in *Fredrikstad*, *Beverøy*, *Selbu*, *Ålesund*, *Oppdal*, *Haugesund* etc. One the other hand, motorhome gatherings can also be huge events exceeding over hundreds of motorhome tourists in one single place. Huge events are characterized by inviting both international and domestic participants (Bobilverden.no, 2014b., Bobilportal.no, n. d.-a., Skeie, 2014), whereas small gatherings consist of a friend circle or local motorhome owners (Nordhaug, 2015., Aune, 2014., Hultgreen, 2015., Hagen, 2014). I, myself, have no experience in participating in gatherings, I have only booked groups not exceeding more than 20 -30 vehicles. As I read the internet newspapers to which I have referred above, I come to understand that gatherings are quite popular amongst motorhome tourists.

Couple #2 had participated in a large motorhome gathering. Out of curiosity, I asked them what happened at these gatherings. The husband said, “there are a lot of people and I think we were about 5-600 motorhomes from all the Nordic countries”. His wife added that “we usually barbeque and socialize in the evenings”. The gathering the husband described is named ‘Nordisk camping treff’, a huge motorhome gathering arranged yearly between the Nordic countries. The husband also mentioned that “we were arranged by nationality in order for the participants to meet people who speak the same language”. The couple gave me an

impression that they did not mind at all staying in a place organized with norms and rules. Reflecting on the couple's story, the performance of disciplined rituals was present as people were directed and controlled within the enclavic space of the campsite, at which the gathering took place.

Couple #8, who had also been participating in gatherings, described gatherings as a nice opportunity to meet new people. In an improvised question, I asked the couple what happened at these gatherings?. The husband answered that:

*“During the gathering there are often arranged sightseeing trips that you drive on your own (...) and often people are participating in gatherings to see something new (...) in every way, gatherings is a very social environment that encompasses both dancing and drinking.”* (Couple #8, the husband)

The mobility of a participant is not bounded by the enclavic space of a campsite, rather the enclave becomes a source of information, which enables the participant to conduct improvised performances in heterogeneous spaces. The information that comes from the other participants and the organizers is a part of the social benefits of participating in a gathering. In other words, people can choose what to do, they can leave the enclave if and when they want. That being said, the husband mentioned sightseeing trips as a collective performance, as some motorhome users prefer to travel together in heterogeneous spaces, to look at the various attractions.

Couple #1 provided another example on how gatherings can function as a source of information. The wife told me that “if you have a problem with your motorhome during gathering, there is always somebody that can help you out”. The husband added “if a motorhome stands with the engine hood opened, than there is a lot of people that will stand around the motorhome wanting to help, everybody knows something”. Reflecting on the couple's statements, people perform to each other by offering help, advice and personal competence, since the gathering may be perceived as a safe environment. However, there were several informants, who disliked participating in gatherings. In interviewing couple #6, I asked them if they liked to participate in gatherings? The wife said, “I don't like so much to participate in gatherings with too much people, however I like to participate in the small local ones, where you can meet people you know”. Similarly, I asked couple #3 what they use to do

together socially when they participated in gatherings. The husband answered that “we use to barbeque and drink a little”. The wife skeptically added:

*“I don’t like to participate in gatherings where the campsites are filled with people, it is so stressing with so many people at one place (...) the motorhomes are parked too close to each other, and some of these camping people are so rude when they come and just place themselves besides us, they don’t care, I think it is a little bit creepy.”*

(Couple #3, the wife)

Gatherings can be a place of frustration for those who seek relaxation and quietness. However, the wife in couple #3 mentioned that she found it creepy when strangers park too close to their vehicle. As a campsite receptionist, I have heard people with motorhomes complain about the lack of privacy, when two vehicles are standing so close that they can gaze into each other’s window. On the other hand, campsites can also be a place of safety attracting motorhome tourists, who are afraid to park in peripheral zones. Couple #7 told me that they prefer to stay at campsites regardless of whether there are too many people. The wife told me that “We always stay at campsites during our vacation, we never free-camp”. The husband followed up his wife’s statement and said “no we don’t free-camp, we choose to stay at campsites because of safety, we choose to do it the right way”. I have chosen to interpret free-camping as staying on a resting area alone in the periphery or in a heterogeneous space, where motorhome tourists have been exposed for robbery and theft (Møller & Lognvik, 2015, Bergsaker, 2006., Ighoubah, 2015). The husband’s way of ‘doing it the right way’ is a metaphor for doing it the safe way. Returning to gatherings, Couple #1, a couple who arranges gatherings, provide further insight into how participants perform during a gathering. In response to my improvised question, ‘what do people do at gatherings?’. The husband, who had worked as a regional coordinator for his county, told me the following:

*“I don’t know how many gatherings I have arranged but I never had any trouble with the participants (...) the motorhome tourist loves food (...) if the weather is nice when we are participating in gatherings, then it becomes very social since everyone is sitting outside of their motorhomes, people walk around, meet and talk to each other.”*

(Couple #1, the husband)

The husband was describing a gathering that was on a parking lot outside a house suitable for 20 couples, independent of any infrastructure, such as, a campsite and third party organizers. This gathering was arranged in the periphery. A problem with Edensor's (1998, 2000) theoretical concept regarding spaces is that Edensor describes spaces with infrastructure, making it hard to describe how motorhome tourist are really travelling. Edensor writes that a tourist can perform "completely improvised enactments in unbounded spaces" (Edensor, 2000: 341). I have interpreted these unbounded spaces as periphery, a space with no signs or symbols. Motorhome gatherings are able to be conducted in the periphery, since the motorhome provides the infrastructure itself. However, the socialization between people in such a small gathering is conducted in two spaces -- an unbounded space and a familiar space. "Familiar spaces form an unquestioned backdrop to daily tasks, pleasures and routine movement" (Edensor, 2002: 54). Small unbounded gatherings stress the importance of everydayness and the local. These small local unbounded gatherings do not have a third party organizer, but are rather based on mutual friendship between the peoples that own a motorhome. Another aspect about these small local gatherings is that they often do not take place in enclavic spaces, but in unbounded spaces. So how do they emerge? During a discussion with couple #3, I asked the couple how long is a motorhome vacation? The husband answered "about two months". I then asked them if it was boring to be so long time on the road. The wife answered "It's not so easy to get bored, we have friends". The husband then started to explain how their friends gathered together spontaneously during a vacation:

*"Suddenly you get a phone call from a friend, that they have stopped in a resting area somewhere (...) then we pack our stuff and drive there to meet them for a couple of days before we separate and drive alone (...)this is what I like the best!"*

(Couple #3, the husband).

I have interpreted the husband's statement that small local unbounded gatherings are popular due to familiarity with other people. Thus, the space where the gathering takes place becomes transformed from the unbound to the familiar regardless if the gathering takes place in the periphery. Further, inspired by couple #8, who said that people uses Facebook to post various photos from their vacation, I searched on Facebook and found out that there are open and closed local groups regarding participation in gatherings. In other words, these small, local, unbounded gatherings emerge as planned and spontaneous events. Reflecting on the 'local' aspect of just being together with friends, there is a non-touristic aura over the phenomenon of



local small gatherings. People do not meet each other to perform touristic disciplined rituals. They gather together to camp close to nature. Like people that go tenting in the woods to get away from everyday life, motorhome people do the same but with increased comfort. People do not *become* motorhome tourists the moment they purchase a motorhome. Rather they perform as tourists by connecting to the surrounding environment, such as, visiting attractions, sleeping at campsites, going to restaurants and visiting new destinations. On the other hand, people can perform as ‘local people’ by simply camping. The motorhome creates a misconception. People do not need to travel on vacation to use a motorhome. They simply ‘camp or visit friends’ while performing their everyday selves as ‘locals’. The misconception stems from the inability to distinguish between *private* from *local* and a local from a *tourist* when seeing a motorhome.

Couple #6, had an interesting opinion regarding how it is to camp in Norway. I asked the couple, how it was travelling with a motorhome. The husband answered that:

*“It seems like we have some official Norwegian politics that want to force tourists to stay at campsites. I am not driving to any campsites regardless how bad the infrastructure is on the place (...) It is almost like the officials are trying to decide, which hotels I should stay in when I am on vacation, I have paid almost a million Norwegian kroners for my motorhome and I am not going to let the Norwegian Public Roads Administration decide where I should stay, that I want to decide myself, I have paid for everything I need to live free in the periphery and I intend to do so.”*

(Couple #6, the Husband)

The husband describes a paradox since motorhomes can park almost wherever they want alongside Norwegian roads, however it is only allowed to park for one day (NAF.no, 2014., Olsen, 2014). Further, parking the motorhome inside a campsite is perceived as unnecessary since this is a situation where one accommodation is nested inside another accommodation. Clearly, the husband does not like performing in enclavic spaces, rather he wants to be free in nature conducting habitual performances regardless of infrastructure (Edensor, 2000: 338).

For motorhome tourists, there is a difference between traveling together and being together socially. The challenge is therefore to understand why some performances are preferred to be conducted collectively while other are preferred individually. During a discussion with couple #3, I asked them if they like to drive with their friends on vacation. The husband answered

“there is always a conflict when we travel with friends, questions like, where should we go? Where should we stop? Sometimes you are almost falling asleep because you friends want to drive longer”. From this discussion, I interpret that the husband dislikes being directed by others, and would rather prefer to improvise during travel. Couple #1 recounted a similar story. The husband told me that “we travelled one time with another couple, yet they wanted to see everything in the shortest amount of time, we, on the other hand, wanted to stop and enjoy nature, thus we became exhausted”. The performance of travelling collectively may conflict with individual travelling habits. Bærenholt et al (2004: 136 -137) notes that people experience freedom and pleasure by drifting in a car on their own, where gazing at tourism attractions comes second to experiencing nature through bodily movements. However, the disagreements between motorhome tourists travelling together may stem from each individual’s perception of ‘freedom’ and this perception of freedom comes in conflict when travelling collectively. People may also avoid tourism since it is associated with too much stress, yet people decide themselves if they want to be tourists or not (Franklin, 2003: 276).

Motorhome tourists engage in gestural performances, such as, greetings each other with their hand visible through the windshield, an individual performance common to motorhome tourists. The wife from Couple #5 told me during a discussion regarding how it is to drive with the motorhome that, “It is strange that motorhome people greet each other on the road but we don’t talk to each other when we stop”. I than said “Really? You don’t talk to each other?”. The husband then answered “Sometimes when we have greeted each other, we can end up parking at the same spot, then we can chat and get to know each other better”. Similarly, couple #2 mentioned greetings when I asked if there was anything social besides participating in gatherings, the husband told me:

*“ It is strange that we greet each other no matter what nationality, but when we drive a normal car then there is no greeting, I have told my wife that I think it’s silly, sometimes you need to greet a lot, but when we stop at a resting area, nobody talks, I think it’s strange, but sometimes of course you do make contact even in the periphery , there you can light up a fire, and talk to people you don’t know at all”*  
(Couple#2, the husband)

Greetings between motorhome tourists, seems like a cultural gesture found within the homogeneous group of motorhome tourist, however what the gesture *means* is a discussion

that requires interpretation. Couple #7, had an answer as to why motorhome tourist greeted each other. I asked the couple if they regarded motorhome tourists as a social people. The husband answered, “we greet each other on the road” the wife then entered the discussion “I have been thinking that we should buy a ‘hand’ and put it on the dashboard”. The husband then continued, “my wife does not like that we need to greet other motorhome tourists, can you explain me why we do it?. I answered “no” then the wife told me “I have an explanation, it is because in the past we were so few people that owned a motorhome, that those who owned a motorhome they affiliated themselves with each other, but now we are so many”. The husband commented softly, “it almost like we don’t do anything else but greet”.

Upon reflecting on the couple’s statements, I searched in some Norwegian internet newspapers to find an answer. One interpretation was that motorhome tourists greets each other to feel a group affiliation, maybe a symbolical fellowship (Svardal, 2013). On the other hand, many motorhome tourists find the greetings annoying, since there are many motorhome tourists, who think they greet too much and do not affiliate themselves as part of a fellowship at all (Svardal, 2014). My understanding is that motorhome greeting is an individual gesture representing collective recognition of belonging to the same group of tourists. However, Svardal (2014), also, write there are generally two types of motorhome tourist, the one that is social and the one that dislikes the social. I have quoted one statement from Svardal below;

*“We are all different, and we have different preferences in our way we use the motorhome. We are not a big family, but a bunch of individualists that share a form of leisure, and not necessary much more than that” (Svardal, 2014)*

Reflecting on the quotation above, we interpret that many people have individualistic preferences when they travel with a motorhome. The motorhome is a vehicle constructed first and foremost to ‘camp’ and some people may prefer to camp alone. Besides habitual performances conducted inside the vehicle, there are performances individualistically undertaken regardless of infrastructure and other people. Driving alone evokes improvised performances, such as, finding a place to camp alone in peace. Further, motorhome people may not classify themselves as a tourist at all since some of the people use the vehicle to stay overnight with friends and family in the neighborhood. Motorhome users may have the need to visit places with infrastructure -- to find, for example, a sanitary station, maybe to shower or do the laundry, to charge their cellphones or to surf the internet, etc. Finally, as a campsite

receptionist, I have witnessed that many people do not socialize with other guests, simply because they want to stay for one night at the campsite to take benefits of the services provided there in order, to move further on to camp in the free. What they do after they have left the campsite is an unknown to me.

### **3.6 Theme #4 - The destination ...?**

In this section, I analyze how motorhome users perform while travelling through various spaces from and within Northern Norway. I discuss motorhome users travelling behavior by first analyzing what it means to travel in one's own neighborhood, to further analyze what it means to travel away from one's own neighborhood in contrast to travelling internationally. I have done so in order to determine how motorhome users give meaning to destinations when traveling. This part of the analysis is mainly based on the part of the empirical material that stems from the ambition I had at the start of the project, where I wanted to discuss South-Varanger as a destination. Yet throughout this section I present empirical material, which caused the research question to be adjusted to its final state. The informant's stories in this theme commence by explaining how it is to travel in Northern-Norway, to venture further into the Russian Federation with a motorhome. The Russian Federation had its own section in the interview guide, and was the only foreign country, about which I specifically questioned when interviewing the informants. I have chosen to exemplify Russia as international space in order to better understand how destinations can influence motorhome tourists travel preferences.

Since 2004, couple #3 had travelled with motorhomes and had previously owned two motorhomes. I asked them if their usage of motorhomes had changed from being a vehicle for vacation purposes. The husband answered, "it has changed, we use the vehicle more now for pastime purposes, such as, going on weekend trips, not only vacations, like driving to Skibotn one weekend then to Kvænangen another weekend". Similarly, I asked couple #2 how they used their motorhome. The wife told me, "we drive up and down Norway to visit our grandchildren". I then asked "so the motorhome is not only a vehicle for vacation?". The wife answered:

*"No, almost every weekend in the summer we go on these short trips around the fjords in the municipality and I don't know if you can call that a vacation (...) we use the*

*motorhome to visit our family and for a lot of weekend trips (...)so the vehicle is not only used for vacation” (Couple #2, the wife)*

Reflecting on that quotation, weekend trips become a repetitive, habitual and familiar phenomenon. The wife was unsure if she could regard their weekend trips as vacation, indicating that the motorhome is used for more than just for vacations.

Since 2005, couple #4 had been traveling regularly on vacation to southern Norway. I asked them how much time do they spend on vacation. The husband answered “the whole summer”. I then questioned, “the whole summer?”. The husband then specifically told me, “we were travelling for two months visiting family and friends and looking at the nature”. The husband then emphasized that the purpose with their vacation was to travel and relax, giving no details about any destination besides traveling in Norway. Couple #8 had also been on vacation for two months in Western Europe, with a goal of seeing and exploring new places. However, what both couples had in common was a lack of detailed description of the places they visited. Leaving me with an impression that the two couples travelled in an unstructured way. I then started to notice that the other couples answered in a similar style.

In 2013, couple #6 had travelled to Northern-Norway with their motorhome. When I asked them why they travelled, the husband told me that “we didn’t really have a plan”. Similar to when I asked couple #5, where they used to travel with their motorhome, the husband answered, “I can tell you that we never had a plan when we traveled with our motorhome”. Further, when I asked couple #7 where they use to travel with their motorhome, the husband answered:

*“We drive after the weather conditions (...) and for me the most important is not the destination itself, it is being on trip and experiencing nature (...) you can stop when you feel that you have found a nice, cozy place” (Couple #7, the husband)*

Reflecting on these statements, I interpreted that the majority of the couples’ vacations consist of improvised performances conducted throughout the entire vacation. The couples have no specific goal for their vacation, the only connotation of anything that could be perceived as a plan was visiting families and friends. The destinations being situated in heterogeneous spaces was of minor importance for motorhome users, because of their lack of place description. Looking closer on how the couples struggled with explaining where they

travelled, their narrations included places without even remembering the names of the destinations they visited. In other words, this research started by having South-Varanger as a main destination, yet South-Varanger became just a minor part of the motorhome users travelling route, it was a place visited spontaneously, a place to see and leave. However, the research criteria made visiting South-Varanger the only thing that the motorhome users had in common, since the couples all ‘scattered’ to their individual routes after visiting that destination.

Somewhere after 2007, couple #8 travelled to South-Varanger. I asked the couple if they wanted to return to South-Varanger. The husband answered “I am not looking for anything special, but maybe we want to travel down the Pasvik valley”. Then I asked “what they thought about nature in South-Varanger?”. The husband answered “we drove alongside the Russian/Norwegian border and just stood there, everything was so quiet, not a sound”. I interpreted the husband’s answer thinking that maybe the couple as being bored of just doing ‘nothing’. I then said “so maybe South-Varanger is not so fascinating?”. The husband replied to my statement with the following answer:

*“We traveled to South-Varanger only to have been there, and I think many other people that drives a motorhome do the same (...) you drive there because you have heard about the place and want to experience the place, However maybe there is not anything special, and you don’t need anything special either.”*

(Couple #8, the husband)

The wife ended the discussion by stating “you only want to see it”. We interpret from the above quotation, that the couple are travelling on pure improvisation. According to Weber (2001: 364), there is a possibility that the act of travelling becomes more important than the actual destination. We can assume that occasionally motorhome users visit places on impulse without any knowledge about a destination. In other words, motorhome tourism is performed through drifting. Drifting can be described as “the pleasure of movement itself” (Larsen, 2001 as referred to in Bærenholdt et al, 2004: 134) where planned navigation is put aside in order to experience places without any form of guidance or specific directions (Bærenholdt et al, 2004: 136-137). So what kind of experience do the motorhome people have when they are drifting? As I continued my discussion with couple #8, I asked the couple how it was to drive

in Northern Norway. The wife answered “we were really lucky, we had such a beautiful weather”. Then the husband continued saying;

*“I remember one time when we were parking by the road E-6, it was 03:00 in the morning and the weather was beautiful, I needed to go down to the sea shore, to open a can of beer to just sit and relax while I was looking at the sun out there in the ocean”* (Couple #8, the husband)

The way the husband narrates his story is almost like he is experiencing a timeless place, where it is only him, the beer and the ocean. This freedom of travelling, parking and just enjoying oneself within the silence of nature is a common performance amongst motorhome users. The ‘space’ the husband resides within is a place without norms and rules, it is a place where the husband needs to turn himself into a performer since no one is telling him how to act and behave (Bærenholt et al, 2004: 53). Here the notion of place is a social construction, where meaning of place is ascribed through interaction with the place (Simonsen: 2008, 14). The understanding of spaces as Edensor (1998, 2000) has purported, describes spaces filled with pre-set characteristics. I have tried to adapt Edensor’s theory regarding ‘spaces’ with the aim to explain where motorhome users are travelling. I came to understand that Edensor has an concept of spaces and places that requires further clarification. Edensor’s theory of enclavic and heterogeneous spaces has been developed in different contexts, describing spaces with infrastructure. Yet when I try to adapt Edensor’s understanding of spaces into Northern Norway, his concept becomes inadequate to apply to the reality where motorhome user are travelling. Yet, spaces can also be places of *being* which can evoke personal understanding of the world around us (Birkeland, 2008: 42-43), where people perform inside a place, while simultaneously performing the place itself. People experience places individually, meaning that two persons cannot have an identical perception of the same place (Haynes, 1998 as referenced in Page, 1997: 124). Spaces can be understood metaphorically as an imaginative association created in people’s minds through experiences (Crouch et al, 2001 as referred to in Wearing et al, 2010: 78). People can in other words ascribe personal meaning to the ‘spaces’ they visit. Further, narratives as conducted in this research can also ascribe *meaning* of places through stories (Simonsen, 2008: 21). However, the stories told indicates that there is no ‘one’ destination that is visited during a motorhome vacation but multiple destinations.



Knowing now that motorhome users are travelling to numerous of destinations, I want to analyze what happens when motorhome users are ‘drifting’ outside of Northern Norway into the Russian Federation.

In 2011, couple #1 had been traveled alongside the Norwegian/Russian border. I asked the couple if they had thought of crossing the border with their motorhome. The wife told me “I think it is exiting to be as close to the Russian border, because it is forbidden to cross it, and you know how human beings are, we like the things that are forbidden”. I then asked, what motivates you to cross the border with a motorhome. The husband answered, “we want to cross the Russian border out of curiosity”. Couple #6 told me a story about their motorhome trip near the Russian border, where a river separates Norway from Russia with only 4-5 meters, I asked the couple if they found it fascinating to be so close to the border, the wife answered “I thought to myself, should I wander across this little river, just to stick my toes into Russia? Just to have done it! I think is fascinating”. The husband added “for me it was very fascinating to drive alongside the border and I actually wanted to drive over the border to see Murmansk”. From the above answers, we interpret that being close to the Russian border evokes fascination, not because the nature is anymore special on the Russian side of the river, but because of cognitive associations that the land on the other side of the river, is somehow different.

Couple #8 was the only couple, who had travelled into the Russian Federation. I asked the couple if they wanted to travel back into Russia with their motorhome. The wife answered “I thought it was fun to travel into Russia looking at the villages and all that stuff, but I think that getting into Russia was just complicated”. The couple then started to tell me about a three-month bureaucratic process of obtaining a visa, where crossing the border to Russia was the strictest border control they had ever experienced. During the discussion, I said that I think it’s fascinating that people travel to Russia with their motorhome. The husband responded to my statement by saying “yes, it’s rare to find motorhomes in Russia, but gradually it comes more and more, but it’s rare.” The couple also mentioned that they could not understand the Russian alphabet and that the traffic within Russia was chaotic and confusing. Nevertheless, they recommended for people to travel over the border as a different experience, in contrast to travelling in both Europe and Norway. Although during the discussion, the wife mentioned that:

*“When we were driving in Russia, it was never like that you just could do things spontaneously, like asking each other if we should drive that way or this way (...) I think it’s best to have somebody else travelling with you in case something should happen.”* (Couple #8, the wife)

Reflecting on the previous quotation, we can read that the couple is experiencing an unbounded performance by venturing into space that is unfamiliar, unknown and filled with uncertainty. The usual habit of traveling improvisationally was delimited due to the many closed administrative-territories within the Russian Federation. In Murmansk, alone, there are several closed town where non-Russian citizens are not allowed to venture, dramatically delimiting free travel. Yet, motorhome users also describe themselves as tourists when they are travelling to western/central Europe. They eat at restaurants, gaze at attractions, stroll at the beaches, bath in the ocean, visit museums and take photographs. A reason for this touristic behavior is first and foremost that many European countries have a more developed tourism infrastructure for motorhomes, where in some countries motorhome tourists are obliged to use campsites for overnight stays. (Bobilportal.no, n. d. –b., Campingbil.net, n. d.). In other words, tourists can improvise where to travel in Europe but are more directed to enclavic and heterogeneous spaces through tourism infrastructure, leading to less connotations of unbounded performances.

Travelling into various destinations and countries leaves me thinking, that maybe we can consider motorhome users as some kind of senior adventurers. With regards to adventure tourism, Priskin (2001) writes that there is a difference between hard and soft adventure tourists. Soft adventure tourists prefer to sleep in hotels and motels, while hard adventure tourists prefer to camp in the wilderness, often with some connotations of risk (Priskin, 2001: 639., Cater, 2006: 332). The question to be asked then is: are motorhome tourists situated between soft and hard adventure tourists? We read that motorhome tourists are sleeping in comfort but at the same time prefer to camp in the wilderness. While senior adventurers do not regard risk as important for their experience, they do focus more on the pleasure of travelling and seeing new places. According to Williams and Soutar (2009: 415), adventure tourists often are young thrill seekers who spend high sums of money in order to have their adventure fulfilled. On the other hand, Gibson and Yiannakis (2002: 375) noted that people between the age of 28 -33 start to prioritize the importance of family and marriage over thrill seeking adventures. Nevertheless, when people start reaching retirement age the ‘need’ for

thrill is reborn. In other words, older people simply took a good long break from their previous 'younger' adventures. Senior adventurers are thus not inexperienced travelers, but due to their age and health situation, they may choose to travel with a motorhome in order to have control over both leisure time and living standard. Senior adventures are independent, they are not bounded to a permanent place, but 'proudly' drift through various spaces enjoying their time seeking for both relaxation and excitement.

# Chapter 4 - Findings

Motorhome tourism is a complex phenomenon, it is unexplored and intertwined with aspects of everyday life, where tourism and 'home' have melted into performances characterized by its 'oxymoronic' nature of being *home but away*. Edensor's theoretical concepts of spaces can be applied to several destinations, but is missing a description of nature as 'space' where there is little or no infrastructure at all. Yet, the informants seem to value nature quite highly since they all spent much time camping in nature. Fjords, mountains, lakes, rivers and oceans were visited without any specific reason besides enjoying the landscape. Edensor's (1998, 2000, 2001, 2007) theoretical concept regarding spaces is based on studies of destinations with much bigger infrastructure and population densities, than found in Northern Norway.

However, some of Edensor's theory is applicable, but does not always suit the description of destinations visited by my informants. Nevertheless, Edensor's theoretical concept has proven to be a practical tool in order to give meaning to the phenomenon of motorhome tourism. The performances conducted in nature could, for example, be developed into theories regarding nature based/outdoor/peripheral performances. My findings indicate that the actual travel becomes the vacation, while a specific destination becomes just one out of many others. The performances varies immensely depending the route people choose to drive, yet always with the opportunity to experience connotations of everydayness, thanks to the motorhome which becomes *the stage* (Edensor, 2001:63) of habitual performances.

However, the art of attaining an economical benefit from motorhome tourism, should be more frequently debated. We know from this research that Norwegian motorhome tourists desire to park in esthetical natural surroundings, paying for both safety, service, silence and social aspects. Yet, the density between campsites in the Northern-Norway is small, meaning that there are several possibilities to capture a good share of the motorhome tourism market. Motorhome users have unpredictable and spontaneous traveling habits, making Northern Norway a very good destination for motorhome tourism, where long driving opportunities invites a 'good' vacation on the road. Northern Norway also invites times for relaxation when driving, the traffic is fairly calm compared to western/central Europe. Landscapes are encountered kilometers after kilometers giving many nice panoramas that can be enjoyed through the motorhome windshield. In other words, nature was the strongest pull factor amongst Norwegian motorhome users, making nature the strongest reason to return to

Northern Norway for future visitations. Further, studying and ascribing meaning to the phenomenon of motorhome tourism made me realize that motorhome tourism is a world filled with differences. Throughout this study I have reflected over the research question in order to come to an understanding of; how Norwegian motorhome users ascribe meaning to the phenomenon of motorhome tourism? Yet, I have also tried to connect my answer with the practical implications that came with studying the phenomenon, in hope that it will benefit other researchers in the future.

The Norwegian informants that was a part of this research project, tend to ascribe meaning to the phenomenon by using the motorhome in a non-touristic setting through local, homely, familiar and habitual practices such as visiting friend and family. Their descriptions indicate that to be a *motorhome user* is not always to be a *motorhome tourists*. Vacations amongst motorhome users is regarded as a trip conducted over weeks and months, in contrast to weekend trips that can be perceived more as a hobby practiced in one's own neighborhood. Further, it seems that motorhome users prefer to travel independently from other motorhome users, since the informants stressed that driving collectively together, often leads to stress and exhaustion. The interviews with the motorhome users indicates that socialization was preferred when the vehicle were parked. Motorhome users socialize in different ways, were some prefer to meet new people domestically or internationally, while other prefer the more local and familiar. Nevertheless, this research implies that the freedom of independent travel is an important value amongst motorhome users, indicating that motorhome users like to be social together, but often not on the expense of personal comfort and privacy. On the other hand, my informants gave meaning to the phenomenon of motorhome tourism by not having any clear purpose with their motorhome vacation. The interview process also indicates that motorhome users answer questions more easily when they are not connected to any specific place in the form of a destination. Questions regarding *how* the informants travelled, would often lead to a more dynamic interaction between the interviewer and the interviewees, generating many topics and discussion, which could broaden the insight into the phenomenon studied. As an example, one of the topics that emerged was economic status, where identity can be studied according to household, marital status, career, retirement and income. Further, the motorhome can represent wealth amongst motorhome users, creating a class difference. Class differences can be spotted collectively through observations or individually through narrations. This research implies that class differences amongst motorhome users is a sensible topic, which in my opinion should be studied with caution.

Motorhome tourism is an unexplored phenomenon that can be studied amongst different nationalities, places and cultures. In this research, we have read how Norwegians give meaning to the phenomenon of motorhome tourism, yet it would be interesting to study motorhome users from different nationalities. International motorhome tourists travelling in Norway may have different place perception and travelling habits, than the Norwegian couples interviewed in this research. Motorhome tourism is an international phenomenon, where Norway is perceived as an attractive destination because of the *freedom to roam*. However, in order to better Norway as a motorhome destination, a study of international motorhome tourists visiting Norway might come at hand. First, since we might better understand Norway as a motorhome destination from a foreign perspective. Secondly, since we might learn how motorhome tourism is practiced in other countries than Norway. Further, an ethnographical study of motorhome tourists may give insight into people's everyday life when traveling on the road. In this research, the empirical material emerged through stories, discussion and conversations that took place in the informant's homes. Yet, by seeing, interviewing and taking field notes of motorhome tourists that are actually on vacation, we can get a better understanding of people's appearance, people's behavior and places when studying the phenomenon. On the other hand, a study of motorhome winter tourism could give insight of motorhomes tourism as a whole year round phenomenon. Most of my informants hinted that they used their vehicle throughout the year, but their stories mostly stemmed from summer, spring and autumn trips. I myself as a campsite receptionist often questions, how can I attract motorhome tourists to travel more during winter season? A question that I leave for future research. Finally, I would like to acknowledge that motorhome tourism can be a huge field within tourism studies. It is an international phenomenon that touches upon familiar values while at the same time emphasizes the importance of travel. Yet, motorhome tourism is also a common Norwegian phenomenon, it is a field of tourism which can easily be taken for granted because of its everyday presence. Nevertheless, studying motorhome tourism has definitely been fun and rewarding. In the end, I hope that this thesis will help and inspire others who also study motorhome tourism in the future.

*“There's never enough time to do all the nothing you want”*

*~Bill Watterson<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> The creator of Calvin and Hobbes/ in Norwegian 'Tommy og Tigern'

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## APPENDIX: I. Interview Guide

### Intervjuguide

TEMA	BOBILTURISTER
Spørsmål 1a	Hvordan begynte dere å reise med bobil?
Probing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Når begynte dere å reise med bobil?</li><li>• Hvorfor begynte dere å reise med bobil?</li></ul>
Spørsmål 1b	Hva gjør dere i løpet av en bobilferie?
Probing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hvor reiser dere med bobil?</li><li>• Hvordan er det å være bobilturist?</li><li>• Hva er fordelene/ulempene med å være bobilturist?</li><li>• Hva vurderer dere som sosialt når dere drar på bobilferie?</li></ul>
Spørsmål 1c	Hvordan er typiske bobilturister?
Probing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hva gjør bobilturister?</li><li>• Hvor drar bobilturistene?</li></ul>

TEMA	BOBILKULTUR
Spørsmål 2a	Hvordan bor man i bobilen?
Probing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hvilken livsstil har en typisk bobilturist?</li><li>• Hvilke vaner har dere når dere ferierer med bobil?</li></ul>

TEMA	SØR-VARANGER
Spørsmål 3a	Hva var det som gjorde at dere dro til Sør-Varanger?
Probing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hva gjorde dere i Sør-Varanger</li><li>• Hvordan var det å være bobilturist i Sør-Varanger?</li><li>• Hva tenkte dere første gangen dere kom til Sør-Varanger</li></ul>
Spørsmål 3b	Hvorfor tror dere internasjonale bobilturister ferierer i Sør-Varanger?
Probing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hva tror dere internasjonale bobilturister tenker om Sør-Varanger?</li><li>• Hva tror dere Norske Bobilturister tenker om Sør-Varanger?</li></ul>
Spørsmål 3c	Hva ville dere gjort annerledes hvis dere skulle ha besøkt Sør-Varanger igjen?
Spørsmål 3d	Har dere vært i Russland?
Probing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hvordan tror dere det ville ha vært og reist over til Russland med bobil?</li><li>• Hva hindrer/motiverer dere til å reise over til Russland med bobil?</li><li>• Hvordan vil dere beskrive bobilturister som camper ved grensen?</li></ul>



## APPENDIX: II. The information Letter

# Forespørsel om deltagelse i forskningsprosjektet

### **Bobilkultur i grenseland**

#### **En analyse av bobilturister med Sør-Varanger som feriedestinasjon**

Bobilturisme er blitt en populær form for ferie i Norge, siden bobilen gir muligheten til å dra hvor man vil, og når man vil etter eget behov. Bobilturister ferierer på mange forskjellige måter, derfor vil det være interessant og opparbeide seg en bedre forståelse for hvordan folk bruker bobilen i ferie og fritid. Forskningen i dette prosjektet vil bidra til en bedre forståelse av fenomenet bobilkultur, basert på det informantene i prosjektet forteller om det å bruke bil.

Forskningsprosjektet ønsker også å skape en bedre forståelse for hvorfor bobilturister velger å feriere i Sør-Varanger. Sør Varanger som destinasjon preges av dårlige veier og slitt infrastruktur. Allikevel ferierer mange bobilturister i dette grenselandet lengst øst i Nord-Norge. Hensikten med forskningen er å bidra til en bedre forståelse av Sør-Varanger som bil destinasjonen.

Tilsamen blir det valg ut 16 informanter som skal intervjues i par (åtte par). fire av parene vil være fra Alta, de andre fire vil være fra Lofoten. Intervjuene vil vare cirka 60 minutter. Noen vil vare kortere og noen litt lenger, avhengig av hvor mye informantene har å fortelle. Prosjektet er støttet av forskningsprosjektet "Reasons to Return" et samarbeidsprosjekt mellom Universitetet i Agder, Kristiansand og ISS samt Universitetet i Tromsø Norges arktiske universitet. Alle opplysninger som kommer fram vil bli behandlet konfidensielt: Personer kommer ikke til å bli identifisert i den endelige avhandlingen/publikasjonen. Alt av datamateriell anonymiseres og alle lydopptak vil bli slettet ved prosjektslutt 2014-05-01.

Deltakelse i undersøkelsen er frivillig og alle som har blitt intervjuet kan når som helst velge å trekke sin besvarelse uten noen begrunnelse.

Prosjektet er meldt til Personvernforbundet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

Vennlig hilsen

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## APPENDIX: III. Consent form

### Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å delta

-----  
(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

*Jeg samtykker til å delta i intervju*